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The Political Representation of Migrant Women in  
Austria: A Challenge to Representative Democracy

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I dedicate this master's thesis to all migrant women of this world – I hope that one day you will receive the appreciation you deserve.

## **Abstract**

This thesis delves into the system of representative democracy by looking at the political representation of migrant women in Austria. Societies are and will continue to be shaped by migration and therefore, the issue of their fair representation will become increasingly important. By looking at the descriptive representation of migrant women in Austria and following a literature-based approach the system of representative democracy is critically discussed. Through a comprehensive analysis of the existing political landscape of Austria, it becomes evident that migrant women are inadequately represented, highlighting systemic deficiencies. This underrepresentation raises crucial concerns about the inclusivity and fairness of the democratic process and the system of representative democracy. The findings of this research underscore the necessity for alternative forms of representation that can bridge this glaring gap and ensure a more equitable and comprehensive political participation for migrant women.

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## **1 Introduction**

We are currently experiencing a period of unparalleled human movement, where migration is increasing at a faster rate than the growth of the population. It is and will become even more necessary for people to migrate because of environmental, economic, and political circumstances, and above all climate change is expected to lead to increased migration (Nail 2015). Countries will continue to have a beneficial effect from the contributions of migrants and can see a worldwide situation in which migration shapes societies. In contrast to prevailing beliefs, migration is not a straightforward progression of people moving from one specific country to another, where affiliation with one nation is replaced by integration and adaptation into a different one (Erel and Lutz 2012). Migrants have needs, demands, and rights that however are not sufficiently fulfilled in many countries and the fact that societies especially in the long term rely on migration is often overlooked (Donovan 2012).

Political representation is believed to be important because it ensures that the needs and voices of the population are represented in policy developments and legislative decisions. In times of this increasing human mobility, the question of the political participation and representation of migrants has become more and more pressing. For decades before, the mobilization, participation, and representation of migrants were not considered to be an important issue for politics, and migrants were mainly assigned the economic role (Martiniello 2006). Even today, the issue of political representation of migrants is addressed far too little. Too often, other topics related to migration such as integration into the job market are discussed which leads to the assumption that the political representation of migrants is not considered as important enough (Schönwalder 2009).

There are various possibilities and levels of political participation, ranging from the right to vote to involvement within a political party to holding the highest political offices. To some degree, we can see a growing recognition that the political landscape must adapt to reflect the diverse demographics of contemporary societies. However, only a few scholars have explored the determinants of political participation of migrants, focusing on gender differences (Wüst 2023; Bird 2004; Bauböck 2006). Migrants and refugees are frequently distanced or excluded from political participation and the issue is not being raised by domestic politicians (Adamson 2006). The definition of political participation

has undergone a continuous transformation, particularly from the 1960s onwards. The broadening of the concept reflects not only a shift in theory but also social and technological advancements (Immigrant and Ethnic Minorities Working Group of the European Students' Union 2016).

Political representation on the other hand in the traditional understanding refers to the professional engagement with politics through holding a mandate or political office (Bauböck 2006).

Only seldom migrants are seen as political actors but even more rarely we think about refugees as political actors. Nonetheless, migrants and refugees can play a dual political role by engaging in the political affairs of both their host countries and their countries of origin. We can see a development in which the rate of political participation of migrants that are allowed to participate in a receiving country is declining confirming the picture that political participation is diminishing in general (Adamson 2006). Before reviewing the literature on the political representation of migrants and minorities a clarification needs to be done – there is a tendency in literature to conflate the terms 'ethnic minorities' with 'migrants'. Migrants and people belonging to an ethnic minority cannot be treated as one group in any given context. Ethnic minorities can be understood as a group of people residing on the territory of a state, maintaining longstanding, firm, and lasting ties with that state, displaying distinctive ethnic, cultural, religious, or linguistic characteristics, and being sufficiently represented, although to a smaller degree than the rest of the population of that state or of a region of that state (Immigrant and Ethnic Minorities Working Group of the European Students' Union 2016). Migrants indeed are an ethnic minority, but the difference is that migrants are the most recent category of ethnic minorities and therefore do not always hold the citizenship of the country they live in, in contrast to ethnic minorities who predominantly are citizens (Wolff 2008). In the discussion of the literature, both terms will be included. After all, in terms of the circumstances that shape the political representation of migrants and minorities, there are similarities. When discussing the Austrian case, this work will predominately refer to migrants. Another important term in this context is marginalisation. There is no single definition of marginalisation. On the one hand, marginalisation of a group can mean that this group stands on the border between classes belonging neither to one nor the other and is fully integrated. On the other hand, it can be a distinct group that is socially

disadvantaged. Political marginalisation however means that a process of exclusion is occurring through the political system and that experiences of a lack of effectiveness of political involvement are omnipresent. Factors that can facilitate marginalisation can be found on individual and institutional levels – the latter one being particularly relevant in terms of political representation and participation. The lack of recognition of social problems and lack of participatory rights are only some examples. People with migration experience carry a higher risk of being marginalised than people without a migratory experience. This has to do with the fact that special challenges such as difficulties in the recognition of qualifications and uncertain residence status can lead to a precarious living situation and discrimination and racism experiences lead to an aggravated social participation. Social inequality increases the more complex and demanding the activities of political participation become (Kaßner and Kersting 2022).

The question of the political representation of migrants is becoming rapidly more and more important because migrants make up a significant portion of the population in many countries, contributing to the cultural, economic, and social diversity of societies. Political decision-makers need to address the population and can not ignore a significant part of it (Wüst 2023). The insufficient degree of political representation of migrants challenges democratic challenges and norms. The exclusion of migrants in nowadays political systems has also historical reasons and can be explained by the construction of modern states. Furthermore, it has to be noted that formal and jurisdictional equality does not automatically lead to material, social, and political equality. The representation of minority groups and migrants in politics is not just a vital aspect of political inclusion, but it also serves as a crucial tool for promoting enhanced integration within democratic societies (Dancygier et. al. 2015).

At the same time alongside these developments, we can see that representative democracy has evolved and transformed into a crisis over the years in response to various historical, social, technological, and ideological changes. Representative democracy is a form of government in which individuals are elected to represent interests and make decisions on behalf of the population. These elected representatives are responsible for formulating and implementing laws, policies, and decisions that shall reflect the will and concerns of the electorate. The general population does not directly participate in every decision-making process, the idea is that they exercise their influence through the selection of

representatives. The presumed explanations for the crisis of representative democracy include a disrupted relationship between the population and political representatives, a shifted dynamic between the media and politics, and the fact that parties have lost influence (Wöhl 2013). In the last years, we can indeed see a growing worldwide pattern where voters are not satisfied, voting rates are continuously dropping and the discussion about the decline of liberal and representative democracy has become omnipresent in today's political sphere. Many argue that the system of political representation is in a crisis as well (Wöhl 2013; Urbinati 2006). Some go even that far as to say that democracy is always in a crisis at some level and there has never been a time in which someone has not declared democracy not to be in crisis. Many researchers have dedicated themselves to the question of why democracy is in this situation or what can be done about it (Tormey 2015). Voices advocating for more participation and less representation are growing louder. There is even a tendency to believe that we are in a post-democratic situation a situation in which the institutions of the representative formally still exist but have been replaced by supranational actors and structures (Saward 2006).

We can not ignore the crisis of representative democracy, a democracy that revolves around politicians, elections, and parliaments. The crisis however does not mean that there is any likelihood of representative democracy vanishing soon. Hence, the confrontation with it will remain (Tormey 2015). Democracies are not going to collapse because citizens are reluctant to vote or to become part of a political party. Recent empirical work illuminates the dilemma of representation – and mentions as examples the representation of indigenous people, the representation of women, and in general the representation of minorities (Saward 2006).

However, criticism is too rarely voiced through the lens of marginalized groups despite their exclusion from political decisions. This work is intended to address the merging of these two topics - the crisis of representation and the inadequate political representation of migrants and people of migratory descent. Another aspect that should also be included is the gender aspect.

In no country worldwide do women possess an equal level of political influence as men, only 23 % of the deputies of national parliaments are women. A global process is underway where we can see that the participation and representation of women are



increasing (Dörfler and Kaindl 2019). Conscious acts by political parties with the specific aim of getting women elected are an important factor that has led to more representation (Wängnerud 2009).

There has been a feminization of Europe's migrant population in the last decades after seeing for a couple of decades in the 1960s and 1970s predominantly male migrants coming to Europe for work purposes (Kofman and Sales 1998). On the European level anti-discrimination guidelines exist that institutionalised the acknowledgment of differences between individuals and take jurisdictional measures against multiple discriminations against individuals because of gender, sexuality ethnicity, and sexual orientation. However, it has been shown that actors in European anti-discrimination and diversity politics seldom address intersectional dimensions. The relevance of the gender dimension is undisputed but immigration and the political engagement of migrant women as well as their political representation have rarely been the focus of scholarly research and the institutionalisation of anti-discrimination measures does not automatically mean that migrant women are not being excluded (Sauer 2012).

Austria, like many other nations, stands witness to a diverse and dynamic demographic landscape, shaped significantly by the migration of people seeking better opportunities, safety, and quality of life. Migration helps maintain demographic balance and counteract demographic challenges such as an aging population. Multiple waves of migration to the country have led to a population that especially in urban areas is diverse in terms of descent. However, the racist attitudes of Austrian institutions have existed since the beginning of work migration (Pölzl 2020). In a survey conducted among migrants in Austria in April 2021 regarding the perception of discrimination, a total of 48.5 % of respondents with a longer migration history (from Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, and Türkiye) stated that they occasionally or frequently experience disadvantages due to their origins. Individuals with a migration biography or Muslim religious affiliation experience discrimination in their everyday lives at double the rate compared to individuals without a migration background or with a Christian religious affiliation (Statista 2021). Certain groups are exposed to a higher risk of discrimination not only based on a singular characteristic but also based on multiple characteristics. There are many areas where discrimination becomes noticeable for example the areas of work, housing, health, and education. In her book *Generation Haram* which gained a lot of attention, Melisa Erkurt

describes how students are subject to prejudice and stereotyping because of their ethnicity or migration biography. These prejudices can manifest themselves in the form of discrimination by teachers and in the school system. It highlights how such experiences of discrimination can negatively impact the school environment for these students, both in terms of educational opportunities and their mental health. As we can see migrants often find themselves in the worst socio economic circumstances of a society (Erkurt 2020). In Austria as well as in many states of the European Union, exclusion has also an ideological dimension. Something like a “*European/ Austrian identity*” is built up and tends to conflate ethnicity and migrant descendants with citizenship (Sauer 2012).

The fact that discrimination is ubiquitous in many areas, gives the stimulus to look more precisely at the status quo of the political institutions. The Austrian political system is characterized by representative institutions hence, an analysis of these is warranted. Furthermore, the question of citizenship will also be addressed. Citizenship confers political rights and duties on an individual level within a particular country. These rights allow citizens to express their opinions and interests through elections and political participation. Political representation is based on the democratic principle, in which citizens represent their interests in political decision-making processes through legitimate representatives. Therefore, it seems important to look at whether the system excludes many people from citizenship and consequently from political representation (Günay and Dhizic 2021).

Until today, migrant and refugee women have been distanced from international frameworks. Among this cohort, migrant women constitute a substantial segment, contributing to the cultural, economic, and social fabric of Austrian society. Many branches of the Austrian economy are built on the work of migrant women. As significant stakeholders in the societal milieu, their role and political representation within the Austrian democratic framework merits careful examination and analysis. The political representation and participation of migrant women however has not been examined for the Austrian context. It is relevant to look at these issues because Austria like many countries of the world will continue to represent a population where a significant degree of individuals were not born in the country or born into a family that is not autochthonous Austrian. However, the topic is not only of relevance for people who are of immigrant descent. Fair participation and representation of all groups of a society has benefits for

everyone. Higher legitimacy and acceptance of parliamentary decisions by migrants can be expected, which can be overall beneficial for the stability of a country (Holtkamp, Wiechmann, and Friedhoff, o. J.).

This thesis therefore delves into the complex realm of political representation, focusing specifically on migrant women in Austria. The political representation of migrant women is a multifaceted subject that intersects gender, migration, and political participation. It encompasses the study of how migrant women are included and engaged in the political sphere, both as voters and potential candidates, and how their unique experiences and perspectives can influence policy decisions and governance structures. It aims also to critically analyse existing policies, institutional frameworks, and societal attitudes that either enhance or impede their political engagement and above all shed light on and critique the system of representative democracy. The political participation of migrants as members of political parties, as voters, and as representatives in parliaments has not been adequately captured so far, and especially migrant women have not been explored in this context.

In light of these considerations, the following research question arises:

*How are migrant women represented in the Austrian Political System?*

This master thesis adopts a literature-based approach combined with a case study analysis to delve into the topic realm of the political representation of migrant women. Through an in-depth exploration of relevant literature and a focused case study on Austria, this research aims to unravel the complexities and nuances associated with the topic while providing valuable insights and recommendations for practical applications (Parija and Kate 2018). The Austrian electoral system, which includes a combination of proportional representation and a mix of regional and national lists, provides a context to study the impact of electoral systems on women's representation.

The aim is to understand to which extent migrant women are represented in the Austrian political system and by doing so to also explain the functioning of the representative institutions in the political system this will be done by looking at the descriptive representation of migrant women. The quality of political representation can be measured based on the representation of marginalized groups this however does not mean that once

present in representative institutions the representators belonging to marginalized groups can shape discussions and content (Wüst 2023).

To describe the political representation of migrant women in Austria, it will be necessary to explain the functioning of the Austrian political system. Before doing that some general notes on representation and democracy, the forms of political representation and political participation of migrants and migrant women will be done. Then, the focus will lie on explaining the functioning of the representative Austrian institutions. Furthermore, an overview will be provided regarding the history of migration movements and the position of women in Austrian politics. Moving on to the descriptive representation it will be examined how many migrant women in the National Council, Federal Council, and Federal Parliaments are present in Austria and the presence of migrant women in party lists will be discussed. Furthermore, the existence of a quota system will be analysed.

This thesis however should only encompass the analysis of the descriptive representation of migrant women. Furthermore, a discussion is intended to be initiated that questions the system of representative democracy to answer the second research question:

*What implications does the political representation of migrant women in Austria have for the system of representative democracy?*

Here, common critiques of representative democracy will be examined through the lens of migrant women. Furthermore, topics that intersect with the political representation of migrant women and challenge the system of classical representative democracy, such as transnationalism or cosmopolitanism, will be examined. Also, the significance of intersectionality for this topic will be illuminated.

The contribution will be to look at the system of representative democracy through the lens of migrant women. In this process, both theoretical considerations and concepts will be addressed, while practical aspects as the descriptive representation are also taken into account. The descriptive representation of migrant women in Austria shall demonstrate their political standing within the country. This analysis delves into their demographic distribution and will gain a deeper understanding of their contributions and challenges, which are vital for informed policy-making and fostering inclusivity within Austrian

society. Moreover, this work will position itself within the critique of representative democracy.

It is important to look critically at the system of representative democracy because criticism is a catalyst for change and improvement. By identifying shortcomings and weaknesses, reforms can be stimulated to make the democratic structure more effective and inclusive and to point out problems that may disadvantage certain minority groups. An open discussion about the workings of representative democracy helps ensure that the rights and concerns of all citizens, including minorities, are addressed. Furthermore, criticising representative democracy can promote alternative models and methods of political participation that allow for broader citizen participation. This helps to promote an inclusive and fair society (Tormey 2015).

## 2 Representation and Democracy

Representation is a controversial political concept and democratic theorists have debated the right form of representation in modern governance for a long time. The issue around the practice of representation is essential to contemporary politics and there are real concerns about its dimensioning (Saward 2008) even though for a long time representation in consolidated democracies has been considered to be unproblematic and was undisputed (Budde 2013).

Nowadays, when representation comes up, it seems that democracy is its steady companion. However, the question of representation goes beyond representative democracy. The multidimensional term representation etymologically speaking comes from the Latin word *representare* which means to make visible. In the Roman legal tradition, we can find a development of representation, namely the discussion about the power and limitations of those standing for others in judicial proceedings. The cultural legacy of this tradition dictated the way for conceptual elements that could be applied in the political field (Cotta and Russo 2020).

Starting in the 14<sup>th</sup> century, representation as the legal meaning of representation occurred, so we can see a pattern of representation as deputization. In the late Middle Ages, representation had mostly a juridical meaning and meant being the deputy of a person (Budde 2013). Furthermore, the need arose for people for cities, estates, communities or religious orders to be represented (Cotta and Russo 2020).

There is also the distinction between the concept of representation into political representation (*Repräsentation*) and representation of the private sphere (*Vertretung*). The latter simply means to act instead of someone else so we can find overlaps with the representation in the legal understanding. Political representation in contrast according to them has a formative and productive character (Duso 2006).

When speaking about representation, the question of legitimacy needs to be taken into consideration because representation and legitimation in politics are closely related. Legitimation in this context is important because representation requires recognition. Every relationship of representation makes a claim to power that depends on the attribution of legitimacy and every claim to rule aspires to recognition but this claim can

fail - where the representative is denied recognition, representation does not take place making recognition and legitimacy a prerequisite of representation (Budde 2013).

Until the American and French revolutions, democracy was the equivalent to direct democracy as in the Athenian city-state and representation was something ascribed to Aristocrats and Monarchs (Saward 2008). With the emergence of modern industrial societies and large territorial states, the tradition of representational thinking in the history of ideas was intensively taken up and controversially discussed by the social sciences, but not generalized into a scientific term or concept. The development of the concept of political representation lasted until the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Budde, 2013).

Representation and democracy crossed paths and paved the way for representative democracy (Duso 2006). With the second transformation of democracy, representative democracy in its present understanding came to life (Budde, 2013.; Saward 2008). The system of representative democracy is a product of the modern imaginary and has its foundation on a series of propositions. For example, the idea of the nation-state which is informal and a distinct territorial entity. Secondly, the idea of sovereignty is located in the state and can therefore be held and possessed as a tool or resource. The foundation of the idea of representative democracy is that power is exercised in the name of the people by its representatives. Not all represented can be simultaneously in the same place to make political decisions. The representatives, therefore, bring the represented to the present. Representative democracy is a form of governance where political decisions are made through elected representatives (Tormey 2015). People elect their representatives to the representation bodies. These bodies are accountable to the people and obliged to act in the interests of the represented. In a representative democracy, we can find three institutions: the electorate, the representation body, and the center of political decision-making. The electorate is the bearer of sovereign power that can not be exercised directly therefore representatives are elected who constitute the representative body (Hughes 2011). Furthermore, the electorate exercises political control over the representative's work through elections (Haxhiu and Alidemaj 2021).

Nowadays understanding of representation emerged predominately after the Second World War implementing principles of consolidating representative democracy: general direct, equal, secret, and free elections that were universally accepted. These principles

have been put into practice by consistently respecting popular sovereignty and international acts for the protection and respect of human rights and freedoms (Haxhiu and Alidemaj, n.d.).

Budde makes two distinctions - representation as political representation and representation as an action. Representation as a political concept means that representational relations are to be examined only where they exist in a political, conflict-intensive space of action for the production, ordering, and implementation of binding society-wide decisions (Budde 2013). Representation as an action-theoretical concept is by no means consistently observed in the literature. Here, representing can first be determined as a social activity. The principle of democracy, for example, requires citizens to have a say in political decisions. Not all citizens, however, can make political decisions at the same place at all times, which is why they are thought of as having a say through representatives. Recent representation theory justifiably points out that the "absence" of the represented must not be understood strictly in the physical sense, because representatives often appear before the represented. Representation as an action, therefore, means that the representative brings the represented to the presence in very specific qualities that the latter cannot articulate or represent themselves (Budde, 2013). The core of political representation is that decisions are delegated to elected representatives of the people. This fact raises questions about the perception, effects, and changes of political representation (Haxhiu and Alidemaj, 2021).

Initially perceived as unproblematic in consolidated democracies, contemporary concerns, as noted by Saward (2008), highlight the intricacies of representation. The historical and etymological origins of representation trace back to Roman legal traditions, gradually evolving into the modern political context. The emergence of modern industrial societies facilitated the development and understanding of political representation, ultimately culminating in the establishment of representative democracy. Representative democracy, as a product of the modern imaginary, operates on the idea of the nation-state and the role of elected representatives in making political decisions on behalf of the people. The essence lies in delegating decisions to elected representatives, prompting inquiries into the perception, effects, and evolution of political representation.



## **2.1 Forms of Political Representation and Citizenship**

The contemporary debate about the different forms of political representation has been shaped by the work of Hannah F. Pitkin which became the common point of reference for normative theorists and empirical scholars (Cotta and Russo 2020). In her work “*The Concept of Representation*” Pitkin proposes four different, interacting forms of representation: Descriptive, symbolic, substantive, and formalistic representation. In general representation in her view means making present and formulating the citizens’ voices, opinions, and interests in the decision-making process. According to her, we can talk about political representation when political actors speak, advocate, symbolize, and act in the name of others in the political arena. Political representation therefore from this view can be seen as a form of political assistance (Fenichel Pitkin 1967).

