

# Activity Report 2020

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## 1. A short message from the president

2020 was without a doubt an extraordinary year. Indeed, it was probably a very difficult year for most of us, a year we struggled on multiple dimensions. The pandemic became – and still is – of overwhelming presence in our lives, and it has major consequences for our societies in the short and long term. We saw how our social relations became turmoiled and how social inequalities crystallized during this year in a probably unprecedented way. It seems that the pandemic works like a *magnifying glass*: Existing disparities in terms of gender, sexuality, race, and class became not only visible, but they were reinforced, both locally and globally.

For instance, women carry out most life-sustaining work and have occupations largely taken-for-granted “in normal times”. All of a sudden, these “essential workers” came into the spotlight. Women working in care or retail were labelled “key-workers” while their precarious economic situations were for the first time rendered visible. The pandemic also brought out of the shadows the still highly (unequal) gendered family and household arrangements. Many scholars observed a re-traditionalisation of heteronormative, gendered family representations and a feminisation of the responsibility for both home-office and home-schooling. Additionally, public expertise became strongly male-dominated, at least during the “first wave” of the pandemic. Furthermore, the pandemic was misused to prohibit sex work (in some cantons). It heavily affected (female) migrants who struggle with legal consequences due to their reinforced economic vulnerabilities, also increasing domestic violence, and confronting more LGBTI people with stigma in many fields. As a response to the pandemic, Europe retreated into national fortresses, introduced border control and restrictions. A reinforced nationalism is currently the *courant normal*, presently mirrored in the question of who has access to vaccination within the European countries and, even more, globally. These are just some of the effects scholars observed, and of course, the list is much longer. Yet, what links all these observations is that they are all related to gender orders while being intersectionally entangled with class, race, migration, and global inequalities.

However, I think there is a flipside. In my eyes, the pandemic enables an unforeseen “momentum” for actions: As this wide range of gender/sexuality-related intersectional inequalities came into the spotlight of politics and media, new spaces for discussion and action could open up. First, it became clear that (intersectional) gender studies are of high value to contribute not only to analyse and understand these transformations but also to propose alternatives. Second, I dare to argue that we are currently talking about structural gender inequalities more largely in Swiss society than ever before. Additionally, 2020 was the year that #BlackLivesMatter made a difference, also in Switzerland. Racial discrimination and structural racism became very much visible during the pandemic, and #BlackLivesMatter found a powerful public resonance whose importance cannot be stressed enough.

Or to put it differently: Intersectional gender studies revealed their high significance for society during this year. As COVID-19 spread across the world, the in-depth expertise which this field of study acquired these last decades could be immediately mobilised and allowed us to understand the deep transformations under a global pandemic. In other

terms, I would like to make a plea to try to take advantage of this “momentum”, of this “magnifying glass”. This is a plea to continue studying social inequalities with the support of political and scientific allies, bringing in all our knowledge and expertise regarding gendered, sexualised, classed, racialised, and migrantized disparities to tackle these issues and develop visions of an equal society.

I believe that the activities described in this annual report vividly depict the in-depth expertise accumulated among SAGS members. During the last year, the SAGS has been prominent in public discussions about the pandemic’s gendered effects. We continued to build up significant collaborations with other actors in the gender and diversity fields; we brought together different generations of feminists and made them engage in insightful exchanges, and many things more. Last but not least, this allows me to warmly thank all SAGS members for their engagement, expertise, knowledge, and stamina they showed during such a challenging year. Most SAGS members have been analysing the turmoil we experienced in society; they spoke up on controversies, they started researching the effects of the pandemic, and, when necessary, they supported each other during this time.

In this sense, it seems to me that this year also merits an extraordinary statement from my side as president of the SAGS – it is maybe a more political one than some of you would have expected. In a nutshell, it became clear that we need new visions for a more equitable world – and gender studies have a crucial role in the development of these visions.

*Janine Dahinden, January 2021, president of the SAGS*

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## **2. Board and Membership of the SAGS**

### **2.1. Members, Board Members, and Advisory Board**

We are pleased to welcome four new board members: [Sébastien Chauvin](#) (UniL), [Hélène Martin](#) (HETSL), [Marion Schulze](#) (UniBas), and Anna Sommer (Gender campus), who were elected for the next two years (2021-22) at the members’ assembly held on November 5.

We would like to express all our gratitude to Lilian Fankhauser (UniBe), Marylène Lieber (UniGe), Andrea Maihofer (UniBas), and Regina Wecker (UniBas), who left the board at the end of 2020. They did a fabulous job. SAGS board members would like to thank them for their engagement on behalf of the SAGS over the past years. A huge and warm thank you to the four of them.

Janine Dahinden and Nathalie Amstutz have been re-elected to the board presidency.

In the form of an *advisory board*, a new body has been introduced in our statutes following its acceptance at the members’ assembly. This new body makes it possible to maintain closer contact with former members of the board or other people active in gender studies or the SAGS and to rely on their insights and expertise when needed. As a result of the vote held during the past members’ assembly, Marylène Lieber, Andrea Maihofer, and Regina Wecker became members of the newly-created SAGS advisory board.