Analysing the representation of marginalized groups an understanding of the fact that exclusion is connected to power is needed. Marginalized groups are being discriminated against, and one way of this manifests in not hearing and understanding their interests in representative institutions. Democratic countries seem to have difficulties in including minority perspectives within legislative institutions and the representation of migrants has challenged liberal democracy and its procedures (Çavus 2015). Political and social inclusion of migrants is one of the key questions for a functioning democracy nowadays, but the interests of national majorities proportionally dominate political life. The deficits including the interests of minorities in decision-making processes seriously challenge the legitimacy of democracies especially when reflecting one of the core values of democracy - equality in representative democracies (Krzyzanowski and Wodak 2009).

An important question that comes up is not only how many members of marginalized groups are elected to office but if once elected they reflect the concerns of the groups they are representing. This leads us to the explanation of the concept of substantive representation which means that representatives reflect the wishes, concerns, and interests of the constituents represented. Substantive representation can occur on a micro and macro level. The individual efforts to promote group interests represent the micro level. When the collective legislators of all legislators are measured we speak about the macro level (Hayes and Hibbing 2017).

Descriptive representation in contrast is concerned with how or to what extent a representative reflects a given constituent's social or demographic identity. We would therefore say that a black woman is descriptively represented when there is a black woman in the parliament, independently of the two having the same ideology or political priorities (Hayes and Hibbing 2017). In a wide range of literature, it is typically assumed that appropriate representation means that the relevant group will have its representatives sitting directly in the legislative body meaning that they are descriptively represented. To measure descriptive representation it is widely used to look at the share of seats in parliament. The disclosure from this string of research is that political representation of minorities is achieved once some portion of the seats is occupied by those who bear the same characteristics (Pildes, n.d.; Philipps 1995; Ramsay 2011).

There is an ongoing academic debate regarding the link between substantive and descriptive representation (Philipps 1995; Young 2002; Mansbridge 1999) that will be shown through the discussion of the descriptive and substantive political representation of marginalized groups. Over time, an extensive literature has developed on the political representation of women (Wüst 2016; Bird, Saalfeld, and Wüst 2011; Mansbridge 1999), and especially the descriptive representation of women in parliament has been empirically studied by many scholars (Hayes und Hibbing 2017; Montoya et.al. 2022; Hughes 2011) It is more advanced than the academic work on the political representation of minorities and migrants. Minorities' descriptive political representation is researched more in the US context and less in the European context where a big part of academic work has focussed on the political participation of the Muslim diaspora (Nielsen 2013; Cesari 2007; Peace 2020).

There is a worldwide overrepresentation of men in decision-making processes and national parliaments (Wängnerud 2009). In the last decades though in many countries an increasing share of women can be found in representative institutions. Research has revealed multiple reasons for the variation in the level of descriptive representation of women that can be mainly found on a macro level. Institutional structures play a decisive role - the electoral system and the organisation of political parties influence the degree of political representation of women in a country. Predominately electoral systems are categorized into three systems proportional, semi-proportional systems of voting, and majoritarian voting systems. The proportional voting systems produce representative

tickets that are fairer and the candidate selection process under this system is more centralized. Because of the greater visibility of the whole slate of candidates, there is a greater incentive for parties to present a list that looks similar to the voters (Bird 2004). Religion, and gender equality in a society are other contributing points to the degree of descriptive political representation of women. Research has shown that in Protestant countries and countries with a gender-equal culture women generally have a higher share of women in national parliament (Wängnerud 2009; Bird 2004).

One way to include more women in the decision-making process is quotas. Quota policies are usually applied to increase the descriptive representation of marginalized groups. Whom the quotas target and on what level quotas are implemented varies, they can target women, minorities, or both and can exist on a national, party, or both levels. These different types of implementation influence minority women in different ways. Especially how gender and minority quotes interact with each other leading to variation in minority women's legislative representation. Scholars following an intersectional approach highlight the fact that not any quota system targeting women will effectively help minority or migrant women (Hughes 2011).

Worldwide gender quotas are more advanced than minority quotas. About 30 % of countries, regulate the political representation of women for example by reserving seats in the parliament on a national level. National policies have proven to be more effective in expanding women's representation than party-level measures. Quotas for migrants are rare to find in the European context but are believed to be an effective tool to counteract the underrepresentation of migrants (Holtkamp, Wiechmann, and Friedhoff, 2013).

Measuring the degree of substantive representation is more challenging than measuring the degree of descriptive representation. The core of substantive representation is the representation of the interests of a group therefore it is necessary to agree on what the interests of a group are which is a complex task (Wängnerud 2009).

One of the first remarkable notes regarding substantive representation was made by Anne Philipps. In her work "*The Politics of Presence*" she assumes that women are best suited to represent the interests of women. She argues that there are interests and needs that men cannot address in the same way. According to her, having equal rights to vote does not ensure representing women's interests, therefore equality among those who are elected to

office must also be guaranteed (Philipps 1995). Indeed, research has shown that societies that elect large numbers of women tend to be more gender equal than societies that elect few women (Wängnerud 2009).

Regarding the political representation of migrants, we can find a pattern in which migrants are increasingly becoming full citizens in Western European countries. This transition gives rise to considerations regarding the effective political representation of migrants (Çavus 2015). The interest in the political representation of migrants is newer than the interest in the political representation of women and literature is at a less advanced level. Changes in the last decades have led to increased global migration and the question of citizenship and second-generation migrants has emerged (Bird 2004).

Immigrants are descriptively underrepresented in European national parliaments, in city halls, and national parliaments this is the case for most European countries but also traditional immigration destinations like Canada. The parity ratio, the share of immigrants who hold elected office divided by their share in the population, is globally decisively below 1. Only a handful of states have passed laws that ensure more political representation of migrants in the legislature and a clear immigrant-native representation gap can be found (Dancygier et. al. 2015).

Literature offers two sets of explanations for the underrepresentation of migrants - individual-level structures and political opportunity structures. Some argue that district magnitude may play a role because if there are a greater number of available seats per capita the party leaders may be more willing to allocate spots to underrepresented minorities.

Dancygier et. al. in a study on the descriptive representation of migrants in Sweden emphasized the role of discrimination against migrant politicians by party leaders. They come to this assumption because only seldom migrants are placed in top positions that have a chance to be voted into parliament. They posited the conjecture that the placing of migrants in a low position on voting lists might act as a tool to look more inclusive on the outside (Dancygier et.al. 2015). For the German context, Schmitz and Wüst note that having candidates with migration biographies on candidate lists is important for parties nowadays. However, only a few parties have multiple migrants on their electoral lists, in

most cases, there are only a few (Schmitz and Wüst 2011). Left parties tend to include migrants more in their party lists (Dancygier et. al. 2015).

A proportional voting system does not automatically have benefits for ethnic minorities or migrants. They can be just as well underrepresented under the majority system in Canada and the U.S., as can be underrepresented are proportional voting systems in many European countries. For ethnic minorities, other features can increase political representation. The size of the minority population, the political integration of minorities, the degree of residential concentration, politicisation, and political cohesiveness among ethnic voters contribute to higher levels of political representation for ethnic minorities (Bird 2004).

Donovan analysed the substantive representation of migrant interests in Germany. Her findings revealed that migrant representatives have different tendencies to focus on migration and integration in their legislative activities. Parties of the left not only have a higher degree of descriptive representation but furthermore, the migrant representatives engage more with the topics of migration and integration, therefore the degree of substantive representation is higher. The fact that her analysis showed that there is a clear link between substantive and descriptive representation does not mean that there is a linear connection between the two (Donovan 2012).

Wüsts' findings revealed that parties set up candidates with migratory biographies in electoral districts where the share of migrants is relatively high. Furthermore, he clarifies that the attitudes of candidates with an immigrant background differentiate from the attitudes of those without. Members of parliament with an immigrant background more often reject assimilation, are more in favour of facilitating immigration to Germany, and rate the representation of the interests of persons with a migration biography in office as more important than members of parliament without a migration biography (Wüst 2016).

Bailer et al. researched if increased descriptive representation in parliaments leads to the substantive representation of disadvantaged groups. The main point they make is that the link between descriptive and substantive representation is not automatic and constant just as Donovan highlighted. Members of Parliament from disadvantaged groups at the beginning of their career in parliament are motivated to engage in group representation but this decreases as time goes by and they get into a more senior position. This paper

shows a new perspective, highlighting that the link between descriptive and substantive representation depends also on the career advancement of individual group representatives. Substantive representation happens in the early stages of parliamentary careers but diminishes substantially when serving for a longer time in parliament (Bailer et al. 2022).

It might be true that minority representatives often formulate the interests of migrants and introduce perspectives that are important for migrants and therefore the probability that their interests will be considered is higher. Still, this does not mean that more descriptive representation of immigrants automatically leads to the reflection in the legislation of all concerns, and there should not be too much emphasis on who the representatives are but rather focus on what they do is the assumption of academic work that is against the idea of the politics of presence (Wüst 2016; Donovan 2012).

Scholars studied descriptive and substantive representation separately but there is also a string of research that is concerned with the relationship between descriptive and substantive representation. Mansbridge for example asks the question if blacks should be representing blacks and women should be representing women. Firstly, looking at group mistrust and uncrystallized interests the better communication of descriptive representation improves the substantive representation of the group's interest. When looking at historical political subordination and low legitimacy, descriptive representation increases the closeness to the polity of the group's members. In this just-described context, she finds advantages of descriptive representation in promoting substantive representation (Mansbridge 1999).

Another body of literature is opposed to the fact that descriptive representation automatically leads to more substantive representation of disadvantaged groups. Contrary to the politics of presence, for example, traditional models of party political representation, do not consider the socio-cultural background of deputies because they are brought into office by parties and are committed to the party program (Holtkamp, Wiechmann, and Friedhoff, 2013).

The theory of female awareness indicates that female politicians per se are not a guarantee for change. Instead, more importance to politicians with a feminist agenda should be given, independently of their gender. This approach follows the idea that if marginalized

groups are descriptively represented it does not automatically mean that they are substantively represented. According to this theory the formulation and implementation of programs explicitly aiming to make a change for women is what should be looked at (Young 2002).

We can not assume unchallenged that descriptive representation ensures automatically an increase of substantive representation and the two forms of representation can even stand in contrast to each other. Institutional mechanisms that are designed to increase descriptive representation can undermine the chance of increasing the substantive interests of minorities. The reason for this possible trade-off lies in the fact that the increase of descriptive representation focuses on parts of a legislative body but policies are not only done by a part of the legislative body but by the whole. An example where this occurred was the Voting Rights Act in the USA. Minority voters were concentrated in a few districts and in consequence, they lost influence over all the districts. This should not imply that descriptive representation is bad but rather that there needs to be more awareness of the conflicting relationship between descriptive and substantive representation and that when a situation occurs in which the two stand in contrast to each other there needs to be a clear decision which one will be prioritized (Montoya et al. 2022).

To conclude the debate around descriptive and substantive representation although there is not a direct link between descriptive and substantive representation and in some cases, they can even be opposed to each other, the importance of descriptive representation should not be underestimated (Montoya et al. 2022; Philipps 1995). Also, because marginalized groups themselves word widely are making a call for an increased descriptive representation and a higher legitimacy for legislative decisions could be achieved. It is a first step into including marginalized groups – of course, once reached a certain level of descriptive representation an emphasis on studying substantive representation must be given (Sobolewska, McKee, and Campbell 2018).

Another form of political representation in terms of marginalized groups is symbolic representation (Hayes and Hibbing 2017). Symbolic representation is the feeling of power to raise certain feelings or attitudes and has nothing to do with authorization,

accountability, or reflection of the popular will but is an adjunct to all of these factors (Fenichel Pitkin 1967).

Symbolic representation has short-term and long-term effects. Support of the government, satisfaction with the decision-making processes, and perceptions of procedural justice are short-term effects. Increased levels of trust in the government and greater interest and engagement in politics present long-term effects. Decisions that are harmonious with a citizen's substantive interests may improve feelings of symbolic representation (Hayes and Hibbing 2017).

But is descriptive and or substantive representation a way of achieving more symbolic representation? Descriptive representation is believed to have a symbolic effect that can influence the political behaviour of marginalized groups. Therefore, most of the literature finds at least a modest link between descriptive and symbolic representation. This interaction can also be described by the "minority empowerment" theory of politics (Montoya et al. 2022). Following this theory, minorities feel empowered after having achieved a higher degree of descriptive representation.

As we can see most of the work that studies political representation largely entails a narrow legislative constituency and focuses on electoral and parliamentary systems. A broader understanding would suggest that this is not all that matters in political representation (Saward 2006).

## **2.2 Representation of Migrant Women**

After discussing the literature on the political representation of migrants, minorities, and women, academic work regarding migrant/minority women will be discussed. Women, minorities, and minority women are globally highly underrepresented in high-level political positions. First, when looking at the two - women and ethnic minorities as two different thematic areas, we can find connections. Especially in North America and the United Kingdom, there are essential similarities in the political situations of women and ethnic minorities but there are differences in the political representation of minorities, migrants, and women especially in the European context. Literature on the political representation of migrant women in the European context is not very developed especially when it comes to substantive representation (Hughes 2011).



To enter political leadership positions is harder for women but for migrant women, it is even more challenging. Multiple barriers are linked to legal questions and socio-economic status. In the migration process, restrictions on entry tend to disadvantage women disproportionately, in some cases reinforcing dependence on a partner and making it more difficult to gain independent legal and social status (Kofman and Sales 1998). Policies that address women and policies that address migrants are not compatible and do not target migrant women effectively and a situation arises in which migrant women are consequently left behind (Schönwalder 2009).

Looking at the descriptive representation of minority women for example Maori women in New Zealand have revealed perhaps counter instinctively that ethnic minority women are more politically represented than minority men. Similar results can be found in European countries for Minority and migrant women in the Netherlands Spain, and Sweden (Banducci, Donovan, and Karp 2004).

It has to be kept in mind though that this does not mean that the interests of minority and migrant women are represented. Choosing an ethnic minority woman might be a strategy for parties to diversify in gender and race and minority women are seen not as threatening to the dominant group as minority men. It remains questionable therefore if parties through a more descriptive representation of migrant/minority women represent their interests. Research on the substantive representation of migrant women in Europe is absent. Political systems discriminate against migrant women, and candidate recruitment of political parties for example often does not encompass the integration of migrant women. Many political parties and their actors, set themselves the concrete goal of achieving a higher proportion of women but at the same time, political parties do not support campaigns of migrant women with the same financial resources as their male counterparts (Schönwalder 2009).

There are reasons to believe that minority quotas are benefiting more minority men than minority women. In the US for example attempts to redistrict to increase the political representation of black people led to a higher increase of minority men than of minority women. For minority women the most inclusive type of quota is the so-called tandem quota meaning that national gender policies are adopted simultaneously with minority quotas. A mixed quota system, which is a combination of party gender quotas and

national minority quotas, does not lead to significant improvements for migrant women. This is mainly because mixed quotas are regulated at different levels and by different actors and the strategic advantage of dual identities gets lost (Hughes 2011).

Regarding political representation, there is a wide literature on descriptive, substantive, and symbolic representation of marginalized groups. Research on the political representation of migrant women in the European context is however in its earlier stages.

### **2.3 Political Participation of Migrants and Minorities**

When discussing representative democracy not only political representation but also political participation needs to be discussed because equal political participation includes the political representation and the political participation of marginalized groups. In political participation, the social science literature distinguishes between political representation (e.g., government members, mayors, parliament or state legislature representatives, or city council members) and political participation (interest groups, citizen movements, etc.) (Dörfler and Kaindl 2019).

The general theory of political participation has shifted in the last years from considering not merely voting on the ballot but also strikes, demonstrations, or even hunger strikes and participating in marches increasingly as forms of political representation. This stands in contrast to the assumption of political participation a concept only covering voting, nomination, or representation in the institutional areas. Like many other concepts within the social sciences, the understanding of political participation is however an undecided matter. Before looking at the political participation of migrants, a general explanation for political participation should be drawn. Most of the literature nowadays assumes a group-based motivation to vote. This suggests that a person's engagement in politics is influenced by their alignment with various social aspects such as economic factors, ethnicity, language, religion, or other social affiliations. In this context, academic research often refers to the theory of socioeconomic status. The argumentation here is that social status and socioeconomic factors are the principal forces influencing participation. Attention is given especially to three different variables: education, income, and occupation - the relationship between each of these and political participation is positive. An increase in education would lead to an increase in political participation just as an

increase in occupation or income would do. However, the level of education has the greatest impact on voting figures (Adamson 2006).

Studies have discussed the variation in political participation in terms of gender, race, and age. Gender differences for example reduce when differentiated by the type of participation. Women in some countries are more willing to engage outside of the party-politically institutionalised sphere, such as in NGOs than within party politics. This is partly due to the traditionally male structures within political parties (Dörfler and Kaindl 2019).

Policy developments in the European Union have widened the gap between undocumented and legal migrants making it a big challenge for undocumented migrants to acquire legal status and citizenship status and more stringent controls on immigration have led to growing numbers of undocumented labor migrants in the European Union since the 1990s. For undocumented migrants political participation in the traditional understanding is therefore not possible (Kofman and Sales 1998). But also documented migrants and ethnic minorities who contribute through their labor, taxes, commercial services, participation in schools and neighborhoods, and by enhancing urban cultural landscapes suffer from a variety of forms of exclusion and live in the worst socioeconomic circumstances of all of Europe's inhabitants. Additionally, it is challenging to measure the political participation of ethnic minorities and migrants. Firstly, immigrants are not one homogenous group in terms of political attitudes and behaviour. Furthermore, technical challenges occur because in national statistics often only foreign nationality is registered and individuals who have a country's citizenship but who have parents who migrated are not shown (Çavus 2015).

Wüst conducted a study regarding the voting behaviour of migrants and differentiated the voting population into people with and people without immigration history. The electoral rate of the proportion is significantly lower among people with a family history of migration. He underlines that this voting behaviour might be correlated to the feeling of not being understood and represented by politicians. Saalfeld confirms these assumptions with a study on Great Britain and Germany. He brings out that group-related factors are particularly decisive for the voter turnout of people with a migratory background. People

with a migration history have a higher voter turnout if they live in constituencies with a higher proportion of people of the same ethnicity (Bird, Saalfeld, and Wüst 2011).

For many years the theory of the quiescence of immigrants dominated the literature. Migrants were thought to be apolitical. According to some scholars, the exclusion from the electoral process explains political apathy. In many countries migrants have only little political rights, they can not vote, can not be voted, and thus politically are not represented (Martiniello 2006).

Another part of scholars sees the reason for the non-participation in political processes of immigrants in the political history of their country of origin – which often is under an authoritarian regime or a country that has just recently democratized. This reflects a culturalist and paternalistic approach and is highly problematic because it takes the point of view that migrants are culturally less developed and politically active. Many migrants have been politicized in their country of origin. Also being politically passive is not the same as being politically disinterested and when political opportunities are very limited political participation is strictly restrictive passivity can be a transitional waiting position (Martiniello 2006).

The political participation of migrants can change depending on the structure of political opportunities existent in a society which is the result of inclusion-exclusion mechanisms evolved by the states. Through the establishment or absence of forums and structures for consultative politics, states either expand or limit the opportunities for political involvement among migrants. Secondly, migrants' level of political participation is determined by political ideas and values, and previous involvement in politics if they will seize the opportunities that they have. Recently though migrants have become more involved in mainstream political institutions by facilitating the extension of the voting rights to foreigners in several countries. Lastly, the involvement in political parties and union politics needs to be thematized (Martiniello 2006).

Migrant involvement in union politics is older and better known and lies at the heart of immigrants' political participation. The role of political parties lies in translating societal interests and ideologies into legislative inputs and training and selecting personnel for political offices, they are mediators between the population and the decision-makers (Bauböck 2006). If a group is not represented enough in the parties and parliaments

legislative decisions will not be informed about their needs. Another connection made by scholars is the one between the rise of neoliberalism and the political participation of migrants. Neoliberalism traditionally stands in contrast to trade unions and works towards weakening them. Unions are of high importance for the political participation of migrants. Some stand for organised specific institutions for migrant workers within the union some are against this sticking to the argument of the unity of the working class (Schönwalder 2009).

Political participation of migrants can be determined by 5 indicators: Electoral turnout as compared to nonmigrants, representation of migrants on electoral lists, the role of membership in electoral lists, own political parties, and specific consultative institutions. It should always be kept in mind when studying the political participation of migrants that their political participation depends on political opportunities present and that the nation-states have the responsibility to not turn it into an inclusion/exclusion mechanism. Different dimensions of political representation exist, namely involvement in electoral politics, parliamentary politics, and consultative politics. The representation of ethnic minorities is an increasingly important issue and political philosophers, and normative theorists look at the question if ethnic minorities have claims to specific representation to counteract disadvantages. This approach though needs to overcome the criticisms of descriptive representation. Regarding electoral politics, the black and ethnic vote has been discussed, and the recognition of the fact that legal obstacles of ethnic minorities are determined by rules for access to citizenship. A general theory can not be found that explains the link between ethnic and racial belonging and political behaviour. In the European context, the question was raised if there is an Islamic vote. There are many Islamic associations, but Islamic parties have not established and gained seats in the European Parliament apart from a few exceptions. Some states created consultive institutions for immigrants and ethnic minorities. However, these are strongly criticised because they would create an illusion of political participation that does not exist (Martiniello 2006).

Once settled in a country immigrants and refugees often face social exclusion. This exclusion is a dynamic multidimensional process and means all the processes that hinder individuals and groups from engaging in the rights typically accessible to members of a social and political community. The forms of exclusion can be summarized in material

and discursive exclusion. Material exclusion refers to social services, housing, and education while discursive exclusion discusses racist categorizations applied to particular groups as migrants and refugees, by academics, policy-makers, and service providers (Kofman and Sales 1998; J. Fink, Lewis, and Clarke 2001).

In the discussion about the political representation of migrants, the question of citizenship can not be left behind. The restrictive rules regarding the obtainment of citizenship contribute to the exclusion of migrants. The rights and obligations that come with citizenship are not fixed. Reinvigorated, neo-liberal discourses and practices in Europe have weakened, watered down, and withdrawn citizenship rights for migrants. Citizenship itself is a factor that contributes to the aggravation of social inequalities and the production of new cleavages. The term citizenship regime relates to ideas about who is and can become a citizen and about the cultural rights and obligations of citizenship. A categorization among regimes can be found. The French civic republican regime foresees access to citizenship with expectations that immigrants shall and will assimilate into the French culture and on the other side in the old German exclusionary regime we can see difficult access to citizenship, based on blood ties. These structural barriers seem to be so profound that they duplicate mechanisms of exclusion through generations a further consolidation of discriminatory structures within the systems is the consequence (Bauböck 2006). According to State and hegemony theory, the state is not only a bureaucratic apparatus, legal authority, and liberal-democratic institutional structure but is a social field of forces. The state thus institutionalizes social relations of inequality and domination thereby making them politically significant. A classification and a distinction of classes is made through the state. Additionally, the nation-state through the definition of citizenship rules builds ethnic exclusions (Sauer 2012).

Political exclusion makes it impossible to participate in decisions about the organisation of society. It denies the right to vote and participate in political organisations, community associations, and trade unions. In the states of the European Union, political participation in the formal political process is directly linked to citizenship. The political exclusion depends on a marked hierarchy of civil statuses and by mode of entry. We can see a pattern in which admission to citizenship is being curtailed for longer periods and more strictly policed. Vachars sees inclusion as the recognition that all identities and opinions

are valuable therefore there is no hierarchisation of identities and opinions of people from different backgrounds (Valchars 2022).

The debate on political and social exclusion needs to discuss the tightening of restrictions on entry into the European Union because these controls are creating an increasing number of undocumented immigrants whose economic, social, and political rights are becoming worse. It is important to consider the circumstances under which individuals initially migrated because different types of rights are attached to forms of entry. Those who feel excluded will in the long term turn away. If multiple belonging to multiple identities are not accepted, over time, the exclusion will occur (Kofman and Sales 1998).

#### **2.4 Intersectionality, Gender Studies, and Migration Studies in Political Representation**

These developments need to be looked at from a gendered perspective. Word widely speaking, women make up the majority of refugees, when looking at the European Union though they are the minority. Gender is a crucial element in determining conditions and statuses. Restrictions on entry have a more negative effect on women. Furthermore, long joblessness, the rise of unstable job arrangements, and reductions in social welfare are significant concerns. that make the situation for migrant and refugee women more challenging. Distinctive gendered welfare regimes in different states influence the position of women. Another important point is that for women it is easier than for men to adapt to changed status. A significant number of female refugees frequently gain self-sustained earnings for the first time. This has led to a transformation in conventional family dynamics, marked by an increase in women's economic autonomy and a rise in individuals opting for independent living arrangements or non-traditional marriages (J. Fink, Lewis, and Clarke 2001).

Feminist and anti-racist scholars highlight that citizenship to an increasing extent excludes people who have a feeling of belonging to a state but are still denied the rights of political participation because of a missing citizenship (Kofman and Sales 1998).

For a long time, Gender and Migration studies were interested in the same question but addressed different social groups and there was no constructive dialogue between the two (Kofman and Sales 1998).

For example, in 1977, Welch identified three factors leading to variations in the political involvement of genders: The first explanation, referred to as the 'political socialization' theory, implies that women are socialized into adopting a more passive political role compared to men. This socialization process discourages women from actively engaging in politics. The second explanation, known as the 'structural' theory, emphasizes the disproportionate representation of women in demographic groups characterized by lower levels of political participation. The third explanation, the 'situational' theory, suggests that specific familial responsibilities, such as those associated with being a wife, mother, or single parent, may hinder women from full participation in political activities (Welch 1977).

But slowly there was a shift towards the belief that European political science can not be studied without acknowledging the meaning and construction of gender and ethnicity. Starting from the 1980s scholarships on “women and ethnicity” or “women and migration” and later “gender and migration” provided new methodological and analytical frameworks. In the the 21<sup>st</sup> century an increasing amount of literature highlighted the importance of gender in the migration process. Gender means socially constructed attributes, roles, and activities linked to being for example a woman. Ethnicity among other axes shapes power relations between citizens and institutions. Studying ethnicity or migrant women, therefore, brings together Gender Migration and Ethnic studies (Mügge and De Jong 2013).

Considering Minority Women and hearing their interests in politics is necessary. To start with, it is important to gain an understanding of the fact that women are not one homogenous group as the framing of the feminist movement might implicate. Policies designed to benefit women and policies designed to have a good effect on migrants, often are not suited to benefit minority women. To effectively remove discrimination against minority women an understanding of how and why it affects them is needed. Discrimination often occurs in their community as well as in the majority community and access to justice and support services is not as accessible as for majority women or minority men (Ramsay 2011). Often policies designed to benefit women or minority groups may fail to address minority women’s interests. Differences in ethnicity, religion, or class shape women’s identities and interests, and build intersecting social hierarchies that shape women’s access to power (Hughes 2011).



An approach that highlights the importance of not only studying one marker of inequality is intersectionality. It is rooted in black and multiracial feminism and US black feminism has been central in shaping intersectional thought. Intersectionality was mentioned in 1989 by Kimberly Crenshaw, a law scholar. She decoded the complex ways in which multiple forms of discrimination overlap and or intersect. It was often not possible to clearly distinguish between discrimination based on sex and discrimination based on skin colour, for example, discrimination against black women in the USA. Accordingly, it was difficult for those affected to take legal action against discrimination. The lawsuit that Crenshaw highlighted was a case in which a black woman was rejected because the company had treated black men and white women correctly and therefore no violation of the principle of equal treatment could be established. Crenshaw used the term intersectionality to make visible the interacting forms of discrimination affecting black women in this trial (Crenshaw 1989).

An intersectional perspective is helpful because it points out power relations in their complexity and history and provides a lens to analyse social and political institutions (Sauer 2012). Theories of intersectionality conceptualize sexism, racism, and classism as interrelated systems that create barriers to power. It can be a tool to study how political power is mediated by the intersections of different positions of privilege and power. Furthermore, it presents a challenge to researchers to integrate gender with other factors like ethnicity (Mügge and De Jong 2013). Therefore an intersectional approach is well suited to unite the up-to-now separate discussions about Gender and Ethnic studies and to critically address the position of minority women who in the European context often are women with a recent migratory background (Holtkamp, Wiechmann, and Friedhoff, n.d.). The interconnections and the constructions of (in)security and of (in)dangerous subject positions, can be made visible and criticised with intersectional and postcolonial analyses (Mauer and Leinius 2020).

Political scientists explain and describe how power is acquired and how/why/when certain actors obtain positions of power. European Gender and political scholars have applied intersectionality but in sub-disciplines for example political representation intersectionality has not been established yet. One of the few is Montoya who employs an intersectional framework to explore how multiple, intersecting, and overlapping identities influence perspectives on representation (Montoya et.al. 2022). In the US

intersectionality is more widely spread as a research paradigm and it needs to be highlighted that the context is different from the European one. The transatlantic challenge will be to understand to what degree intersectional outcomes vary for ethnic minorities with a recent migration history (Mügge and De Jong 2013).

Regarding intersectionality and political representation dynamics of group identity might be complicated (Montoya et.al.). A group-based approach to intersectionality pays attention to groups with multiple or intersecting marginalized identities and gives them a voice (Severs, Celis, and Erzeel 2016). Taking an intersectional approach challenges how political representation is studied. In traditional studies of political representation power is something fixed as a result of a social location, but this view could be problematic as it neglects the dynamics and productive dimension of power. The benefit of intersectionality in political representation could therefore be the conceptualisation of power as something not fixed – power relations can change and can offer opportunities for resistance (Severs, Celis, and Erzeel 2016).

Different types of intersectionality can be differentiated. Structural intersectionality for example means how individuals with intersecting identities experience marginalization because of various structural barriers that create inequality. Political intersectionality refers to the fact that people belonging to at least two subordinated groups often face conflicting agendas (Tatari and Mencutek 2015).

As we can see many remarks on how intersectionality highlights the importance of previously overlooked groups, for example, minority and migrant women who are at the intersection of multiple systems of discrimination.

The focus mainly looked at the outcomes of political representation and the explanation of these unequal outcomes and the question of how intersectionality shapes political processes and institutions has remained rather undiscussed (Severs, Celis, and Erzeel 2016). Predominantly there is the belief that political representation reflects the positions of privilege and disadvantage. Severs et. al. argue that intersectionality theory needs to go further than this and highlight the coexistence of oppression and resistance. Women can be and are a part of politics of domination – as victims and as perpetrators, therefore one is never just privileged or oppressed. An example is when headscarf bans made Muslim women manifest themselves as dialogue participants in policy debates. The

depiction of political representation in the political world may lead to change but at the same time, it can reinforce prevailing power structures (Severs, Celis, and Erzeel 2016).

Attention to the ontology of power of intersectionality theory and the importance of the (re) creating character of positions of privilege and disadvantage needs to be made. Understanding political presentation as a process through which power relations are constituted opens the understanding of its repressive and productive aspects. It can therefore push scholarship to study how political representation recreates positions of privilege and disadvantage. An interesting question here is how statehood, state norms, and institutions, construct different forms of inequality and what part statehood plays in the generation of inequality (Severs, Celis, and Erzeel 2016).

Existing scholarship on intersectionality has underscored the importance of moving beyond singular identity categories such as gender or race. However, the literature on democratic innovations has not yet adequately addressed intersectionality, despite its objective of promoting inclusivity. Wojciechowska addresses these gaps by analyzing inclusion tools within democratic innovations, contending that they do not sufficiently account for intersectionality. She argues that current democratic innovations explicitly exclude the very groups that should be a primary focus for democratic scholars. Wojciechowska advocates for a shift away from advocating for isolated acts of inclusion, and instead urging a more direct emphasis on empowering marginalized groups and diversifying the contexts of democratic innovations. She asserts that such changes could enhance the responsiveness of democratic innovations and pave the way for broader social transformation (Wojciechowska 2019).

Political representation is better understood through the incorporation of an intersectional approach. When the intersections of gender, ethnicity, class, and other axes of inequality are taken into consideration and included in the analysis, it is possible to understand better which factors influence the process of political participation of migrants (Holtkamp, Wiechmann, and Friedhoff, 2013). An intersectional theoretical framework shall highlight the position of migrant women in the Austrian political system and should help to show how multiple social positions for example gender and ethnicity cannot be adequately understood by considering these social positions independently.

Gender and Migration studies historically focused on different social groups, lacking dialogue. However, a shift occurred in recognizing the significance of gender and ethnicity in European political science. Scholarships emerged in the 1980s, evolving to "gender and migration" studies, and offering new analytical frameworks. Understanding Minority Women's political interests is crucial for recognizing their diverse identities within feminist movements. Intersectionality proves instrumental in analysing power dynamics, urging scholars to integrate it with gender and ethnic studies, especially for minority women. However, its application in European political representation studies lags behind the US, presenting a transatlantic challenge. Intersectionality underscores the importance of overlooked groups, particularly minority and migrant women facing intersecting discrimination. Attention should shift to studying political representation dynamics beyond fixed power structures, acknowledging oppression and resistance coexisting within individuals. Understanding political representation as a process shaping power relations offers a deeper understanding of inequality generation. Lastly, in the context of democratic innovations, incorporating intersectionality is crucial to enhance inclusion and address the needs of marginalized groups, advocating for a move towards diversified contexts and leadership that truly represents the disempowered.

I argue that previous literature suffers from certain weaknesses. It covers extensively the political participation of ethnic minorities, migrants, and women. But regarding the political representation of migrant women scholarship is not at an advanced stage. Previous research can only be considered a first step towards a more profound understanding of the political representation of migrant women in the European context. Furthermore, when studying the political representation of migrants a focus lies on their descriptive representation in parliaments alternative models are not sufficiently discussed. There is a wide string of studies, criticizing representative democracy but only a few of them express their concerns concerning the accurate representation of minorities and migrants. Intersectionality challenges the traditional approach to studying political representation.

### **3 Austria's Political System**

The analysis of the representation of migrant women in the political decision-making processes can not occur without the examination of the structures of power and the institutions. An understanding of their composition, working methods, operations, transparency, practices, and standards are needed to explore how representative institutions can be analysed from an intersectional perspective and how migrant women in politics are affected by them (European Network of Migrant Women 2021). Therefore, this chapter will explore the Austrian political system and in particular, its representative institutions, the position of migrants, women, and migrant women to be able to analyse the political representation of migrant women.

Austria exemplifies a parliamentary republic constructed upon the fundamental tenets of democracy and the separation of governmental authority powers across the legislative, executive, and judicial domains. The Austrian constitutional framework encompasses four cardinal principles, namely, the democratic, rule of law, republican, and federal principles (Parlament Österreich n.d.).

At the core of Austria's democratic system is the parliament which is the central organ in the modern political system of parliamentary democracies. The parliament is the legislative political institution and makes decisions on laws. Beyond this function, it is supposed to represent the population and control the government. The Austrian Parliament includes two chambers: the Nationalrat (national council) and the Bundesrat (federal council). After the last elections of 2019 5 parties are represented in the Austrian Parliament: ÖVP, SPÖ, FPÖ, die Grünen, and NEOS (Praprotnik 2023).

Political power lies within the National Council. The main function of the National Council is the discussion and consideration of proposals for new laws or amendments to laws. As a body elected by the people, the National Council also has an important control function of the government. The communication function is expressed by the connection of citizens with the government through the parties represented in the National Council (Praprotnik 2023).

183 deputies sit in Austria's National Council who are elected every 5 years by Austrian citizens who are over the age of 16. The deputies have a free mandate and are not subject to the club constraint. In practice, however, the commitment to one's party is strong,

because parties influence the chances of (re)election by drawing up electoral lists. Because of the proportional representation system, that is dominating in Austria, the electoral votes after election day are transformed into mandates in the National Council. Parties with more votes, therefore, get more mandates (Praprotnik 2023).

The Federal Council has the task of representing the interests of the nine federal states. Unlike the National Council (Nationalrat), it is not directly elected by the people, but its members are sent by the federal parliaments. The Federal Council (Bundesrat) is therefore made up of representatives of the federal states. Through them, it has an impact on the national legislative process. The members of the federal council are sent based on a proportional system by the results of the census of people who have Austrian citizenship. The federal state with the highest rate of people with Austrian citizenship has 12 seats in the federal council and all the other federal states are set in proportion to this number. For example, lower Austria is the federal state where most of the people with Austrian citizenship live, therefore 12 deputies are sent by Lower Austria. In Vienna, 89 % of lowers Austria's people with Austrian citizenship are located and in consequence, Vienna is entitled to send 89 % of 12 deputies namely 11 deputies to the federal council. The same system applies to the remaining federal states, with the regulation that the smallest federal state must send at least three deputies - the smallest federal states are therefore disproportionately overrepresented (Stadt Wien n.d.).

All laws must be passed on to the federal council but with few exceptions, it has only a suspensive veto right. In budget matters, rules of procedure, and dissolution of the Parliament the National Council is the only decision maker (Praprotnik 2023).

The National Council has more political power since the Federal Council is only empowered to decide on a few matters. For both chambers, the political representation is tied to the status of the citizenship for the national council through the voters and for the Federal Council through how the number of deputies is calculated. Unlike in a centrally organized state, in a federal state, legislation, and execution are divided between the federal and state levels. On the federal level, we can find a parliamentary system as on the national level. The decision-making process is shaped by the parliamentary clubs that are formed through the elected deputies of the parties. The federal parliaments therefore represent the legislative institution on the federal level. A difference however is that the

system on the federal level is unicameral and not bicameral as on the national level. The federal parliaments elect the federal government consisting of five to nine members and constitute the executive branch which enforces national and federal laws (Dolezal and Fallend 2023). Federal parliaments and state parliaments represent the two central political institutions and the Federal Governors incorporate the helm of the federal government and are elected by the state parliaments (Parlament Österreich 2023). On a national level, the function of representation is primarily carried out through political parties. All state parliamentary electoral regulations include aspects of individual candidacy, but it is the parties that shape the electoral process. Not only the sociodemographic representation is relevant on this level but also the representation that relates to the advocacy of communal interests. Apart from Vienna, where the representatives are not allowed to simultaneously belong to the district councils, many representatives also hold a local office (Dolezal and Fallend 2023).

A municipality is a local authority with the right to self-government and is the smallest political administrative unit. Municipal elections in Austria are crucial democratic processes in which citizens elect their representatives at the municipal level. These elections take place every five years and are an important part of the Austrian political system. Municipal councils play a central role in shaping local policy and decision-making on issues such as education, infrastructure, environmental protection, and social welfare. All Austrian citizens over the age of 16, EU citizens whose primary residence is in Austria, and long-term resident third-country nationals are eligible to vote. The parties and independent candidates draw up their lists and compete against each other making this the only level where individuals without Austrian citizenship are allowed to take part in the decision-making process (Stainer-Hämmerle 2023).

On the local/municipal level, we can find three organs – the local council, the mayor, and the local board. The local council is elected by the population living in the municipality. It is the highest organ in matters of the local area of influence and is the representative institution on the local level. Additionally, the local council bears the responsibility for the election of the parish council. In three federal states, namely Vienna, Steiermark, and Lower Austria, the mayor is selected through an electoral process involving the local council. In contrast, in the remaining federal states, the mayoral election is conducted directly by the electorate. The primary duties of Austrian mayors

encompass both the representation of the municipality and presiding over sessions of the municipal or city council, thereby effectuating the implementation of resolutions. On a local level, the election motives are determined more by personal feelings towards the candidate and less by party belonging. Still, most of the majors represent the ÖVP and the SPÖ – traditionally the strongest parties in Austria (Stainer-Hämmerle 2023).

As is evident, in Austria's political system we can find representative institutions on national, federal, and municipal levels. In contrast to the institutions of political representation, we can find the instruments of direct democracy. In Austria, those are the Volksabstimmung, the Volksbefragung, and the Volksbegehren<sup>1</sup>. In a Volksabstimmung the people are asked whether a law passed by the parliament should come into force or not. The result of the referendum is legally binding. So far, in Austria, there have been two Volksabstimmungen: the commissioning of the Zwentendorf nuclear power plant and the question on Austria's accession to the European Union. In contrast to the Volksabstimmung the Volksbefragung, it is held before a law is passed. Hence it is used by politicians as a tool to ask the opinion of the Austrian population before final decisions are made whereas Volksbegehren are legislative proposals submitted by citizens (Jenny 2023). Recently there have been efforts to reinforce the instruments of direct democracy and to expand it with some tools, such as the citizens' councils, which have been firmly anchored in Vorarlberg for a long time but are rare in other provinces and on the federal government for the first time it was introduced with the Climate Council in 2022. Again, individuals possessing Austrian citizenship are deemed eligible to participate in the mechanisms of direct democracy (Praprotnik 2023).

Like most democratic systems nowadays Austria is a party democracy. Political parties are the most important political actors in Austria's representative democracy (Steininger 2000). A discernible development is that political parties are losing trust and approval although the significance of political parties has increased for years due to a shift from shift from a majoritarian electoral system to a proportional representation system with party lists. Until today, they remain relevant in bringing the diverse needs of as many groups of the population as possible into the political system and therefore play an

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<sup>1</sup> In the English language the word referendum covers multiple meanings which cannot be applied one to one to the Austrian text therefore the German wording of Volksabstimmung, Volksbefragung and Volksbegehren is kept because this way the differences stand out best (Jenny 2023).



important role of inclusion in pluralistic societies as they have personnel sovereignty in the national council. Under the conditions of socio-structural change, changes in the working international migration, and crisis tendencies in the political system, the integrative role of political parties however faces new challenges (Jenny 2023).

The functions of political parties can be summed up into encompassing coordination, facilitation of electoral campaigns and delineation of political competition, personnel selection, and recruitment, alongside the pivotal role of representation. When we speak about the representation by political parties in Austria what is meant is the representation of interests, bundling of interests into policy offerings, and implementation of these interests in the framework of policy-making and sociodemographic representation. In this context, I would like to highlight the task of political parties of sociodemographic representation because it foresees the involvement of the composition of their representative body vis-à-vis the electorate (Jenny 2023).