Kristina Schulz has been re-elected to the controller's function, together with Beatrice Ziegler, who replaces Fabienne Amlinger.

In numbers, the 15 newly elected or re-elected board members represent 7 universities and 3 organizations promoting gender studies and equality, 2 linguistic regions, and a broad range of disciplines and positions. The board met three times over the year. As of December 31, 2020, the SAGS counted 289 members.

*Table 1: Board members in 2020*

| <b>Name</b>           | <b>Function</b>                                 |
|-----------------------|---|
| Janine Dahinden       | President                                       |
| Nathalie Amstutz      | Vice-President                                  |
| Michèle Amacker       | University of Berne                             |
| Claudia D'Andrea      | Student Representative                          |
| Bettina Dennerlein    | University of Zurich                            |
| Annelise Erismann     | Public Relations                                |
| Lilian Fankhauser     | University of Bern, Gender equality officer     |
| Dominique Grisard     | University of Basel                             |
| Marylène Lieber       | University of Geneva                            |
| Matthias Luterbach    | Cashier   |
| Andrea Maihofer       | University of Basel                             |
| Katrin Meyer          | University of Zurich                            |
| Katharina Pelzelmayer | FemWiss   |
| Regina Wecker         | University of Basel                             |
| Fleur Weibel          | Think Tank Gender & Diversity, Public Relations |

*Table 2: Newly elected and re-elected board members, 2021-22*

| <b>Name</b>           | <b>Function</b>                                 |
|-----------------------|---|
| Janine Dahinden       | President                                       |
| Nathalie Amstutz      | Vice-President                                  |
| Michèle Amacker       | University of Berne                             |
| Claudia D'Andrea      | Student Representative                          |
| Sébastien Chauvin     | University of Lausanne                          |
| Bettina Dennerlein    | University of Zurich                            |
| Annelise Erismann     | University of Lausanne, Public Relations        |
| Dominique Grisard     | University of Basel                             |
| Matthias Luterbach    | Cashier   |
| Hélène Martin         | University of Applied Sciences, HETSL, Lausanne |
| Katrin Meyer          | University of Zurich                            |
| Katharina Pelzelmayer | FemWiss   |
| Marion Schulze        | University of Basel                             |
| Anna Sommer           | Gender Campus                                   |
| Fleur Weibel          | Think Tank Gender & Diversity, Public Relations |

## 3. Scientific Activities

### 3.1. New SAGS Publication Series "Gender issues"

We are delighted that, since January 2020, we have our publication series "Gender Issues". Our book series unites theoretical and empirical work in the field of Gender Studies in the humanities and the social sciences. It is edited by the SAGS and published by [Seismo Press](https://www.seismo.press/). This series was founded by Prof. Lorena Parini in 2005 and directed by the *Institut des Etudes genre* of the University of Geneva until 2019. In 2020, the SAGS took over the series' editorial direction, opening it up to different languages (German, English, and French) and disciplines. It is peer-reviewed and open-access. The direction of the series comprises SAGS board members and other scholars. Furthermore, from 2021 onwards, the series will be supported by the SAGW/ASSH. For more information, see: <https://www.gendercampus.ch/en/sggf/gender-issues>.

**On this occasion, we reiterate our encouragement to all young (and older) scholars working on gender or with a gender perspective, from any disciplines of the humanities and social sciences, to submit their manuscript.**

Our first two publications under the new editorial direction will come out in 2021:

#### **AG Transformation von Männlichkeit (Ed.). Zeitdiagnose Männlichkeiten in der Schweiz.**

Wandel und Persistenz der Geschlechterverhältnisse in Arbeitswelt, Familie und Politik bedeuten für Männer\* und Männlichkeit(en) spezifische Möglichkeiten und Herausforderungen.

Zur Debatte steht, was sich gegenwärtig überhaupt verändert. Welche Entwicklungen werden ausgemacht? Welche Potenziale, Widersprüche und Spannungen – für Männer\* und für die Gesellschaft – tun sich auf oder entstehen dadurch? Wie haben sich Männlichkeiten historisch in der Schweiz überhaupt gestaltet und ausgebildet?

Das Buch bündelt Forschungsbeiträge zu Männlichkeit(en) in der Schweiz, die zu

einer kritischen Zeitdiagnose beitragen. Dabei werden Perspektiven aus verschiedenen Disziplinen – der Geschlechterforschung, Soziologie, Sozialen Arbeit, Geschichte, Literaturwissenschaft, Psychologie und Migrationsforschung – eingebracht.

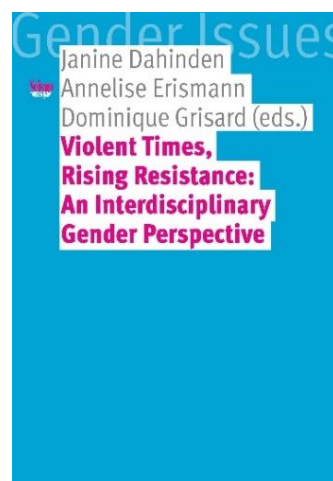


**Janine Dahinden, Annelise Erismann, Dominique Grisard (eds.). *Violent Times, Rising Resistance: An Interdisciplinary Gender Perspective*.**

Violence is a persistent element of modern history, and it always has been gendered. Today's violent times have politicized and mobilized new publics, generated creative forms of resistance, incited the most unlikely coalitions, and emboldened to live life differently.