All political parties in Austria have a party statute that specifies the internal structures, organisational structures, rules, principles, and political goals as well as the conditions to become a member. It helps to regulate the functioning of a party and to ensure that the party works in accordance with its principles. The drawing up of party lists in Austria is a crucial process that takes place before every National Council election. In this process, the parties select the candidates they wish to represent in the representative institutions for example the Austrian National Council. The formation of the electoral lists follows certain rules and procedures that are designed to ensure that the process is fair and democratic (Filzmeier and Perlot 2023). Most parties in Austria have an internal structure that allows for the democratic participation of members in drawing up electoral lists. Given these points, the share of women depends on the order of the candidates on the party lists (Dörfler and Kaindl 2019). Moreover, the voting system in Austria is characterized by “*Vorzugsstimmen*” (preferential voting). A possibility for voters is given to prioritize politicians that they want to get elected. Historically, men have commonly reaped advantages through this preferential voting system because old people who still adhere to outdated gender roles tend to make use of the preferential voting system (Dörfler and Kaindl 2019).

Elections are at the core of political participation. Generally, a distinction between a proportional voting system and a majority voting system is made. In Austria, the elections of the national council elections follow the proportional voting system which means that the seats given to a party proportionally reflect the votes received in the election. The aim of this system is the fair representation of the decision process. The Austrian Federal Constitution states that elections to the National Council, have to be general, equal, direct, secret, free, and personal. The notion that elections must possess a universal/ general character is intriguing, as the historical interpretation of the term general has changed over time. Men have had the equal right to vote since 1907 whereas women were allowed to vote starting from 1918 onwards. In addition, there were discriminatory differences in the mandate calculation for German- and non-German-speaking parties as to how many votes were required for a seat in parliament (Filzmeier and Perlot 2023).

The allocation of vote shares to the distribution of seats in the National Council is carried out in a three-stage procedure where the federal territory is divided into 20 regional constituencies. How many mandates can be won per regional constituency is calculated based on the number of Austrian citizens. A ratio is calculated from the number of citizens and the 183 mandates to be allocated. The second constituency level consists of nine state constituencies, which geographically correspond to the federal states. The mandates to be allocated here correspond to the sum of the mandates in the regional constituencies of the federal state and the third level is the entire federal territory with 183 mandates. In federal elections, not individual politicians but parties are elected who create lists of people and according to how many votes the party gets people from the list will become deputies (Filzmeier and Perlot 2023).

The Austrian Trade Union Federation (Österreichischer Gewerkschaftsbund ÖGB) with 1.2 million members is a powerful institution and a major social and political organisation in Austria. Through negotiations, strikes, and other actions, the Austrian Trade Union Federation strives to improve the rights and conditions of employees. Trade unions in general traditionally play a significant role in Austria. They represent the interests of the members towards the employer and the state and conduct wage negotiations. Furthermore, trade unions promote employee co-determination and strengthen democratic structures in companies and workplaces. They enable employees to voice their concerns, participate in decision-making processes, and incorporate important partners in

shaping labor market policy by contributing their expertise and work to create and secure jobs to combat unemployment and strengthen the economy (Österreichischer Gewerkschaftsbund 2022).

Migrants often find themselves in more precarious jobs and are a classic field relevant for unions to act. Nevertheless, trade unions in Austria regarding migrants find themselves in an ambivalent position. In Austria however, we can find contradictory behaviours of trade unions. For example, their influence on the discussions about the contingent arrangements for guest workers, the unions did not have any interest in the permanent presence of guest workers in Austria. Historically we can even find a reproduction of the hierarchization of migrant workers and non-migrant workers in Austrian trade unions (Jungwirth, n.d.).

In the programme of the Austrian Trade Union Federation 2023 – 2028 the topic of migration and integration is touched upon but not in great detail. Nevertheless, the ambivalent attitude towards migrants can be seen. On the one hand, the Austrian Trade Union Federation highlights the risk for migrants and asylum seekers of wage dumping. Moreover, a remark about the situation of female migrants and asylum seekers is made. It is emphasized that special measures for the consideration of women need to be taken however, what these are supposed to be is not described. On the other side, the Austrian Trade Union Federation points out that open job positions can be filled with people already living in Austria and accentuates that any model of skilled labor migration is incomplete unless it also incorporates a qualification program that addresses individuals already living in Austria. The representation of women in Austrian trade unions has a long tradition and compared to other institutions women were well represented, but deficits remained. For example the low degree of representation in top positions or the fact that negotiation contents were primarily shaped by men (Mayer and Hofmann 2017).

Trade Unions as representators of interests for the workers are confronted with questions of diversity and inclusion and this will represent one of their biggest challenges in the future. The interests of migrant women often stand in contrast to the interests of their “*traditional members*” – white men with Austrian citizenship this is explanatory for the ambivalent position of Austrian trade unions. It is important to observe the development

of the position of Austrian trade unions towards migrant women also because trade unions influence the entire social and economic policy (Mayer and Hofmann 2017).

The Austrian Parliament, central to the democratic system, functions as the legislative institution and makes decisions on laws. It also represents the population and exercises control over the government. The Parliament comprises two chambers: the Nationalrat (national council) and the Bundesrat (federal council). After the 2019 elections, five parties are represented in the Austrian Parliament: ÖVP, SPÖ, FPÖ, die Grünen, and NEOS (Praprotnik 2023).

The National Council holds significant political power, primarily concerning the discussion and consideration of new laws or amendments. It represents a direct link between citizens and the government through the represented parties. In contrast, the Federal Council represents the interests of federal states and participates in the national legislative process. However, its influence is limited, with exclusive decision-making powers residing with the National Council, particularly in budget matters and the dissolution of the Parliament (Praprotnik 2023). Austria employs a proportional voting system in its national council elections, ensuring fair representation. Candidates are selected through party lists, and voters can use preferential voting to prioritize their choices. However, historical gender biases persist in this system (Dörfler and Kaindl 2019). Elections play a central role in political participation, and political parties, as the main actors, shape the electoral process and policy offerings (Jenny 2023). Trade unions, a significant force in Austria, play a crucial role in representing the interests of workers, including migrants. However, they face challenges in navigating the diverse interests of their members, particularly concerning migrants and their integration into the workforce (Jungwirth). The representation of women within trade unions has a longstanding tradition, but gender disparities in top positions persist (Mayer and Hofmann 2017).

Understanding Austrian institutions provides a foundation for delving into migration and the political representation of women, especially migrant women. The examination of migration and its intersection with political representation is the next critical step in comprehending the landscape of political representation of migrant women in Austria.

An understanding of Austrian institutions has given us insight into the processes of political representation and the roles that elections and political parties play in them. In

the next step, migration and the political representation of women will be discussed to approach the political representation of migrant women in Austria.

### **3.1 Migration and Minorities in Austria**

The role of ethnic minorities and migrants in Austria has been conflict-ridden ever since. Slovenians, Croatians, and Jewish people represented the largest minorities after 1945. Various situations arose that made clear that their position in Austrian society was not undisputed. For example, in the late 1980s a president, Kurt Waldheim, who later was confirmed to have supported Hitler's regime remained in office even though big protests from the Jewish communities took place (Weiss, 2000). Also, the Ortstafelfreiheit, a discussion about whether in villages and towns in Carinthia where the Slovenian and Croatian minorities are strongly represented, locations boards should be bilingual shows that ethnic minorities had to stand up repeatedly to fight for their rights and their acceptance in the Austrian society is not undisputed (Prandner and Grausgruber 2019).

Austria has been a country of immigration for decades and has simultaneously acted as a transit country. Besides the ethnic minorities in 1945, 1,4 Million foreigners lived in Austria among them displaced persons war refugees, liberated concentration camp prisoners and forced laborers, Jewish refugees from other countries, former prisoners of war, and members of allies of the German army, most of whom were soon sent to the emigration or were forcibly repatriated and in 1948 only half a million of them were still in Austria. In the following years, Austria was a place of refuge as a consequence of political crises in Hungary, Czechoslovakia, and Poland. In 1956/57, after the suppression of the Hungarian national uprising, more than 180,000 Hungarian refugees came to Austria. For the majority Austria was primarily a transit country; about 20,000 Hungarians set up a residence permanently in the country. Following the Prague Spring, Austria hosted a substantial contingent of 12,000 refugees who opted for prolonged residency. Furthermore, Austria resumed its role as a transitional conduit for numerous individuals in 1981 after the quelling of the Solidarnosc movement in Poland (Bauer, 2008).

The most substantial income of migrants to Austria however occurred during the era of GastarbeiterInnen<sup>2</sup> who arrived in the country to improve the situation of a labor shortage. This demographic phenomenon led to recruitment agreements between Austria and several nations. Notably, an accord was established with Italy in 1961, followed by Spain in 1962, Turkey in 1963, and Ex Yugoslavia in 1966. Predominantly, this migration wave was driven by a dearth of the workforce, prompting a significant number of individuals from Turkey and the former Yugoslavia to depart their countries of origin and seek employment opportunities in Austria. Employers' and employees' associations agreed each year on a quota for foreign workers who were to receive a work and a residence permit in Austria for one year. An Austria-wide quota was set, which was then in turn distributed among the individual federal provinces according to the "needs" of the economy. In the beginning, it was mainly people from Türkiye and later from Ex Yugoslavian states that came to Austria. In cooperation with the sending countries, the Federal Chamber of Commerce set up recruitment places. In Türkiye in particular, they cooperated closely with the German recruitment agencies, which referred to Austria those migrant workers who did not meet the German qualification requirements (Perchinig 2010).

The initial idea of the GastarbeiterInnen model followed a rotation principle. People should come to Austria to work for a certain amount of time and then be sent back to their home countries. But, people stayed longer because, on the one hand, employers wanted the same workers to stay in their companies for longer periods. On the other hand, the guest workers also wanted to stay in Austria for a longer period, bringing their families with them or starting families here (Weiss, 2000). Other characteristics of the status of the GastarbeiterInnen were the dependence on the employer and the employer's obligation to give preference to Austrians for secondment and to dismiss foreigners before nationals (Perchinig 2010).

With this immigration became a significant element of Austria's demographic development. Initially, the immigrant labor force was essentially male, with no children.

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<sup>2</sup> Guest workers" primarily referred to those labor migrants who, starting from the late 1950s, but particularly in the 1960s and 1970s, came to the Federal Republic of Germany, Switzerland, and Austria. The word is widely used in the German-speaking region (Pözl 2020).

In 1971, the share of women in the foreign resident population in Austria was already over 39 %, and the proportion of children was almost 15 % (Bauer 2008).

While coexistence with a few minorities was already marked by tensions, these increased further with the GastarbeiterInnen coming to Austria (Weiss, 2000). In 1973 for example a media narrative emerged, focusing on the location and decrease of GastarbeiterInnen, marking the first instance of GastarbeiterInnen becoming a political concern. Political actors such as the FPÖ, SPÖ, and the Austrian Trade Union Federation started to demand the reduction of migrants. A remarkable point is that the migrants did not have a say in any of the discussions, out of the 199 articles in 1973 that raised the discussion about the foreign workers, not a single one showed the perspective of a guest worker migrant (Pölzl 2020).

The year 1974 became a turning point in the Austrian immigration policy. The international oil crisis and the circumstance that numerous Austrians working abroad returned to their home countries led to increased competition in the labor market and a migrant recruitment stop was imposed which had an unexpected side effect – many guest workers already living in Austria prolonged their stay and settled in (Bauer, 2000).

With Austria's EU accession, the downfall of Communism, and the democratization of Eastern European states led to changes in the geopolitical framework of migration to Austria. Between 1989 and 1993 the rate of people living in Austria without Austrian citizenship doubled and in consequence a limit for the share of the migrant workforce was introduced. People from the former socialist block made their way to Austria and new migration patterns developed, the number of migrants from Ex Yugoslavia and Türkiye stagnated in contrast to the number of migrants from the states that joined the European Union in the course of Eastern Europe enlargement after 2004 (Bischof and Rupnow 2017).

As in many other states of the European Union, we can see that in Austria a shift from the pull-led work migration in the 60s and 70s to the push-led migration that can be seen nowadays occurred. The work migrants instantly achieved an occupation and afterward settled down for good, present-day migrants have fewer opportunities and are faced with a lot of insecurities. A person's long-term prospects in a new environment, coupled with minimal opportunities for positive changes in their home country, could significantly

reduce the probability of engaging in political activities in Austria (Bauer, 2000; Adamson, 2006).

Since the beginning, we can see a chauvinistic treatment of ethnic minorities and migrants (Weiss, 2000) and in course of the time, a classification of newer and older ethnic minorities and migrants living in Austria developed. A highlight of this anti-migrant resentment was reached when in 2000 a coalition between the conservative ÖVP and the right-wing FPÖ became Austria's government, in 2017 again a coalition between these two parties was agreed (Bauer, 2000).

Today, the population living in Austria is marked by the migration waves of the last decades. A high rate of people who live in Austria was not born there and an even higher rate of people have parents who were not born in Austria. Apart from Germany because speaking the same language holds a special position, the biggest share of migrants without Austrian citizenship come from Rumania, Serbia, and Türkiye reflecting the long history of labor migration to Austria and the EU Eastern enlargement (Statistik Austria 2023).

The census of 2022 revealed that 2 351 800 people, more than one-quarter of the total population, with a migration biography, live in Austria, however, in this statistic, only people whose both parents were born abroad are counted as people of immigrant descendants. 1 731 300 are individuals with a migration background of the 1<sup>st</sup> generation, this generation was born abroad and then migrated to Austria. The rest, 620 600, hence can be allocated as individuals with a migration history of the 2<sup>nd</sup> generation. The second generation incorporates individuals whose parents were born in another country but were born in Austria. In Vienna, the share of people with a migration history is the highest, 40 % of all the immigrant descendants live in the capital while 26 % of the whole population located in Austria lives in Vienna. Upper and Lower Austria are the federal states where after Vienna most individuals with a migration biography can be found, the lowest rates can be recorded in Carinthia and Burgenland. The Statistical Yearbook on Migration and Integration 2022 indicates that the population in Austria is growing primarily through migration. Without migration, the population rate would fall back to the level of the 1950s (Statistik Austria 2023). Therefore, looking at the facts, migration has brought many benefits to Austria. It has not only positive effects because it influences demographical development but it also closes the gap between labor supply and labor demand. Still,



political parties have recurrently instrumentalized migrants as scapegoats to obtain votes (Aiginger and Kohlenberger 2020). Migration is used repeatedly to mobilize and politicize people and often draws the us versus them picture. In 2017 for example it was by far the most discussed topic in the electoral campaign. The FPÖ and the ÖVP used the migration wave of 2015 to make a call for a more restrictive migration policy often with racist and insulting comments about especially Muslim migrants (Rosenberger, 2023).

The political participation of migrants is an essential part of integration. Migration research assumes that migrants are fully integrated when they can participate in the political sphere of the country. Austria in this context performs very poorly. The Migrant Policy Index shows that Austria is one of the countries where the gaps in political participation between migrants and non-migrants are the largest. Only a third of people who are migrants or have who have ancestors are eligible to vote therefore a big part of the migrant population in Austria has no say in national political decisions (Aiginger and Kohlenberger 2020). As a further consequence, the political interest of the Austrian context is lower compared to the non-migrant population (Prandner and Grausgruber 2019).

Political rights in Austria are strictly linked to citizenship status. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the citizenship law was a significant instrument to achieve legal and political equality nowadays we can see a contrary function in the Austrian context. The nationally defined citizenship law segments the society and acts as a tool of exclusion as it is an institutionalised line between equal and unequal (Wiener 1996). Only people who have Austrian citizenship have the right to vote and stand for national and federal elections. Furthermore, the right to participate in instruments of direct democracy is only intended for Austrian citizens. The National Council regulation of 1992 shows that only individuals who hold the Austrian citizenship are eligible to vote ( §21 *Bundesgesetzbuch* ).

In Perchinig's words who classifies the approach of countries to transfer political rights to migrants into voting or descent communities, Austria is a decent community (Perchinig 2010). Austria holds on to the *ius sanguinis* which is linked to the citizenship of the parents therefore a child automatically receives the citizenship of its parents at birth. This stands in contrast to the *ius solis* that links the acquisition of citizenship to the place of birth.

Through the *ius sanguinis*, Austria sees the citizen as the sole sovereign and excludes a big part of the migrant population. Bauböck notes however that the majority of states combine elements from both models. For example, by allowing the transmission of citizenship based on *ius sanguinis* for descendants of nationals born abroad and applying *ius soli* to children of foreign residents born within the country (Bauböck 2006).

Also, the rules for the obtainment of Austrian citizenship are very strict. The acquisition of Austrian citizenship is handled very restrictively both at birth and later on and is linked to costs, proof of income, and social status. This is reflected in the fact that a steadily growing part of people is excluded from elections. 17 % of the population living in Austria does not have Austrian citizenship, two-thirds originally come from countries of the European Union and one-third come from third countries. Compared to other European countries this illustrates a high share. These circumstances reveal a high rate of immigration but can also be a sign of restrictive citizenship laws – or both. In Vienna for example, over 30 % of the inhabitants have no right to vote – this number is higher than the people who voted for the strongest party in terms of votes – the SPÖ. Valchars highlights that this exclusion is politically motivated and wanted. It requires a simple majority to change the restrictive rules regarding citizenship rules. Since 1985 citizenship has been reformed over 20 times and ended each time in the introduction of new rules or a restriction of the existing rules and never went in the direction of loosening the rules (Valchars 2022). In Germany, in contrast in 1999, a liberalisation of the citizenship laws was achieved. This liberalization had as a consequence the naturalization and right to vote for 1,5 Million inhabitants between 2000 and 2011. In Austrian political discourses, citizenship often constitutes a high value. This implicates a societal hierarchization of people without Austrian citizenship. If Austrian citizenship is seen as something of high value, how are people seen who do not possess it (Valchars 2022)?

We can see a situation of growing inequality between people with and without a migration biography characterizing Austrian society. A difference can also be seen in the regulation of the political, social, and residence status of migrants from the European Union and third countries. The main actors of migration policy in Austria are the Ministry of Interior and the Ministry of Integration. It has to be noted though that a significant portion of migration policy is decided at the EU level. Integration remains a full competence of the national states. Therefore, regulations on citizenship law and the right to vote are resolved

in Austria. Border control, asylum policy, and citizenship law fall within the scope of the Ministry of Interior. A characteristic of national states is to claim the right of sorting at borders and decide under which circumstances people can settle. Border security after the fall of the Iron Curtain in 1989 turned into a high political priority in Austria. Furthermore, the Ministry of Social Affairs and Education, as well as civil society, social partners, and welfare organisations on the non-governmental side play a role. Despite the recruitment of guest workers and refugee movements, political Austria did not see itself as a country of immigration until the 2000s. And it still does not see itself as a country of immigration that would shape immigration legally and politically. Migrant organisations are not given the possibility to make political decisions. Their only involvement in political decision-making processes occurs in matters of religious policy, but not in migration and integration policy. However, asylum seekers have carried out some protest activities for residence and better living conditions. Non-governmental organisations play a significant role in integration in Austria (Rosenberger, 2023).

As we can see, the history of migration in Austria has been very dynamic, and historically, labor migration has played a significant role. Starting from the 1960s, migrants have become an integral part of Austrian society. However, migrants from the beginning had to face multiple challenges, and especially the strict citizenship rules led to the hindrance of political participation and representation.

### **3.2 Women in Austria's Political System**

The Institute for Parliamentarism and Democracy Issues commented that the year 2022 marked a low point for women in Austria's top politics. After years of an increasing share of women in political positions, a downfall could be recorded (Institut für Parlamentarismus and Demokratiefragen 2023).

As in many other states, during the 20<sup>th</sup> century and the democratic processes of the political system, demands for gender equality have increased. Since 1918 the number of women occupying positions in political institutions increased and women attained political positions that were previously held only by men. However, the number of seats occupied by women in parliament is still lower compared to other countries (Steininger 2000).

Regarding the gender perspective, Liebhart conceptualizes an understanding of democracy and the criteria for the quality of democracy. She refers on the one hand to formal standards, which are the prerequisite for speaking of democracy at all. In addition, there is the question of the substantial content of these standards. Her question is when it is possible to speak of a gender-equitable implementation of democracy. Firstly, in this context, legal equality of all citizens matters namely are there formal, legal provisions that establish equal participation rights for all genders? Another point is the validity of formally equal rights for political participation. The question is whether these formally equal rights apply to all instruments and forms of democratic participation in decision-making processes. The right to vote and to stand for election in the sense of representative democracy, as well as for direct democratic instruments such as referendums, citizens' initiatives, and other forms of civic participation. Furthermore, the transparency of decisions and decision-making processes as well as existing possibilities for monitoring decision-making procedures matters. Do all genders have access to information and control political decisions? Then the de facto equal access opportunities have to be mentioned. Are there de facto equal access opportunities to political rights, political power, political resources, and political functions? Lastly, social equality or inequality needs to be taken into consideration if the voices of all individuals and all population groups in a state have equal weight (Liebhart 2002).

Historically we can say that the women's movement presented a starting point for the demand for more representation of women in politics. Women's policies in Austria are historically located in the socialist movement and were therefore often shaped by socialist and later social-democratic women politicians. It was not until the 1970s that the socialist politician Johanna Dohnal was able to position herself and became active in women's politics and the women's issue in Austria took on a new significance. She stood up for the idea that every second deputy should be a woman. Also, in the 70s autonomous independent women's movement was founded that fought for the improvement of the situation of women. Their clear message was that the private sphere is political. In the private sphere only in 1975 with the reform of family law gender equality had been addressed (Dörfler and Kaindl 2019).

1979 was the start of the institutionalisation of women's policy in Austria. Federal Chancellor Bruno Kreisky added two state secretariats for women's issues to his

government (State Secretariat for General Women's Issues in the Federal Chancellery and the State Secretariat for the Affairs of Working Women in the Ministry of Social Affairs). This step for the first time in Austrian politics displayed a dedication to the topic of gender equality. Kreisky pushed through these appointments only against great resistance within the party bodies and opposition - in 1983, in the course of the coalition negotiations between the SPÖ and the FPÖ, the State Secretariat for Professional Affairs was cut again.

Formally speaking equal treatment and equal representation of women are an explicit goal of Austria's gender policy. Also, international organisations of which Austria is a part have addressed the gender gap in political representation. For example, in 1990, the Women's Status Commission of the United Nations decided that government parties and trade unions shall dispose of a share of women in decision-making positions of 30 % or the 12 strategic aims of the Beijing Declaration and Action platform (Dörfler and Kaindl 2019).

These measures were successful as the 21st century saw a significant increase in the number of women in political leadership roles. Women's representation in the Austrian Parliament steadily improved, with legislation promoting gender equality in political parties and electoral lists. The implementation of gender quotas further encouraged the inclusion of women in decision-making positions. In recent years, women have held influential political positions in Austria, such as the presidency of the National Council, key ministerial roles, and prominent positions within major political parties. Additionally, there has been a growing emphasis on addressing gender disparities and promoting equal opportunities in both policy-making and electoral processes. Despite these improvements, men are still overrepresented in all representative institutions (Dörfler and Kaindl 2019).

The starting point of a political career in Austria is the party and recruitment mechanisms for political positions are decided upon within the party, therefore, to understand the composition of the national assembly it is relevant to look at the party statutes. Quotas for promising positions on candidate lists and high functions in parties for women or migrants will only be implemented if they are obligatory. The political system in Austria was mainly dominated by three parties in the last decades – the ÖVP, SPÖ, and FPÖ. Therefore, they were in most cases responsible for the composition of the parliament. Traditionally speaking the SPÖ and the Green Party as well as NEOS (which was founded

in 2013 the reason why the party was not part of the historical process) identify themselves as parties that defend the interests of women (Expertenrat für Integration 2022).

The country, like many others, has struggled with historical gender inequalities and is striving to bridge the gap between male and female representation in political spheres. The women's movement, particularly in the 1970s, propelled demands for increased representation. Formal gender equality is constitutionally endorsed, and international organisations advocate for gender parity in decision-making positions. Notably, the 21st century marked a rise in women holding significant political roles. One notable change is the growing awareness of the need for gender equality in political representation. Advocacy for women's rights and demands for gender parity have gained momentum through various civil society movements and increased public debate. This has put pressure on political parties and institutions to address inequalities and actively work toward more balanced representation. Political parties are responsible for filling the positions in the representative institutions and some of them have shown a commitment to advocating for fair representation of women. However, inclusive political representation for women is yet to be fully realized. Notwithstanding it needs to be noted that these historical aspirations benefited primarily white women and women without a migration history realized.

### **3.3 Migrant Women in Austria**

Gender has an immense impact on every stage of the migration cycle, including integration. The appliance of an intersectional concept in the Austrian context of migrant women can help us to understand how sex and being a migrant can intersect and lead to specific challenges for migrant women. According to the Integration Report of 2022, every 5<sup>th</sup> woman in Austria was born abroad and every 4<sup>th</sup> woman has parents who were born abroad (Expertenrat für Integration 2022). Before delving into an analysis of the political representation of migrant women, an examination of the societal positioning of migrant women in Austria will be presented.

Most women of immigrant descent living in Austria have roots in Serbia or Türkiye. Regarding citizenship status, we can find a pattern in which women more often obtain Austrian citizenship than men (Goisauf, Moser, and Schwarz - Wölzl, o. J.). Historically

we can see that the portrayal of female migrants as reliant spouses hindered the recognition of the substantial labor participation of Ex-Yugoslavian and Turkish women in Austria for a long time. The picture of a woman who migrates from an underdeveloped region where she faces repression into a modern society has been maintained for decades but this portrayal does not align with reality. Studies show that many female labor migrants to Austria lived a transnational life, often postponing the date of their return themselves (Lorber 2017).

Migrant women have traditionally worked in precarious job positions and continue to do so today. One sector where many migrant women can be found is the domestic work sector – a sector where exploitation, poor pay, and discrimination are ubiquitous. The situation in this sector reveals the precarious work conditions in which migrant women often find themselves. The COVID-19 pandemic has further exacerbated the situation. Female migrant workers are presently remunerated and safeguarded to an insufficient extent (Amnesty International 2021). Women without a migration background receive 35 % less pay than employed men without a migration background. The income gap between men and women with a migration background is as high as 41 %. The wage gap of women with a migration history is largest in comparison with men without a migration history. Here it is as high as 60 %. This wage gap alone is more than migrant women earn at all. However migrant women also lose out in a comparison between women with and without a migration background (Muckenhuber 2023). We can thus see that migrant women work in jobs with very harsh working conditions, but often earn much less than, men with a migration background, and women without a migration background.

Austria's integration policies have above all one principle: integration through performance. Integration is seen as a reciprocal process and migrants must prove themselves through language, education, and work. This approach applies to migrant women as well. In the last years, there have been various plans on the national Austrian level and EU level also addressing the situation of migrant women in Austria. The topics of integration and women are under one ministry under the ÖVP. This circumstance shows the intersection of gender and migration in the Austrian context (Heilemann 2021).

The Government Programme 2020 - 2024 implies that initiatives are directed not only toward women who have personally immigrated and fall under the so-called first

generation but also towards women who are part of the second and third generations of immigrants, some of whom may already hold Austrian citizenship. The overarching integration policy principles outlined in the National Action Plan on Integration specifically emphasize women with a migrant background from the second and third generations (Heilemann 2021).

The actors of Austria's integration policy do see migrant women as multipliers of the integration process and the civil society broadly acknowledges that women are a main force in integration. Some national initiatives addressing migrant women have been implemented. The main issue though is that the federal chancellery sees the main reasons for the disadvantages of women in gender-specific distribution of roles and patriarchal structures and traces these back to attitudes in the home country. The issue of migrant women is given attention when it is linked to cultural aspects, other causes as the fact that long asylum procedures lead to more violence against women are not even being discussed. Therefore, feminist discourses are used to explain and justify restrictive migration policies and a culturalized perception of the problem can be seen (Heilemann 2021).

The Corona pandemic drew more attention to migrant women because they often work in the health sector which was severely hit by the pandemic (Expertenrat für Integration 2022). Still, no evidence of the existence of dedicated national policies, such as focused strategies or action plans, aimed at mitigating the adverse effects of the COVID-19 pandemic specifically addressing migrant women can be recorded.

The point that also needs to be stressed is the difference between the EU and third-country migrant women. The number of females from third country nations compared to the overall female population increased while the number of males from third countries stagnated (Heilemann 2021). For third-country female migrants, the legal status is crucial. Different kinds of cards come or come not along with work permits. Once obtaining a work permit migrant women end up working in the cleaning or children care sector. Areas in which the working conditions are hard and not highly regulated (Amnesty International 2021). What stands out is the comparatively lower frequency of mentions regarding the labor market integration of migrant women in key policy documents compared to other domains. The majority of policies focus on women with a migrant background, without



explicit emphasis on women from third countries or specific groups of migrant women. These policies are directed towards first-generation immigrant women and explicitly include second-generation and third-generation women as well (Heilemann 2021).

The creation of an inclusive society in which migrant women have equal opportunities and their voices are heard has not happened until now and would require committed cooperation between government, non-governmental organisations, and society at large to sustainably improve living conditions and prospects for migrant women in Austria.

Migrant women in Austria face significant disadvantages despite progress in equality. They struggle with language barriers, limited access to education and jobs, and cultural prejudice. These factors make social integration and professional development difficult. Migrant women are often affected by precarious working conditions and lower incomes. In addition, some experience discrimination and racism in various areas of life, including health care and housing. Effective action to address these disadvantages requires a holistic approach that improves educational and employment opportunities and promotes an inclusive society. Although the literature has illuminated the difficulties for migrants to participate in Austrian politics the focus on migrant women remains limited. Furthermore, the representative institutions unlike in other European countries such as Germany or the Netherlands have not been examined from an intersectional perspective and there is no record of the descriptive political representation of migrant women in Austrian politics. Furthermore, the perspective on what constitutes successful integration and the optimal means to achieve it are problematic. Too much emphasis is placed on individuals, and insufficient attention is given to the restrictive nature of state institutions.

### **3.4 Descriptive Political Representation of Migrant Women in Austria**

Wüst notes the understandable expectation that the composition of parliaments should reflect the composition of a society. This does not necessarily lead to the demand that all population groups must be exactly proportionally represented in parliaments. Furthermore, as it became evident in 2.1, descriptive representation is not undebated. However, the proportion of politically underrepresented groups in parliaments is an indicator of social integration and equal opportunities. An approximate representation of a social group in political institutions, therefore, appears to be desirable. Hence a picture of the representation of migrant women in Austrian representative institutions namely the

national council, the federal council, the regional parliaments, and the municipal councils shall be drawn. To approach the representation of migrant women, beforehand the representation of women and migrants will be considered separately. This work assumes that the inclusion of MPs with an immigrant background is a step toward a more representative democracy in which diverse populations are adequately represented. It allows for a broader consideration of the concerns and interests of people from different backgrounds, including migrants and in our case migrant women. This helps to ensure that political decisions are more diverse, balanced, and equitable (Wüst 2016).

### **3.4.1 Descriptive Representation of Women**

In the present national council, out of the 183 deputies, 39,9 % are women. Since 1945, only once the share of women was higher – in the national council of 2019. Historically speaking an increase in the share of women could be recorded. In 1945 10 women were present as deputies in the National Council and until the early 1970s, the share of women in the National Council remained consistently low at around 5 % to 6 %. An upward trend only from the 1970s onwards started. The developments although were not free from fluctuations. For example, in 2006, after the elections, the proportion of women declined again for the first time after constantly increasing. The representation of women, therefore, has increased but slowly, however, we are still not in a situation of a fully equal representation of women in the national council. Additionally, when examining the representation of women in Austrian National Council committees, it becomes apparent that family, education, health, and equal treatment are predominantly regarded as women-related matters, while security and finance are perceived as more associated with men (Parlament Österreich 2023).

What we can also note are large differences in gender parity between the five parliamentary clubs. The female deputies are distributed as follows: ÖVP: 26, SPÖ: 19, FPÖ: 4, Grüne: 15, NEOS 8, without any club: 1. The share of women ranges from 13.33 % club of the FPÖ to 57.69 % club of the Green Party. In the middle, we can find the Neos with 53 %, the SPÖ with 50 %, and the ÖVP with almost 37 %. Two parties, therefore, have a higher representation of women than of men. Austria's case confirms the pattern in which left parties tend to incorporate women more in their parliamentary clubs than right parties (Parlament Österreich n.d.).

In the federal council, 23 out of the 60 deputies are women. The Green parliamentary group has the highest proportion of women at 66.67%, while the FPÖ parliamentary group has the fewest women at 30% (Parlament Österreich n.d.).

In the regional parliaments until the 1980s the share of women was low namely under 10%. Also, here in the last decades, there has been a remarkable increase. Today, in 2023, in Vorarlberg, close to 50 % of the representatives in the federal parliament are female, specifically comprising 18 out of the total 30 deputies (Landtag Vorarlberg n.d.). In Tyrol, we can see that out of 36 members, 15 are women and in the federal state of Salzburg, there are 14 female representatives out of a total of 36 (Landtag Salzburg n.d.; Landtag Tirol n.d.). We can observe a lower share of women in the federal parliament of Upper Austria, where 20 out of 56 delegates are female, and an even lower representation of women in Lower Austria where only 13 out of 56 deputies are female politicians – only slightly over 20% (Landtag Niederösterreich n.d.; Landtag Salzburg n.d.; Landtag Oberösterreich n.d.) In Burgenland 12 deputies of 36 are women (Landtag Burgenland 2023).

Moving further on the local level women are highly underrepresented – only 24 % of the politicians on a local level in the municipal councils are females and in 40 municipalities in Austria not a single female is represented. The proportion of women in the municipal council is higher the larger the community is. In communities with fewer than 1 000 residents, the average proportion of women is 20 %, while in communities with over 100,000 residents, it reaches 46 % (Stainer-Hämmerle 2023).

In the federal state of Vienna for municipal and district councils, the proportion of women has increased compared to the last municipal and district elections. The proportion of elected representatives at both the Vienna state and municipal levels is 37 %. Out of the seven executive city councillors who lead the seven business groups of the municipal government, four are women. The opposition parties have an additional five non-executive members of the city senate: four men and one woman (Stadt Wien n.d.).

The degree of networking plays a significant role in the context of municipal politics. Networking is a crucial part of politics on the municipal level and men tend to be better connected than women. Hence support programs for women on this level are especially relevant to set incentives (Dörfler and Kaindl 2019). An augmentation of the portion of

women on the local seems relevant because local political activities act as a first step into higher political functions. In multiple cases, for example, a local political position is a preliminary stage of a seat in the federal parliament (Steininger 2000).

### **3.4.2 Descriptive Representation of Migrants and Migrant Women**

Documents of the Ministry of Integration clarify that in the Austrian political system, a person is perceived as a migrant or a person with a migratory history if one or both parents were born in another country (Heilemann 2021). To analyse the representative institutions, we will adhere to this definition. Regarding migrants, their representation in the Austrian parliament is not nearly as high as women's representation.

In the national council, out of the 183 deputies, 7 have a migration history, whereas 23 % of the Austrian population have a migration history – therefore a significant underrepresentation can be analysed. Migrant women are better represented than migrant men in the Austrian National Council. Out of the 7 people with a migration history, only two are men.

ÖVP and FPÖ both have no deputies whose parents or they were born abroad. The SPÖ has two deputies with a migratory background – both of them are women. Out of the 26 members of the National Council of the Green Club in Parliament, 5 people have a migration history in their family, one is a man. In total, the club has 11 male and 15 female deputies in the national council. There is one representative from the NEOS Party who has a migration background.

The descriptive representation of migrants in the federal parliaments apart from Vienna is practically non-existent. Only sporadically we can find one person with a migrant history in the federal parliaments of Austria, for example in Upper Austria, Ines Vukajlović is a deputy of the federal council for the Green Party (Landtag Oberösterreich n.d.). Individuals with migration history are indeed rather situated in urban areas than in rural areas and consequently, it is to be expected that in federal states with a high rural population, the degree of migrants in politics will be lower than in the capital, Vienna. But still, the degree of the actual underrepresentation is disproportional.

In Vienna the federal parliament and the municipal council are represented by the same deputies therefore the 100 members of the Vienna City Council are simultaneously members of the regional parliament. 12 of the 100 members in the Viennese Federal

Council/municipal council have a migration history – being the only regional institution that surpasses the 10 % share. It has to be noted that Vienna is the federal state and city with the highest share of people with migration history. 49 % of the population can be categorized as migrants of the first or second generation (Statistik Austria 2022). Considering this number, the 12 % share of the Viennese federal/municipal council seems very low.

On the municipal level in the other federal states of Austria, the representation of migrants and the representation especially migrant women is very marginal. Also regarding the share of female mayors Austria is the EU's laggard. Summarised we can say that Migrant representation in the Austrian parliament is remarkably low, indicating significant underrepresentation. Interestingly, migrant women have better representation than migrant men in the National Council, with only two men out of the 7 deputies with a migration history. The ÖVP and FPÖ parties do not have any deputies with a migration background. In contrast, the SPÖ has two female deputies with a migratory background. The Green Party has five members with a migration history, with just one being a man. Representation of migrants in federal parliaments outside Vienna is extremely scarce. Vienna, with its highest migrant population, only has 12 out of 100 members with a migration history in its federal/municipal council, which, given Vienna's demographic composition, seems disproportionately low. The representation of migrants particularly migrant women is exceedingly minimal at the municipal level in other Austrian federal states. Austria also falls behind in terms of the proportion of female mayors within the EU.

For the sake of completeness, the number of women and migrant women in the European Parliament should be described. Out of 19 members elected to the European Parliament in Austria, eight are female politicians, which constitutes, 42.1 % (Zögernitz 2023) none of these women however are of an immigrant descendant.

### **3.5 Other Forms of Representation**

Only marginally, but there are projects and initiatives aimed at ensuring that the voices of migrants and refugees are heard. For example, the project empowering migrants' voices on Integration and inclusion policies. Part of this work is to support people who come to Austria in settling into the society. At the same time, raising awareness of successful

coexistence among people here on the ground - from volunteers to representatives of authorities, politics, and business is aimed at. The political participation of migrants shall be strengthened by encouraging them to see themselves as agents of inclusive policies and the special focus is on women. At the same time, local and regional authorities and institutions are supported in reaching out to migrants. In Graz, a new E-participation tool was the first of its kind in Austria and enables direct communication between the city government and all residents living in Graz. For people with a migration background, this can significantly strengthen political participation (Südwind Österreich, n.d.)

Another initiative aimed at giving migrants, especially individuals without Austrian citizenship a voice is the "Pass Egal" elections that have existed since 2013. It foresees that all people of voting age can cast their votes. This includes those who are excluded from official elections due to their non-Austrian citizenship. In addition, individuals with Austrian citizenship can cast solidarity votes. "Pass Egal" has been regularly held since 2013 about political elections at the federal and state levels. They complement and complete the official elections. The last nationwide "Pass Egal" election organised by SOS Mitmensch in collaboration with partners took place during the 2022 Federal Presidential Election. The "Pass Egal" election sends a signal for a more democratic Austria, as democracy thrives on participation, not exclusion. Casting a vote in the "Pass Egal" election is a strong statement against the exclusion from democratic participation (SOS Mitmensch, n.a.).

Outside the institutional forms of political representation, migrant associations can be found. In Austria, there are mainly two forms of migrant associations. Firstly, the post-migrant associations primarily deal with issues of anti-discrimination. The other form represents associations that are shaped by the sending country. However, associations do not hold any political mandate and the political demands tend to get lost (Valchars 2022).

### **3.6 Party lists**

When looking at the party lists of the last National Council elections, the picture is confirmed that parties do not place politicians with a migration history on promising positions. The diversity of the party lists of Austrian political parties seems to be very limited and discussions on this matter are non-existent (Bundesministerium für Inneres 2019a; 2019b).

In the last elections in 2019 in the list of two Austrian political parties that are represented in the Parliament individuals of immigrant descent could be found in the first ten positions. For the Green Party, Alma Zadic, who later became the minister of justice, and for the NEOS Yannis Shetti who is now a member of the national council (Bundesministerium für Inneres 2019a). The SPÖ did have individuals with a migration background on the party list, but they were predominantly found in the lower positions on the list (Bundesministerium für Inneres 2019b). The most promising positions are still being awarded to autochthon Austrian men. Also, autochthon women are represented – but still not to a degree of 50 %. The results already discussed for Germany in 2.1 context hold for Austria – migrants are in general not represented to a sufficient degree on party lists and they are represented to a higher degree in left parties.

Party lists however are decisive for those who will sit in parliament, so it's not surprising that women, migrants, and migrant women are just as underrepresented in the party lists as they are in representative institutions. The party lists shall be structured to represent the diversity of political views, interests, and ideologies that exist in Austrian society this is not the case at the moment. The significance of party lists is scarcely discussed, even though they constitute the foundation for the personnel that sits in the parliament.

### **3.7 Quotas**

The introduction of quotas for women in Austria is a highly debated topic and different opinions collide. Although research has shown predominantly positive effects that come with gender quotas, in the Austrian Parliament these have not been instituted so far. What does exist in Austria, however, is a quota for women in the civil service. In 2012 the quota was increased to 50 %. This is intended to guarantee that women and men are equally represented in the public sector. Since 2019, the share of women among members of the national council and federal councils however plays a role in club funding. If the proportion of women of a party club in the National Council exceeds 40 % then the sum of a club's funding for members of the National Council increases by 3 %. The same rule applies to the clubs in the Federal Council (Institut für Parlamentarismus and Demokratiefragen 2023).

Some parties in addition have introduced a party internal voluntary quota system for women. The Greens party aims the highest with a 50 % representation of women in

functions and electoral lists. This rule was introduced in 1987 when the party was founded and is integrated into the party statute. At least a 40 % representation of women in electoral proposals and among functionaries is the aim of the SPÖ and the ÖVP. In 1985 the SPÖ decided to introduce a quota of 25 % for electoral lists. In 1993 the determination was made to raise this percentage to 40 % until latest the year 2015. This regulation is incorporated in the party statute. Nevertheless, if this quota will not be fulfilled no sanctions will ensue. Therefore the regulation can not be categorized as an obligation (Steininger 2000). In 1995, the ÖVP also implemented a requirement stipulating that women should constitute 40 % of the representation. However, this regulation was not incorporated into the party statute. The FPÖ is strictly against quota regulation, and the NEOS also have not introduced quotas so far, but they do not speak out against it. As we can see apart from the Green Party, no party was able to agree on a women's quota that corresponds to the proportion of women in the total population (Dörfler and Kaindl 2019).

Furthermore, experiences show that mandatory quotas are not necessarily effective. Also, placing women on party lists in various positions is not particularly promising for an outcome in which women get elected. A low placement of women on electoral lists, especially a placement after the first 10 list ranks, leads to female underrepresentation as we have seen when examining the party lists. Women still tend to be less strongly represented in the parties' election proposals, especially in the top positions (Hughes 2011).

In 2020 the former vice mayor of Vienna, Birgit Hebein, brought forth the idea of preferring migrants in city-related jobs and introducing a quota (KURIER ONLINE 2020). Also, the SPÖ in the last years has stressed repeatedly the importance of including migrants in the Austrian political sphere. The ÖVP and FPÖ however see no need for a further integration of people with migration history in the Austrian political system.

No political party has introduced quotas for migrants in their candidate lists for national or federal elections. It is noteworthy that in the broader political discourse, a broader discussion on quotas for people with migration backgrounds has not been raised so far unlike in other countries such as Germany. In recent years, there has been a small but increasing chorus advocating for a quota system for migrants in the German political sphere (Tank 2017).



The traditional mandatory quotas for the federal states' representation in the Austrian Parliament, according to which all federal states have to be represented fairly, reveal that quotas are realizable and effective in the Austrian political system if they are politically wanted. It is crucial though to understand that quotas are not a simple solution. The aim is to convince the parties themselves that diversity is a clear benefit for everyone. However, to achieve this goal, quotas are valuable tools (Institut für Parlamentarismus und Demokratiefragen 2023).

We can see that in four out of five parliamentary parties, there exists a political will to increase the representation of women partially through party-internal quota systems. The situation for people with a migration biography is different. In this case, only two political parties partially exhibit a willingness to strengthen their representation and none of the parties has introduced measures that would strengthen these.

#### **4 Critical Aspects of Representative Democracy**

As we can see through the analysis people of migrant descent are highly underrepresented in Austria's political system and concrete measures to improve this issue are non-existent. We can observe a peak of underrepresentation of migrants and migrant women on the federal and local levels. It is indisputable that this represents a democratic deficit. The intersectional approach makes the underrepresentation of multiple marginalized groups as migrant women very clear. Besides the discussion on how to make changes in the existing system, this situation gives a stimulus for the discussion on the system itself – the system of representative democracy.

First, I want to consider how changes in the system could take place. One option is to overthink how to increase the participation and representation of migrant women by expanding the participation for those with Austrian citizenship. Here efforts on a local level can be made and a process of encouragement can occur. Also, an emphasis on individual participative resources might be employed. An emphasis on education for migrant children might increase the individual participative resources. However, even if the rate of migrants and migrant women with Austrian citizenship might increase, this would not directly lead to changes for migrants who do not possess Austrian citizenship and it would not lead to changes in the political representation.

To believe in a change within the system seems almost utopian at this point as it would require a significant shift in the balance of power in the Austrian parliament. As Valchars highlights the two political parties that have advocated for the right to vote for non-citizens are far from attaining a majority to make changes in this matter. Isolated voices suggest that there should be simplifications in the citizenship law. However, there is little realistic prospect that this will happen as the law has not changed in decades and major political forces are against it. The noninclusive and nonintegrative character of Austrian structures and institutions makes it imperative to think of alternative approaches to the existing system – also to question and challenge existing power structures (Valchars 2022).

Therefore, I argue that we must go beyond thinking of changes within the system and we need to challenge existing power structures. To look at how these existing power structures might be challenged a discussion of representative democracy through the lens of political theory shall first be initiated.

Political theory can be helpful in understanding, classifying, and illuminating the structural problems of democracy. From the perspective of political theory, the crisis in democracy manifests in political representation. Hence, one part of the discussion chapter aims to look at representative democracy critically through the lens of political theory (Diehl 2016), thereby a focus on migrant women in Austria will be kept.

The first part of the critical reflection will reflect on the view of political theory on the issue of political participation and representative democracy of migrants from a historical perspective and discuss these critically. For example, it is possible to interpret some of the broader philosophical principles of Aristoteles and Rosseau or Kant to gain an understanding of their perspectives on the political representation of migrants to see how migration in the context of political representation can be discussed. All of them had an impact on the development of modern societies and modern political systems. Modern political systems, including the Austrian system, are based on a variety of ideas, theories, and political traditions developed over time by a variety of thinkers and theorists. These systems are often democratic and representative, but they have evolved, influenced by different political theories, historical events, and sociocultural contexts. Much of the Western political thought is not directly grounded but influenced by the thinking of

Aristoteles and therefore it seems relevant to shed light on his ideas on migration and migrants (Nail 2015).

We can find exclusion in Aristoteles' articulations on politics. According to him, political participation and representation were crucial for citizens to flourish as individuals and collectively. Aristotle's concept of citizenship however was often limited to a specific group of people, excluding women, slaves, and non-citizens, social status was connected to one's inclusion in the polis. Individuals who did not speak Greek and who did not belong to a polis in his eyes were barbarians. A core point attributed to the category of barbarians was the inability to use political speech and together with the non-Greek status it made these people inferior. Chiefly, the term barbarism represents a political inferiority and an incapacity that makes political life impossible. If people do not have a city-state in consequence, they can not have political rationality, and conversely. Hence, the migrant barbarian embodies three interconnected ideas that are linked to the city-state. Firstly the incapacity to communicate in the city-state's language then the incapacity to engage in the city-state's rational discourse and lastly an exceptionally high degree of geographical movement about the city-state (Nail 2015). The incapacity to engage in the city's state rational discourse is a situation that is comparable to the situation of irregular and regular citizens nowadays.

Not only perspectives on migration but also thoughts on representative democracy shall be illuminated. One of the main opponents in the course of history of representative democracy was Jean-Jacques Rousseau. In the context of criticism towards representative democracy, considering the work of Rousseau seems unavoidable. He is one of the first and strongest criticisms of the system of representative democracy. In his writing "*The Social Contract*" he argues that a representative government is deeply flawed and can not be seen as truly democratic because elected representatives are often motivated by their self-interest and are not truly representative of the people they used to serve. He was an advocator of a concept of indivisible and inalienable popular sovereignty, which is not compatible with the principle of representation. Also, according to him, the moral equality of the citizens is not given in a system of representative democracy. Therefore, his ideas would imply that the representatives need to be identical to the representatives. His criticisms can be categorized as action-oriented.

While not directly discussing the topic of migration his ideas on citizenship and the social contract imply that individuals who migrate to a new society should ideally become part of that social contract by adhering to its laws and norms. He furthermore emphasized the importance of civic virtue and patriotism in a well-ordered society and stated that citizens should prioritize the common good and the welfare of the whole community over their interests. This could be interpreted as suggesting that migrants should assimilate into their new society and contribute to its well-being. However, assimilation is highly problematic and there is a need for the acknowledgment of different identities (Geißel, n.d.).

Generally, the points of criticism are that citizens are not given the chance to participate in decisions that concern them. Also, the fact that disadvantaged groups are underrepresented and that they reproduce social inequalities is common. More direct involvement is advocated for. Through the analysis of the political representation of migrant women in Austria, we can additionally criticize firstly the determination of who the citizens are and secondly that groups exposed to various forms of inequality have little access to representative institutions. I would like to explore how the considerations about representative democracy by Rousseau factor into these points of criticism. He believes that the success of democratic participation depends on economic conditions (Geißel, n.d.). However, in the end, it can be identified that he is opposed to the legislative function of democracy but advocates more strongly for the executive function of democracy. Therefore, we can say that his points of criticism in no way advocate for the rights of migrants of migrant women.

Opposed to this type of critique we can find an action-oriented critique of representation. The point made is here that citizens through representation are denied the opportunity to act politically and participate themselves in the political arena. The most prominent representative of this form of critique is Hannah Arendt. She makes the point that a passive role is given to the electorate and only the elected officials have the chance to engage in politics. However, it must be said that the criticism is not directed at representation itself, but rather it criticizes the point that the delegation of political agency by citizens to representatives takes place. At the same time, she praises the representation of different opinions in elected bodies (Geißel, n.d.).

Hannah Arendt's writings did not focus specifically on the political representation of marginalized groups. Still, she made remarks on the enablement of individuals affected by exclusion to become more visible in political education and subsequently in the public sphere. She notes that society as a whole should be made more inclusive. Excluded people need a greater public presence and expanded access. These accesses should be made possible through inclusion in all areas of society, be it in the world of work, in the cultural sector, and especially in politics. Second, civic education should be made more inclusive. This means, first, that inclusion should be given greater consideration as a teaching topic. This involves both basic expertise, such as about social and political structures that stand in the way of inclusion, and an understanding of the specific life situations of marginalized groups, their political interests, and the resulting conflicts with society as a whole, for example through structural discrimination. Lastly, political education should be designed to enable people affected by exclusion to become aware of their interests and to find ways to advocate for them. It's about encouraging and empowering them to speak and act actively with others and giving them access to educational opportunities in the political sphere (Meyer, Hilpert, and Lindmeier 2020).

In his book, *The Political Representation: Genesis and Crisis of the Concept* Giuseppe Duso explores the evolution and challenges to the concept of political representation. While discussing all points raised by him would go beyond the scope of this work some points that are relevant for the representation of marginalized groups shall be discussed. An emphasis on the central importance of representation for the political form points to the originality of the problem and urges us to contemplate a more radical question about the meaning and structure of representation. He discusses the issue of the people. Only the people, the collective subject formed by all, are entitled to the faculty of dictating the law because only the people cannot harm themselves. However, when it is said that the people are bound by the laws they have established for themselves this statement is understood as the realization of freedom, that is, of the independence of the will of the collective subject, one sets in motion a way of thinking whose logic is not without difficulties and perhaps contradictions. The sovereign people who make the law and the people who obey do not form a unified subject that is immediately identical to itself (Duso 2006).

A more recent critique of representative democracy is made by Tomba. He disapproves of the concept of representative democracy contemporary because the nation-state recognizes only the concept of a "free mandate". Every representative, irrespective of their particular geographical constituency, stands for the collective "people." Each representative articulates on behalf of the entirety of the people, rather than representing a specific segment. Hence, a law endorsed by the majority of representatives is seen as an embodiment of the people's intent, compelling every citizen's compliance. The concept of the free mandate therefore emerges because of the notion of the indivisibility of the people's sovereignty and its political representation. It acknowledges the individual as the primary force surpassing the constraints of the societal and political structure, striving to alter external conditions as part of its personal growth. As a result, insurgent universality aligns with the progress of three types of emancipation—political, social, and human—within a universal framework where distinctions coexist and engage with one another, rather than being eliminated. The historicist way of reading history in linear and progressive terms does not allow democracy to present itself apart in terms of a reconfiguration of pre-modern and pre-capitalist elements (Tomba 2019).

Also debates about Pitkin's straightforward definition emerged and scholars argue that her definition leaves the concepts of political representation underspecified (Saward 2006; Rehfeld 2006; Cotta and Russo 2020). The criticisms of her work and most of the discussion of accounts in political representation involve four components. The relationship between the represented and the representatives, the object of representation, normative criteria to evaluate representation, and the political context in which representation takes place (Cotta and Russo 2020).

A fundamental criticism of the standard account of political representation was made by Rehfeld and Saward. Rehfeld criticizes the standard understanding of political representation and points out that it may not be suited to explain worldwide political representation. Representatives often do not look out for the substantive interests of those who elected them and argue that political representation per se is not a democratic phenomenon. But what is political representation then if it is not seen as authoritarian, accountable, and looking out for the represented interests? According to Rehfeld, political representation manifests itself through rules of recognition and he makes a call for a general theory of political representation. This general theory explains the action of

political representation in democratic and non-democratic contexts as well as in formal and informal contexts. Therefore, if an audience decides that one is their representative, this representative truly is the representative of the audience, simply because the audience accepts this person as such (Rehfeld 2006). According to Rehfeld, political representation can be described as an action by one or more person(s) B that makes a person(s) A appear to be sufficiently present before an audience P by the requirements determined in function F (Rehfeld 2006).

Saward stated that discussions on the issue of representation must focus more on its dynamics before further working on its forms. He calls attention to representational claims outside of state institutions and refers to the plurality of representational claims of social actors and the culturally embedded practices of asserting these claims as legitimate. He views representation not as something that results from an election but instead as a process where claims are being made - in electoral and many other contexts. Representation is a process of making and receiving claims – in, between, and outside electoral cycles (Saward 2006).

Tormey expresses the thought that not everyone wants to be governed by representatives and that representation is increasingly contested today. Unsatisfied with politicians and representative institutions, many new political movements have disapproved of representative politics (Tormey 2015).

Pitkin herself 2004 criticized her work and commented that she saw democracy and representation as going hand in hand. She admits that her belief that modern societies and democracies can only be representative has been challenged in the last decades (Pitkin 2004).

The exploration underscores the need for a broader understanding of political representation that considers diverse perspectives and challenges the conventional assumptions of democracy. It prompts a re-evaluation of traditional democratic structures and urges for inclusivity, greater public presence, and expanded access, especially for marginalized groups like migrant women in Austria. Overall, the discussion advocates for a more comprehensive and dynamic understanding of political representation that aligns with the evolving socio-political realities of the world.

#### **4.1 Cosmopolitanism, Citizenship and Transnationalism**

In our analysis, we also looked at the Austrian state institutions however other factors need to be included in the analysis as well. Transnationalism and Cosmopolitanism shall be discussed firstly in the global context and then while looking at the Austrian case.

Cosmopolitanism is a philosophical and ethical worldview that emphasizes that all people belong to a single global community, the word kosmopolis means that a political community is open to the world. It suggests that our responsibilities and loyalties should transcend national and cultural boundaries. Cosmopolitanism promotes the idea that individuals should recognize and accept their common humanity, prioritize the well-being of all people, and work toward a more inclusive and just world. Furthermore, a cosmopolitan perspective shall advocate for an inclusive approach to political representation, ensuring that the voices and perspectives of migrant women are heard and considered in decision-making processes at local, national, and global levels and it encourages the formation of transnational networks and advocacy groups that work towards the political representation and empowerment of migrant women. These networks can bridge gaps between different countries and regions, advocating for common rights and policies for migrant women worldwide. However, it will be shown that cosmopolitanism in this context can also be seen critically (Nail 2015).

Immanuel Kant developed concepts aimed at the idea of a universal moral law and a general human rights order. However, also Kants' writings show an exclusionary attitude towards migrants. He states that from the inception of the ancient city-state, human societies have gradually broadened their inclusivity and should persist in this trajectory. Cosmopolitanism protects migrants from slavery but only while benefitting the true winners of cosmopolitanism namely citizens and states. Therefore, we can say that cosmopolitan institutions that are composed of nation-states protect the interests of citizens and states but at the disadvantage of migrants. Several theorists provide a current example of this. The UN establishes the right to leave a country as a human right but not the right to enter a country which presents a significant contradiction (Nail 2015; Song 2018). I argue that a system in which migrants who do not hold citizenship of a country but are part of the economic system and pay taxes can also be seen from this perspective.



We can see a pattern where some rights are given to migrants with status but migrants without any status are left behind and don't even have basic human rights. Therefore the cosmopolitanism of nation-states is not enough to provide for the protection and inclusion of global migrants (Nail 2015).

The second major type of cosmopolitanism sees the possibility of NGOs providing rights and global justice and is called civic cosmopolitanism. Civic Cosmopolitanism, also referred to as democratic or political cosmopolitanism, is a perspective within cosmopolitanism that emphasizes the importance of active civic engagement, democratic principles, and the role of global citizens in shaping international policy and guidelines. It encourages individuals to participate in the democratic process at the local, national, and international levels to promote the common good and global justice. Indeed, NGOs can provide substantial assistance, but the point is that through this process they can not give migrants a political voice in the long term. We can see that there are two major types of cosmopolitanism, but both do not grasp the inclusion of migrants (Nail 2015).

All sovereign states claim the right to control their borders. Citizenship therefore works as a filter. States impose particular limitations on certain groups of nationals, such as implementing visa requirements, while simultaneously keeping their borders more open for others, such as citizens of the European Union who are relocating to fellow member states (Nail 2015). This is exactly what can be observed in Austria, EU citizens have it much easier in many areas, for example in the labour market. Additionally, they have the right to vote at the local level. The historically largest migrant communities in Austria, the Turkish and Serbian ones, do not have these rights because they are not part of the European Union (Günay and Dhizic 2021)

We already discussed the important role of citizenship in the political representation of migrants in 2.1. The meaning of citizenship in the context of cosmopolitanism is also an important aspect. Cosmopolitanism emphasizes a universal perspective, emphasizing belonging to all humanity across national or state boundaries. This contrasts with the emphasis on citizenship and national identity (Nail 2015).

Isin posits that acts of citizenship can vary in authorship, visibility, intentionality, and collectiveness. According to this perspective on citizenship, what matters is not the status of the individual, but the nature of the action itself. Citizenship is not a possession but

rather an identity and a practice through which belonging and privilege are constructed and this shows us that the history of citizenship is a history of exclusion and marking of boundaries. The role of the state is changing in the context of globalization. Nevertheless, the issue arises regarding how this suggests a model of citizenship based on essential connections between citizens, the state, and territory. According to Isin citizenship isn't strictly confined to formal membership in a nation-state, although it is one aspect of citizenship. It also represents being included within any political community, consequently entailing the essential exclusion of others from that particular entity. Here the term insurgent citizenship emerges. By that, the particular struggles and strategies of slaves, women and others cast as outsiders at different historical moments are meant. The term comprises the idea that citizenship is not just about rights and responsibilities within a legal/ political framework, but it can also involve active engagement to change and recreate society's norms and institutions. It usually occurs in a situation when people feel marginalized, excluded, or disempowered within the existing political system (Isin 2009; McNevin 2006). Instead of passively accepting the status quo, they actively mobilize to bring about change. This form of citizenship represents a challenge to traditional power structures and seeks to create a more equitable and just society. Restrictive citizenship is hard to justify not only ethically but also seems conceptually incoherent and represents a liberal asymmetry position (Nail 2015). Insurgent citizenships lead to thinking about alternative formulations of citizenship. Their conflicts are clashes of citizenship and not only protest and violence. Differentiated citizenship takes into consideration various positions, interests, and identities of citizens that emerge due to gender, racial, ethnic, and religious discrimination (McNevin 2006).

Migrants view citizenship as an elusive objective, the lack of which would consign them to a perpetual secondary status in comparison to citizens, constraining their choices and impeding their plans for self-fulfillment. The legal prerequisites mark a crucial juncture in the lives of migrants aspiring to acquire citizenship. This insight is drawn from numerous interviews, suggesting that migrants often seek citizenship (as a form of acquiring nationality) primarily to access enhanced citizenship rights. However, this does not imply that all migrants aspire to become citizens; rather, it underscores the challenge of linking rights to nationality (Pajnik and Bajt 2013).

A recent example of migrant cosmopolitanism is the sans papier movement in 1996 in France. Here the dimensions of the political representation and participation of migrants without residence permits emerged. An autonomous organisation of undocumented migrants was founded with the Sans papier movement. At the core of the struggle was their demand to speak for themselves and in their name. The sans papier represents a long tradition of migration in France. High numbers of guest workers from Mediterranean countries and its colonies in the post-war years immigrated or were imported to France. Families of guest workers arrived and later, a new wave of asylum seekers arrived. However, the conditions for migrants worsened significantly under neoliberal policies. For example, under competitive conditions. French employers are increasingly depend on an informal labor force. In certain industries, subcontracted employment arrangements and the utilization of affordable, adaptable, and compliant labor are dominant. Most of the people had entered France legally and were pushed into an illegal status due to the tightening of consecutive laws that allowed authorities to cease renewing their residence permits, alongside the introduction of limited access to asylum rights, granted only sparingly. The Sans-Papiers both challenge and reaffirm the territorial and citizenship boundaries they are fighting against (McNevin 2006). Immigrants launched a resistance movement that redrew the boundaries of grassroots immigrant politics in France. Their demands contained the legalization of their status by the French state. Their demands soon extended and sans-papiers collectives have since appeared throughout the European Union (Raissiguier 2010). As we can see cosmopolitanism here did not happen in the voting booths; it happened in the streets. The results of the struggles of the sans papier movement after many years were the win of several important battles for their papers, rights, and more inclusion in French society but still there is much to be done. Furthermore, the rights were not enacted simply because beneficent leaders had broad ideas about cosmopolitan justice. These rights were established because starving migrants were publicly beaten, had experienced racial discrimination, and were expelled by the police (Nail 2015).

Through the discussion of the sans papier movement, we can shed light on the topic of political belonging. The term political belonging describes the connections between political community, political identity, and political practice and it frames how an individual is located concerning others and the agency one enjoys in that context. Political

belonging however should not be defined by the state as it is the case at the moment. Only concerning the state and its citizens, the concept of irregular migration exists and policing of borders is justified. The movement is an exemplification of a top-down form of struggle for citizenship. Currently, the Westphalian state system is the primary framework for representing political affiliation. Irregular migrants are perceived as outsiders, even if they are integrated into neoliberal markets. The Sans-Papiers contribute to shaping both the city and the state from which they are excluded. Within these spaces, a redefined understanding is emerging regarding who is considered a part of the community and who is not. This includes perceptions of the structure and boundaries of the community, as well as the validity of claims relating to new forms of borders. The movement addresses the question of what occurs when irregular migrants engage politically and assert their rights in communities from which they are excluded, and how these assertions impact prevailing perceptions of political affiliation (McNevin 2006).

It is relevant in this context to understand that the state is not the guarantor of protection and security for all groups in a society. They are only temporarily allowed in a state but do not have the right to stay, furthermore, their right to participate in political life is non-existent. Balibar states that the wider political community owes the Sans-Papiers a great debt for the reinvigoration of citizenship (Nail 2015).

In Austria, we can not see a comparable movement to the Sans Papier movement. The emergence of a movement similar to the Sans Papier in Austria would depend on various factors. For example, the treatment of undocumented migrants, public opinion, political climate, and the presence of advocacy groups or individuals working on migration-related issues.

So going back to Aristotele's idea about the polis states and institutions have indeed opened the polis walls throughout the civilization process but there has always been a group on the other side of these walls namely migrants that were economically, territorially, and politically displaced. In the modern world, we can see a pattern where migrants were taken away everything and needed to go to work wherever the capitalists desired, as we can see with the movements of the guest workers in the Austrian context (Nail 2015). As long as they were economically needed and Austrian politics strongly advocated to recruit them. The crisis of representative democracy and economic and

environmental might force us to think of different pathways to political modernity, namely pathways that have not been followed and are not channeled into the idea of the political unity of the nation-state.

Transnational migration is connected to social, cultural, political, and economic facets. Social remittances play a significant role in disseminating standards across different geographical areas. Migrants uphold transnational ties with their families, and the act of migration itself can lead to changes in family structures, particularly when one or both parents migrate. Notably, women's migration is profoundly influenced by gender roles and hierarchies, which, in turn, result in modifications to gender roles (Sager 2016).

Voting or supporting political parties in national politics as well as regional politics can be described as Political Transnationalism. It includes and affects collective identities and conceptions of citizenship (Sager 2016)

The issue is that the system of representative democracy does not take into account transnational identities. Those who are elected to represent them namely deputies of the parliament for example come to appear less as representatives and more as politicians. Therefore, transnational political practices shall be discussed in this context. Activities, behaviours, and engagements that cross national borders and involve individuals, groups, or organisations in political actions or interactions that extend beyond the confines of a single country can be described as transnational political practices and they represent a challenge to the role of the states. The receiving state shapes the various forms of political mobilization by setting boundaries of inclusion, exclusion, and citizenship for migrants. If there is easy access for migrants to relevant political gatekeepers in the receiving country namely to trade unions, political parties, and NGOs their political activities will be channeled into the political system and would influence the political ways of negotiating (Østergaard-Nielsen 2003).

Identity politics constitutes a political strategy wherein individuals prioritize issues relevant to their racial, ethnic, or sexual identity, building exclusive alliances while moving away from traditional party politics. Can identity politics in the context of the political representation of women have an impact? Identity politics lies at the heart of political contestation today. It is argued to play a major role at the ballot box the question that arises is how and why identities become politicized and mobilized for political ends

and how they may shape political behaviour. Here we shall discuss not only the role of identity in elections and voting but beyond that look at the significance of identity politics in protest politics from below and political representation (Anderson 2013). In the 2<sup>nd</sup> half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century in the US political movements such as second-wave feminism, Black Civil Rights in the U.S., gay and lesbian liberation, and the American Indian movements emerged. With these movements, identity politics, as a form of structuring social movements, that are closely linked to the notion that certain societal factions face oppression emerged. In other words, identity politics suggest that being identified as a woman or belonging to the African-American community, for instance, renders individuals particularly susceptible to cultural domination.

When observing the Austrian case and many other countries states of the world, we can see a clear distinction between Us and Them through the classification into migrant and citizen. This line is not clear as people with a migration history do have Austrian citizenship. However, the divide begins when migrants who have lived for years or decades in the country do not have a citizenship status. The concept of a migrant is not only a legal construct but also a normative one therefore representing significant challenges for technocratic policies. A normative construct is an idea, concept, or belief that is built upon social norms, values, or standards of what is seen as "normal" or "appropriate" within a particular society or culture. Often it incorporates judgments about how things should be rather than describing how they are. Normative constructs can influence the way people perceive and interact with the world, shaping their attitudes, behaviours, and decisions (Anderson 2013). In the context of migrants, this can mean that society has certain norms and expectations about who or what a migrant should be or how they should behave, and these norms can influence policies and attitudes toward migrants.

Representation politics manifest when an individual belonging to a marginalized group and aligning with a specific identity is granted a degree of influence within a predominant institution to advocate for the interests of that particular group. Identity politics in contrast raise political consciousness as a disruption of existing power dynamics through organizing and fighting against repression based on political identities takes place. Building grassroots power and self-determination is not possible within representation

politics and a weakening and silencing of oppressed people's power takes place (Günay and Dhizic 2021).

Günay and Dhizic in their study on the transnational political participation of Turkish and Serbian Migrants in Vienna make some important remarks in this context. They ask how social identity shapes the engagement of migrants and assume that belonging to a political group is influenced by social identity. There is a migrant identity in transnational spaces and not only socialization but also shaped by experiences of discrimination shape political participation and engagement in Austria (Günay and Dhizic 2021). They furthermore highlight the importance of transnationalism. Political identity can not be seen as something attached only to the sending country or only to the receiving country, the transnational dimension of migrants needs to be considered. In the last years there has indeed been a shift towards a perspective that considers the transnational dimension where the recognition of national structures is still existent but also other important factors such as personal, cultural, and political relationships are being acknowledged. Personal experiences and social contacts build transnational identities, and it is relevant to not think within the either-or categories. Political engagement can relate to structures and issues of the sending country, and transnational experiences can become a source of knowledge. Transnational identities allow the inclusion of hybrid, multiple identities, and transnational spaces allow multilocality –belonging to multiple places. Transnational connections must therefore be seen as a reality and as a chance (Günay and Dhizic 2021).

The post-migrant perspective follows the idea that society is not measured anymore by the categories of migration and integration but rather that the discussion shifts around privileges and equality. This point of view suggests that in fact, categories of migration, ethnic belonging, and race are constantly (re) produced through discourse while attempting to overcome them. A society in the postmigration phase should strive to combat stereotypes, prejudice, and discrimination against migrants. A more inclusive and informed public discourse is essential to shape perceptions and attitudes, paving the way for fair and equitable representation (Bhugra 2004).

There is a turn towards complex territorialities, complex sovereignties, and complex non- or post-identities. Ordinary citizens depend less on the decisions of national politicians (Tormey 2015).

I argue that these considerations are very relevant for the political representation of migrant women in Austria. There needs to be more understanding and empowerment of transnational identities, also considering gender as Erel and Lutz argue the concept of the transnational serves as a valuable analytical framework for comprehending gendered dynamics across diverse contexts and at different scales. This encompasses perspectives ranging from supra-national and national levels to civic and educational institutions, social movements, and even the intricacies of familial connections and the construction of individual identities (Erel and Lutz 2012).

Methodological nationalism is the approach of scholars to the nation-state as the natural social and political form of the modern world needs to be put into question. It can be found in many disciplines and contexts. One aspect of methodological nationalism is the ignorance of the national framing of modernity. Methodological nationalism reproduces the othering of migrants in research and theory. It is a concept that is often applied in the social sciences, particularly in the fields of sociology, political science, and anthropology, and refers to a methodological approach or bias where researchers and scholars unconsciously or consciously assume that the nation-state is the natural or default unit of analysis when studying social, political, or cultural phenomena. In other words, it involves viewing the nation-state as the primary and often an exclusive framework for understanding and explaining various aspects of society and researchers may take for granted that the nation-state is the natural and unquestionable context for their research, often overlooking other forms of social organisation or identities. There are three variants of methodological nationalism. Ignorance appears when theorists presuppose the nation-state without understanding how the nation-state affects their theorizing. Often there is an ignorance of the fact of how ideas and categories such as citizen immigrants are shaped by nationalist background assumptions. Often Theorists are not aware of their nationalist presuppositions. A comparison between immigrant and native-born populations occurs without thinking about the internal heterogeneity of these groups or the usefulness of these categories. The second manifestation of methodological nationalism is naturalization. Here an acknowledgment of the nation-state is given but it is seen as unproblematic and not enough consideration is given to why the nation-state upholds its hegemonic status. Lastly, territorial limitation can be found in methodological nationalism. This happens when social scientists operate solely within the boundaries of



the state and therefore remove trans-border connections and processes from the picture (Wimmer and Schiller 2003; Sager 2016).

In summary, we can say that transnational migration addresses the challenges of political representation and identity politics, particularly in the context of migrants and gender, emphasizing the need for a transnational perspective in understanding these dynamics.

#### **4.2 The crisis of Representative Democracy, Alternative forms of Democracy, and Unconventional forms of Political Participation**

The marginal representation of migrant women leads us to new ways of thinking about political inclusion and the rise of the idea of more pluralistic representative politics emerges. Immigrants, who comprise a growing group in many European countries, are usually underrepresented in the political process as we have also confirmed in the Austrian case.

Many points argue why the current system of representative democracy is not suitable in the context of the participation of migrants. Democracies that do not defeat minority interests create issues from the perspective of political morality. Can we say that it is morally not fair for minority interests to lose to majorities? Additionally, the acceptability of democratic institutions is put into question when minorities lose out in these circumstances, democratic processes will not be accepted as fair and will therefore might result in not being stable (Pildes n.d.). Hence, the question emerges of if and how democracy is compatible with migration and transnational identities.

In the context of the political representation of minorities and migrants, democratic systems need to be designed in a way that the electoral process and the representative institutions empower minorities in a general universal way and enable every minority of a certain size to have political representation. Universal enhancement of minority representation exists and an exemplification is cumulative voting.

Cumulative voting is an electoral system in which voters have several votes and can either give them to one candidate added together or split them among several candidates. In this system, voters have as many votes as there are positions to be filled (e.g., several seats in a parliament). They can give all their votes to one candidate (i.e., cumulate their votes for that candidate) or split them among different candidates as they see fit. For example, if there are three open seats in an election and a voter has three votes, they can cast all three

votes for one candidate (by cumulating their votes for that candidate) or split them between two or three candidates. The goal is to allow voters to have a greater impact on election outcomes, especially in multi-member constituencies. Cumulative voting is often used to improve minority representation or to ensure that minority interests are considered in the electoral process. It is a proportional representation system that allows for a more diverse selection of candidates, including those who may not be a majority in a particular constituency (Cooper 2007). However, in the context of increasing political representation of migrants and migrant women, cumulative voting is not the most suitable tool. Minorities usually have citizenship, which is not always the case for migrants. Cumulative voting leads to changes only for individuals who have the right to vote. But what are other alternative models when it comes to the concrete involvement of migrants and migrant women in the Austrian context? The issue often is that innovations usually focus on one, separate identity category at a time and not multiple ones as it would be necessary in an intersectional approach (Wojciechowska 2019). Various organisations have spoken up for a model of co-governance that mixes representative and participatory democracy. This system would lead to a more responsive and accountable system of governance (European Network of Migrant Women 2021). Furthermore, most of the criticisms made on representative democracy come from the point of view of all people, and I propose that this criticism has to be made considering especially those people who are not even allowed to take part in the system of representative democracy or those who can only participate to a certain degree in it.

Democracy is not a static unchangeable political form; it can change in line with society. On the other hand, democracy is by no means free from destruction as Arendt underscores (Arendt 1963). Democracy manifests itself as inherently crisis-prone. Besides Populism and Manifestations of the identitarian closure of the people, a symptom of the crisis of democracy is the shift of political participation and representation outside the institutional framework. These for example consist of new forms of citizen participation. The important point in the context of political representation is that these concepts occur outside the standard relationship of representation and can give new impulses for democracy (Diehl 2016).

A highly debated topic as an alternative to representative democracy is the model of participatory democracy. With the crisis of representative democracy, the idea of

participatory democracy has been emphasized more. The core idea of this model is that citizens in the period between elections can participate in the political system. The direct involvement of the people in shaping laws, policies, and other government actions is emphasized, and the aim is to increase citizens' influence and engagement in governance, allowing them to have a more direct impact on the political process. Different degrees of participatory democracy can be categorized from the transformation of the complete decision-making power to the citizens up to keeping the decision-making power in the institution and only guaranteeing the citizens slightly more possibilities for participation. Strong democracy, deep democracy, or participatory democracy are a few approaches. The mutual idea is that the participation of citizens is a crucial part of democracy and that participatory democracy should be extended to all spheres. However, in none of these ideas, we can see an expansion of who the individuals are in the decision-making process. The point here again just as with cumulative voting is to give people who already have voting rights more participation (Kaim 2021).

But what impact do the models of participatory democracy have on marginalized groups specifically on migrant women? There is the idea that through new participation mechanisms, marginalized groups have more possibilities to be heard and engage in political activities. However, it has been argued that dialogue-oriented procedures often result in the interests of resource- and organisationally-powerful groups prevailing. Participative methods have the potential for inclusion but only through the use of specific recruitment mechanisms. Community initiatives must ensure an inclusive approach. For refugees to participate they need to be open, change their mindset and challenge their institutional relations according to the marginalized group's perspectives (Rast and Ghorashi 2018).

Within the scope of participative democracy, radical democracy is an approach that challenges traditional power structures. In doing so it goes beyond the practices of representative democracy and advocates for more direct citizen involvement in decision-making processes. It is sceptical that conventional democracies will engage the energies of ordinary citizens. Radical democrats emphasize deliberation and participation and favour a more deliberative democracy in which citizens potentially solve public problems by rationalising together. The goal of deliberative democracy is to go from bargaining,

interest aggregation, and power to the common reason of equal citizens as a dominant force in democratic processes (Cohen and Fung 2011).

Especially in the context of migrants, radical democracy represents a departure from traditional democratic structures. It advocates an inclusive, participatory, and transformational approach to democracy that aims to challenge and change established power relations, social norms, and discriminatory practices that marginalize migrants within democratic systems. In essence, radical democracy might be a response to the shortcomings of traditional democratic models that often fail to adequately address the specific challenges and experiences of immigrant communities. These challenges include social, economic, and political inequalities, limited representation, assimilation pressures, and exclusion from decision-making processes. Within the framework of radical democracy, migrant voices are heard and their agency is recognized and respected. In particular, migrant women are perceived as a distinct and significant population group with specific needs, goals, and contributions to society. This approach emphasizes active engagement, dialogue, and collaboration among migrant women, migrants, and the broader society to strive for a more just and equitable democratic system (Cohen and Fung 2011).

The criticism of the competitive representation of radical democrats addresses three political values: responsibility, equality, and autonomy. The value of equality is specifically relevant in terms of the representation of marginalized groups. Radical democrats underline that modern representative democracy achieved to bring the idea that people should be treated as having equal importance in the processes of collective decision-making systems. But they also highlight that formal political equality should not depend on property qualifications, gender, race, or social status which in the representative democracies however is the case, social and economic inequalities shape opportunities for political influence within systems of representation (Cohen and Fung 2011). Radical democrats believe that participation and deliberation lead to an increase in political equality. Regarding deliberation because it mitigates the power of greater resources with the strength of stronger arguments. Expanding participation may be the best strategy for addressing the inequalities that result from asymmetric concentration of interests (Cohen and Fung 2011).

Barber is an advocate of strong and radical democracy in contrast to Rousseau he does not assume a *Volonté Générale* and focuses on the negotiation of political content through which citizens learn to make decisions oriented towards the common good. He states that representation is not compatible with freedom because individuals can only be free if through deliberating and deciding together, they can take part in political decisions that affect their lives. At the local level, self-organization can take place. In manageable units, could debate and decide on their matters, and power and responsibility lie in their hands. Systemic turn encompasses participatory elements, maintained alongside representative democracy (Barber 2014).

How do migrants and refugees manage to organise themselves and build political movements when they do not have any rights? Radical democracy draws them as subjects and not only as victims and as demos of democracy from the point of view of states and national communities, democracy and migration are opposed to each other. Schwietz developed a radical democratic practice theory and contributed to debates by proposing an approach of a theory of radical democracy as practice as an alternative to the often-criticized concepts of radical democracy as a strategy of hegemony or a political regime of agonism. He challenges the approaches of victimization to migration and builds up on the work of Rancière, Balibar, Laclau, and Mouffe who have all contributed to the conceptualization of radical democracy theory. He aims to challenge the ones fighting for equality and freedom as victims and instead conceive them as political subjects and as demos of democracy. He takes as an example the protest marches of migrants in Germany in 2012 and argues that the protest march can be understood as a paradigmatic case for highlighting key aspects of the theory of radical democracy as practice. The democratic can be enacted despite the marginalizing mechanisms of hegemonic border and democratic regimes and challenge them. A concept of democratic difference was developed that makes a differentiation between democratic regimes and the fundamental principle of democratic of equality in real existing democracies established by state constitutions and democratic practices where quality liberty is in the foreground. Democratic difference describes the tension between democratic regimes and polemic universalism. According to him, democratic emancipatory movements arise from this gap between real existing institutions that call themselves democratic and the idea of democracy that is never fully realized. Another point being made is that real existing

democracies are never full democracies (Schwiertz 2022). Migration and democracy according to him are not opposed to each other. The migrant protests may appear to be opposed to democracy because the refugees and migrants who were protesting as not being citizens are not counted as democratic people and positioned themselves in opposition to the established democratic institutions but at the same time, they actualized the democratic of equality and freedom in the struggle for their rights. He calls for an understanding where migrants are seen as part of democracy and they can give lessons about how democracy can be renewed. Therefore, a conceptualization of the Refugee March as a protest event but also as a negotiation of democracy that is significant for the whole society takes place (Schwiertz 2019).

Ranciere created the concept of political subjectification and describes it as an act in which those who have no part arise as political subjects. At the heart of Rancieres approach to radical democracy is the political struggle of those who do not have a part. Democracy is never something that you have but it is only something that you create or recreate. Ranciere addresses the question of how radical democratic struggles influence and challenge current power relations (Schwiertz 2019). Radical theories of democracy therefore do not place unity but a fundamental openness and conflictuality at the beginning of democratic polity. The participatory stance acknowledges that increasing plurality and cultural heterogeneity must lead to increased attention to the concerns of minorities (Thaa 2008).

I argue that the model of radical democracy has some important implications in the context of migrant women. As we have seen, radical democracy makes a call for the inclusion of marginalized groups in the political process. Furthermore, a radical democratic acknowledges that the experiences of migrant women are shaped by multiple intersecting identities, including gender, ethnicity, class, and immigration status. The most important point is that radical democracy seeks to deconstruct and challenge traditional power dynamics within the political system which includes examining how structures of power, privilege, and exclusion operate within migration policies and institutions. In this sense Radical democracy often promotes bottom-up approaches to decision-making and governance and representation of migrant women should not be limited to formal political institutions but should also include community-based and grassroots initiatives that empower migrant women to shape policies and practices that

affect their lives. Also, radical democracy might lead to the building of alliances and solidarity with other social and political movements that also seek to challenge dominant power structures can strengthen the representation of migrant women within the broader context of radical democracy.

As we can see migrants are often not seen as part of the democratic people. Instead, the demos as the collective subject of representation, decision-making, and rights represent the ethnos, which is an imagined community of belonging and heritage, and migrants are excluded as non-citizens structured as an issue in the hegemonic institutionalisation of democracy.

There are severe limitations of the current representative democratic system, calling for alternative models like cumulative voting, participatory democracy, and radical democracy to enhance minority representation. Additionally, the concept of radical democracy can alternative model, emphasizing inclusive, participatory approaches to challenge traditional power dynamics and amplify the voices of marginalized groups, such as migrant women, within democratic frameworks. The fact that migrant women face such a high level of underrepresentation, strengthens the idea that representation can take place also in non-institutional forms meaning that informal and not voted representors can be claimed. It gives a stimulus to discuss and rethink political participation. Political representation can be seen as an attempt to engage the political imaginary.

The alternatives cannot not be comprehended in the dominant discourse but there could always be an alternative to the established political order. The democratic revolution is the most significant struggle against political order. Movements put into question the subordination of women and people of colour and challenged previously accepted relations of subordination. This is a practice of radical democracy that is still effective in contemporary society, and we can extend this emancipatory perspective to migration struggles.

### **4.3 Unconventional Forms of Political Participation and Representation**

In the common literature, the distinction between conventional and unconventional political participation is made. In this context, conventional political participation is considered something of a higher value than the unconventional options. At the same

time, there is the argumentation that the system of representative democracy is strengthening the denial of the recognition of unconventional forms of political participation and political acts. The distinctions between conventional and unconventional are established based on at least six pairs of opposing concepts:

- legality vs. illegality
- institutionalisation vs. lack of institutionalisation
- the government's relationship with the opposition compared to its relationship with the governed
- the public sphere vs. the private sphere
- collectivism vs. individualism
- unity vs. plurality

Conventional forms of political participation are mainly understood as activities that are linked to the electoral process and unconventional forms of representation are understood as protest behaviour sometimes even seen as illegal and violent. The lines of division between conventional and unconventional forms of political participation are not fixed and the non-recognition of this fact is an issue, and the strict demarcation leads to an exclusion of modes of political participation from being recognised (Kaim 2021).

We must raise the question of who has access to modes of conventional forms of political participation and who does not. In the Austrian context, we can see a pattern in which migrants have significantly less access to conventional forms of political participation. We must consider the effects when a group can only engage in political participation that is perceived as an illegal or non-institutionalized form. Therefore, it would be relevant to rethink the forms of unconventional and conventional forms of political participation.

As we have seen in the analysis in Austria the access for migrants is very restricted. The question arises whether it is even possible within the existing system to enable the political participation and representation of migrants. To address the context of exclusion, we may look at non-conventional forms of political participation unrelated to citizenship, such as protests, demonstrations, sit-ins, hunger strikes, boycotts, and so forth (Pilati and Herman 2020). Therefore, the idea emerges that political participation can happen outside the institutionalised system.



As Kaim argues the reductionistic and exclusionary nature of the distinction leads to unequal representation and social inequality. A limited focus on voting as the primary aspect of political engagement results in overlooking unconventional forms of participation and therefore classifying them as non-political actions. This lack of acknowledgment can lead to disengagement. Consequently, we observe an unequal situation where individuals engaging through acknowledged methods wield greater influence over political decisions compared to those employing unacknowledged approaches. Initially, it may not be immediately acknowledged that the absence of involvement from disengaged individuals is an indication of inequality. Instead, it might be perceived as an ostensibly objective observation that certain forms of political participation are simply not occurring (Kaim 2021).

Rast and Ghorashi looked at the challenges and opportunities of deepening democracy through participatory spaces for refugees and concluded that refugees' active participation might be a contributing factor to a deepening of democracy but at the same time, it is a created space that is not free of power and is influenced by unequal power relations that can lead to recreation and reproduction of exclusives structures (Rast and Ghorashi 2018).

An aspect that should not be overlooked is that less conventional and extra-parliamentary forms of political participation are often most relevant when they are united and grouped. In most cases, they assume the constitution of a collective actor characterised by a collective identity and some degree of organisation through a mobilisation process (Martiniello 2006). Therefore, here we can again discuss the relevance of identity politics in the context of collective identity. We should go back to the non-institutional forms of representation. I agree with Diehl's notes that political representation can also occur in symbolic forms and that these forms of representation need to be recognized and empowered. The symbolic dimension of political representation provides insights into how the legitimacy of political institutions and, consequently, representatives are established, and how the political is imagined. Symbolic representation serves as a significant indicator of the state of political culture and how the political imaginary evolves. Through symbols, images, and staging, both democratizing and antidemocratic concepts are "tested." When representation is understood as a symbolic activity, its significance for democracy becomes evident. Symbolization not only conveys claims but

also political ideas and self-conceptions. Hence, political representation is always an attempt to influence the political imaginary (Diehl 2016).

For migrants without citizenship status, the only possibility to formally participate politically is outside of the political domain. A part of political theorists state that political participation does not need not relate directly to the formal political institutional framework of a country, or to the conventional actors within that framework (Ekman and Amnå 2012). However, the question emerges to what extent the forms of political participation can influence the institutional framework or the conventional actors within that framework. In the Austrian context, we cannot find similar actions as the *sans papier* movement. The climate action movement can be an example of political protest outside the institutional framework (Jenny 2023). Nevertheless, it is highly questionable if movements led by marginalized groups might achieve any success in improving their political rights.

Political representation through the lens of migrant women in Austria underlines how migrant women face multiple forms of marginalisation. Traditional forms of political representation in the system of representative democracy fail to consider the diverse experiences and perspectives of migrant women. Some examples are the high barriers to entry, or the fact when they try to participate their voices remain unheard in the dominant narratives. Therefore, a transformative approach to political representation is required that includes the reimagination of representation as a means of giving voice to the experiences of migrant women. The gender transformative approach, for example, questions unequal gender relations and discriminatory norms and practices which are typically based in favour of men. A transformative approach to political representation needs to challenge unequal relations and reimagine and reshape the traditional models of representation to lead to more inclusion and empowerment of marginalized and underrepresented groups such as migrant women. Forms of political representation outside democratic institutions play an essential role in articulating concerns, advancing interests, and influencing policy decisions for marginalized groups such as migrant women (Schwiertz 2019).

#### **4.4 Gendered and Decolonial Perspectives**

Feminist critique of the standard account of political representation states that the actions of the population depend on the responsibility of the representatives, how strong

mechanisms of political accountability are exercised, and what means exist beyond elections. Women tend to be more willing to be politically active outside of institutions. The asymmetrical distribution of social, economic, and symbolic power sets a framework for politics as a male-dominated system. Institutions produce and reproduce structures and processes of hierarchical gender relations (Dörfler and Kaindl 2019).

I would like to discuss the issue of migrant women outside the Austrian and European context. When speaking about migrant women there is a need for a discussion about colonial and racist structures. We have to criticize the hegemonial position of feminism because it disadvantages women from the Global South. The critique of the hegemonic position of Western feminism, in the sense of decolonizing feminism, is a prerequisite for transnational feminist solidarity and this critique can be on three interconnected levels: research, political representation, and theoretical orientation (Sauer 2012).

The political representation of migrant women takes on a nuanced and multifaceted perspective that challenges traditional power structures and colonial legacies. Decolonial feminism seeks to unravel and dismantle the intersecting systems of oppression rooted in colonialism and patriarchy, aiming to empower women while recognizing the diversity of their experiences. Furthermore, it gives an intersectional understanding and recognizes that women's experiences are shaped by intersecting factors such as race, class, gender, and colonial history. It emphasizes the importance of understanding and addressing these intersections in political representation to ensure an inclusive and representative democracy. The approach furthermore involves critically examining and deconstructing the colonial legacies that have shaped political systems and institutions. It questions how colonialism has influenced power dynamics, marginalized indigenous and minority women, and continues to impact their representation in political spheres. Decolonial feminism furthermore advocates for the recognition of indigenous women's rights and the inclusion of their perspectives in political decision-making. It highlights the need to address historical injustices and promote self-determination for indigenous communities, including equal participation in political processes. Lastly, it challenges Eurocentric Feminist Narratives. It emphasizes the importance of amplifying the experiences and struggles of women from the Global South, who have often been marginalized or ignored by mainstream feminist discourse (Sauer 2012).

In her essay *Can the Subaltern Speak?* Spivak argues that the voice of the subaltern (marginalized and silenced groups) within the framework of dominant culture and politics can not be heard and therefore their experiences remain unacknowledged. The structures that allow representation simultaneously subsume and distort the narratives of the subaltern. Acts of representation therefore can have as an outcome the same power dynamics that silence marginalized groups and duplicate colonial and hierarchical structures. We therefore can see a limitation of traditional forms of political representation which are at the core of Western models of democracy and governance and ignore the subalterns' lived realities. She states that Western social sciences define the characteristics by which they recognize legitimate representatives of the Global South (Spivak 1988).

From this, we can draw that there is no discussion about the question if we can even speak about representation without already assuming the factual acknowledging of the representation. It is Spivak's merit to have consistently drawn attention over the past decades to the complex processes of representation and understanding within the power-laden North-South relationship, as well as to promote the establishment of a culture of continuous criticism and reflection in this regard. A gender-sensitive analysis of macroeconomic structures must precede, one that takes both a historical perspective to understand the causes of the divergent positioning of women and also considers the logic of the current international division of labor and the resulting global structure of privileges (Spivak 1988; J. Fink, Lewis, and Clarke 2001). Her essay can be seen as a call for privileged intellectuals and politicians to reflect on their speaker position and privileges and to be aware of the relevance of representational processes as well as to acknowledge transnational interdependences and complicity (J. Fink, Lewis, and Clarke 2001)

Looking at the issue from a feminist perspective works on the conflict dimension of international sisterhood shall be discussed. Postcolonial scholars stated that there are three levels of the decolonization of feminism: research, political representation, and theoretical orientation. Feminists of the global north are intertwined in the system of neoliberalism and imperialism (E. Fink and Ruppert 2009).

The critique extends to Western feminism's dominant position, emphasizing decolonization for transnational solidarity, involving research, political representation,

and theoretical reorientation. Decolonial feminism aims to dismantle intersecting systems of oppression, considering intersections of race, class, gender, and colonial history. It challenges Eurocentric feminist narratives, amplifying marginalized voices. Spivak's perspective highlights the limitation of traditional political representation, particularly in the Global South. She questions the assumption of representation without acknowledging the subaltern's realities.

#### **4.5 Implications for the Austrian Context**

After discussing the representation of migrant women in Austria and other important aspects such as transnationalism, unconventional forms of political participation, and democracy an attempt will now be made to integrate these themes into the Austrian context. In dominant discourses, the voices of marginalized groups as migrants have rarely been heard until now. There is no position for speech in the democratic regime of Austria - in both the formal sense, as they have no voting rights and the informal sense as the forms of unconventional political participation are marginal and not being heard by the institutional political sphere. Taking a European standpoint, examining transnationalism necessitates considering national contexts within Europe, countries of emigration, and the influence of European governance on shaping gender relations in legal practice, social movements, and migration regimes, which are regulated by both European and national factors (Schwiertz 2022).

Overall, as we can see, political theory is an important area for understanding and improving the political representation of immigrant women and developing policy solutions to promote equality and diversity. What can be said through our analysis and discussion is that the concept of representation is not only not invented by modern democracies but is some points opposed to democracy as Duso writes (Duso 2006).

Now the question is how can these theoretical considerations be applied to the Austrian context? Challenges persist in implementing policies that holistically account for intersecting axes of discrimination. Austrian institutions need to embrace an intersectional lens to create more inclusive policies and ensure equitable political representation for all citizens, regardless of their intersecting identities. This approach can foster a more representative and participatory democracy, reflecting the diverse fabric of Austrian society (Sauer 2012).

Another point would be more understanding of transnational identities. In the context of political representation, transnational identities present a complex challenge to traditional notions of citizenship and governance. As people increasingly identify with multiple cultures or nations, the need for adequate political representation becomes crucial. In Austria, the small degree of political representation of migrants and migrant women shows us that there is an inhibition of transnational identities. Some scholars as Günay and Dzehic have already taken up the topic of transnational identities in the context of Serbian and Turkish migrants in Vienna (Günay and Dhizic 2021). Austria should recognize its identity as an immigration society, which should also be made clear in official political discourse. It is important to counter the discourse of "othering" and stigmatization of migrant groups in all areas of society, which is often present in Austrian politics, with a more inclusive discourse. Political parties in Austria should recognize the country's character as an immigration society and actively work to open their structures to migrants. This concerns both the internal structures of the political parties and their work with young people. Opportunities and space should be created to involve and engage migrants more. Political parties should also focus on promoting and supporting a public that is committed to the equal social and political participation of migrants. Transnationalism shall be seen as an opportunity for creating a space where migrants can participate.

Migrant women, representing a significant portion of Austria's diverse immigrant population, navigate the challenges of transnationalism while seeking political representation. Within the Austrian context, the political representation of migrant women poses a unique set of challenges. The traditional political landscape may not adequately accommodate the diverse needs and perspectives of migrant women. Structural barriers and a limited understanding of the Austrian political system and institutions hinder their effective participation.

Another important aspect referring to Schwiertz discussed in 4.2 would be the self-organization of migrants and the structure of political initiatives through a social group that is active because of their experiences with discrimination is needed. It is relevant to say that migrant groups that organise themselves are not the same thing as pro-migrant organisations. Pro-migrant organisations promote pro-migrant content and can manifest in NGOs or trade unions. The difference is that the activism of people in these

organisations does have to come from experiences they have made themselves as they do not necessarily have a migration background themselves (Schwiertz 2019). The self-organization of migrants is too often understood as a sign of failed integration or as an instrument of integration policy. My position however is that a self-organisation of migrants especially of migrant women is necessary in the global and the Austrian context. This is the only way in which they can speak for themselves, and they are not spoken for and a hinderance of false representation claims can be made. To promote the political representation of Migrant women it would be relevant to acknowledge migrant struggles as a democratic practice.

From a normative perspective in Austria, an increased political representation of migrants would be beneficial. Firstly, because it gives a different perspective on issues regarding migrants and therefore a more effective problem solving could be achieved. A higher representation could also lead to a higher political interest of migrants and through better contact with deputies an increased responsivity could be achieved. Furthermore, political decisions would be legitimized to a higher degree and lastly, migrants themselves want more representation because they hope to be understood better by national politics. One of the main weak points in nowadays political representation is the issue of the representation of the people and in democracy there is always a struggle over the definition of the people. The people are not a homogenous, static mass but it changes over time. Symptoms of democracy in crisis are populism and identitarian shift which again does not consider minorities and populist leaders in the name of a direct relationship with people who call for more power and ignore and exclude minorities The acquirement of citizenship is still considered to be the most potent measure of integration into a society. Sets of diverse criteria that applicants must meet pose challenges for migrants aiming to obtain citizenship. This places them in a position where they are receptive to accepting the 'rules of the game' with the aspiration of gaining citizenship (Holtkamp, Wiechmann, and Friedhoff, 2013).

Furthermore, there is a need for a system that leads to more political inclusion of underrepresented groups. It is highly questionable whether the system of representative democracy can ever be structured in a way that adequately represents migrant women. It has also to be kept in mind that even when the intention is to include minorities, there is always a danger of assimilating or marginalizing them (Rast and Ghorashi 2018).

Through looking at migrant women in the Austrian political system therefore a criticism of the system of representative democracy is made. We proposed some alternative models as radical democracy. It is important to contemplate such models also for the Austrian context because they provide impetus for new forms of political participation.

Unconventional forms of immigrant political representation are important for several reasons in Austria. First, they provide an opportunity for the inclusion of voices and perspectives that may be underrepresented or even excluded in traditional political structures. Migrants can bring unique insights and experiences to policy discussions and decision-making processes. In Austria, there is a lack of such forms of unconventional participation. Therefore, there is no adequate representation of Migrant women in the representative institutions but also not outside of these institutions.

The last part of the critical reflection shall address the fact that migrant women are better represented than migrant men in the Austrian political system. This aligns with some assumptions made in the literature review. However, this is not a universal finding as other studies for example for the Italian context find a higher political representation of men than women (Gatti, Buonomo, and Strozza 2023). I argue that again here we have to think about the discussion about the relationship between descriptive and substantive political representation. Only because more migrant women are descriptively represented in Austria's political system it does not signify that their interests are better represented than the interests of migrant men. Furthermore, the social roles that individuals take on throughout their lives result in different outcomes for men and women. Gender roles and family connections often serve as a basis for political inequality for women (Gatti, Buonomo, and Strozza 2023) but at the same time might represent a contributing factor to the politicisation of migrant women. Being marginalized in multiple interesting forms may lead to higher awareness and a questioning of the existing system and framework. Another explanation therefore could be that migrant women face more discrimination and therefore politized differently than male migrants.

To sum up, representative democracy is a product of the modern imaginary. The modern imaginary strengthens stereotypes, inequalities, and marginalization based on gender, race, ethnicity, religion, and other social constructs. Furthermore, representative democracy includes the idea that the nation-state is a homogenous and distinct territorial



entity and that it sees the idea of sovereignty as something located in the state (Tormey 2015). However, we are moving towards a world in which complex territorialities, complex sovereignties, and complex post-identities are the reality. Points made and discussed by new work going beyond the standard account of political representation are that representation can be both formal and informal, electoral and nonelectoral, and national and transnational (Saward 2008; Rehfeld 2006).

## 5 Conclusion

This thesis critically evaluated the representative democratic system by looking at the political representation of migrant women. For the first research question that addressed the political representation of migrant women in the Austrian political system, it can be concluded that migrant women are highly underrepresented on national, federal, and local levels. Although migrant women constitute a significant portion of the population and often engage in essential and system-sustaining professions they have a very marginal voice in the Austrian political system. Their representation in the Austrian National Council, the main political institution is far below 10 %. Migrants and individuals with a migration biography are underrepresented in all political Austrian institutions. While on a national level one can still speak of at least a small degree of representation, on a federal and local level, representation of migrant women is practically non-existent.

A rather surprising result is that women with a migratory background are represented to a higher degree than men with a migratory background. The reasons for this circumstance lie outside the focus of this thesis. Nevertheless, it needs to be kept in mind that the reasons for this circumstance might be that women are seen as less threatening and that in positions of power migrant women are rarely to be found. Austria's policies create barriers, especially for non-EU immigrants and one of the main challenges is the degree of political participation here the situation is categorised as unfavourable because of the low voting rights and the weak support of immigrant organisations. While significant disparities exist regarding the accessibility of political rights and civic engagement, the overall condition for migrants, including women, should witness substantial improvement. Especially migrants coming from states outside the European Union face exclusion from political rights unless they obtain the citizenship status.

I argued that procedural norms of descriptive representation can and need to be challenged. A thinking beyond the orthodox thinking of representation is needed and representation mechanisms that occur outside of elected parliaments need to be emphasized more because they exceed the representative function. Simply discussing the degree of representation of migrant women therefore is not sufficient. It is important to go beyond looking at the descriptive representation in representative institutions and grasp the relevant influencing factors of dominant power structures and institutions.

This comprehensive exploration highlighted the significance of political theory in comprehending and enhancing the political representation of immigrant women.

Political participation is strongly based on citizenship. What is obvious is that at the national and federal levels, voting is only allowed if Austrian citizenship is present. Our analysis showed, however, that other aspects are also determined by citizenship namely how the size of the federal council seats of the federal states is determined. Looking at the situation of migrant women in the context of representative democracy, several critical aspects emerged. Numerous significant facets pertinent to the subject matter have been raised that showed that although representative democracy is a foundational political system in many countries it is highly problematic in the context of representing migrant women migrants in general. Even though migrant women are not entirely excluded from social and political life they are relegated to a subordinate position and made into disenfranchised subjects. It has inherent limitations and challenges in adequately representing the diverse needs and voices of marginalized populations, particularly migrant women. This discussion critically examined these limitations and their implications. Most importantly, representative democracy often struggles to reflect the true diversity of society. Migrant women, who represent a significant demographic group, often find themselves underrepresented or misrepresented in the political arena. This underrepresentation leads to a lack of policies and initiatives that address their specific experiences and challenges, from cultural integration and discrimination to economic disparities and access to health care.

From my perspective, some practical implications could be extending voting rights to individuals without Austrian citizenship at all levels of governance (local, state, and federal) to ensure increased representation of migrant and migrant women in the Austrian legislative bodies. Facilitating access, ensuring equal opportunities, and advocating for political and social representation of migrant women that corresponds to the demographic composition of the population would be beneficial.

Other concepts such as intersectionality were brought to the forefront in the context of political representation and migrant women. We can see big struggles for recognition and social justice within Western democracies as in Austria. The concept of transnationalism serves as an analytical framework that holds significance in comprehending gender-

related phenomena across diverse contexts and at various scales. This encompasses contexts ranging from supra-national and national entities to civic and educational institutions, social movements, and even the realm of familial interactions. Transnationalism through highlighting and exploring cross-border activities shows that migrant women have ties and experiences that concern multiple countries. Through transnational networks and organisations, they can advocate for their rights and representation, transcending the limitations of individual nation-states, however in Austria, they are often hindered from doing so and the strengths of these connections are not being recognised.

An intersectional approach considers that individuals, including migrant women, possess multiple intersecting social identities (e.g., gender, ethnicity, immigration status). It helps in understanding how these various layers of identity influence their political experiences and representation. Migrant Women in Austria's realities are shaped by the fact of being a woman and a migrant.

Forms of unconventional political representation need to be emphasized more because, in the Austrian political system, it is often the only way in which migrant women can make their voices heard. This might include in recognizing their unique circumstances and experiences and creating inclusive platforms for their engagement. Furthermore, this criticism gave rise to alternative forms of democracy such as radical democracy and we discussed which implications this might have for the representation of migrants. The theories of radical democracy are suitable to encompass the empowerment of migrant women.

So, to answer the second research question the political representation of migrant women has many implications for criticizing the system of representative democracy. Apart from the importance of transnationalism and intersectionality we can see that early criticisms of the system of representative democracy can be understood as not addressing the exclusion of certain groups and, in some cases, even assuming or reinforcing it.

The limitations of this work encompass that the thesis focused on the descriptive representation of migrant women and substantial representation was not analysed because comprehensive and reliable data specifically focused on the experiences and representation of migrant women is often lacking. Another limitation is that treating all

migrant women as a homogeneous group can oversimplify the realities. Migrant women come from diverse backgrounds, cultures, and experiences, and this heterogeneity should be considered in the following works.

Further contributions might look at the substantive representation of migrant women in Austria to understand to what extent marginalized groups represent the interests of these groups. Also, it would be relevant to identify any legal, social, economic, or cultural barriers that impede migrants from participating in the political process. These may include language proficiency requirements, discriminatory laws, or financial constraints. In future works, it would be intriguing to conduct a comparative analysis of political participation on equal terms between native and foreign women to analyse the differences. Another question that needs to be examined more is whether the representation systems reproduce the social inequalities of which they are a product.

To conclude we can say that this thesis highlighted and indicated a significant democratic deficit in the underrepresentation of migrant women. Especially against the background of an increasing instrumentalization of migration debate, the inclusion of migrants is very important – also in symbolic terms. Furthermore, looking at the system of representative democracy as a whole this thesis gave an impetus to reflect on the fact that forms of participation can also occur in a non-institutional framework and that they deserve much more respect and recognition. The system of representative democracy does not represent everyone – this is a deficit that can not be ignored in the long term.



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