The systemic use of rape in warfare, nationalism, and settler colonialism, the persistency of intimate partner violence, and the increasingly open racist, sexist, transphobic, and homophobic discrimination are just a few examples of violence's omnipresent intersectional dimension. The contributions of this volume analyse violence and multiple forms of resistance from an interdisciplinary perspective. They

show that violence is not just a central and powerful structuring principle of gender, sexuality, ethnicity, race, and class, but also part of the national social fabric, structuring almost every relation under the auspices of nation-states. In addition, the contributions depict various strategies and tactics of confronting violence.



### **3.2. Scientific activities of the SAGS regarding the pandemic**

Since the beginning of the pandemic, it became clear that COVID-19 has strong gendered effects. Not only did existing inequalities in terms of gender and sexuality become visible: the pandemic has also reinforced some of them. We took a public position in view of these questions through different actions. We are pleased that our voice made an essential contribution to ongoing debates.

The SAGS contributed to the policy brief [Gender aspects of COVID-19 and pandemic response](#) of the Swiss National COVID-19 Science Task Force, Expert Group: Ethics, legal, social, under the direction of Prof. [Samia Hurst](#), University of Geneva. By putting together the expertise of SAGS members (and other gender studies scholars in Switzerland), we could, within a few days, produce a consistent overview of gender- and sexuality-related problems that emerged due to the COVID-19 situation.

The SAGS also contributed to the public debate with a blog entry published on the Gender Campus website. It is entitled [The corona crisis from a gender perspective: Opening up a debate](#). This blog was in the following re-published on a wide range of websites, to mention just one, for instance, by the blog series of the University of Lausanne, [VIRAL, les multiples vies du COVID-19](#).

Following these contributions, the SAGS was invited by National Councillor Melanie Mettler to provide inputs regarding the pandemic's gendered effects to the "Parlamentarische

Frauengruppe". Janine Dahinden and Nathalie Amstutz represented our Association and made a contribution during a parliamentary meeting held on June 2.

Besides, many of the SAGS board members were invited, in the weeks that followed, as experts in Swiss Television, newspapers, and radio emissions. These activities reflect the dynamic role of the SAGS, as its members make available their expertise on topics of paramount importance, educating within universities as much as the larger public. We will hopefully be able to continue on this path in 2021 and beyond.

### **3.3. Public Roundtable "Shared Memories of Equality Movements – an Intergenerational Dialogue"**

The public roundtable, which we organized on November 5, was a highlight of 2020. We invited four panellists, distinguished feminists from different generations, to share their experiences:

- Serena Dankwa, Co-Secretary General of Lesbenorganisation LOS, social anthropologist, gender & critical diversity scholar, member of Bla\*sh (Berne)
- Ella Hautier, activist of feminist and wom\*n's strike, prevention worker at VoGay and PROFA, Master student (Geneva)
- Elisabeth Joris, pioneering historian of wom\*n's and gender history in Switzerland (Zurich)
- Patricia Schulz, former member of the UN CEDAW Committee and former director of the Federal Office for Gender Equality, Senior Research Associate at UNRISD (Geneva)

The panellists engaged in a discussion about the signification of being a feminist, their struggles and successes, commonalities and differences between different feminist movements in Switzerland. Dominique Grisard masterfully chaired the debate.



The event took place online, and it was a true success. Over sixty persons participated, among them many who are not members of the SAGS.

The podcast of the round table is accessible online on our website and here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F2mYNhHVVHc0&feature=youtu.be>



### 3.4. A conversation with SAGS members presenting Gender Studies

Three members of the SAGS – Janine Dahinden (UniNE), Annelies Erismann (UniL), and Martine Schaer (UniNE) engaged in a debate with Sabine Eggmann from the SAGW. They presented Gender Studies, what they are (and are not), why we need them and what we do. The debate can be watched on the website of the SAGW "*Fachportal Kulturen und Gesellschaft*".



<https://www.cult-soc.ch/beruf/berufsportraits.html>

## 4. Outward Communication

Since 2020, we have been delivering the former SAGS newsletter, recently-rebranded as the **Bulletin SSEG-SGGF**, relying on a new layout that is more compact and reader-friendly. Our Bulletin is now out three times a year, in German and French languages, and only available online due to environmental concerns. We are thankful for our 297 subscribers (including SAGS members and institutional contacts)!

Take a look into the SAGS highlights of 2020, summarized in our previous Bulletins:

- [Bulletin SSEG-SGGF 2020 | 1](#)
- [Bulletin SSEG-SGGF 2020 | 2](#)
- [Bulletin SSEG-SGGF 2020 | 3](#)

And when it comes to social media management, the SAGS is on par with professional associations of its kind: Our Twitter account, created in March 2019, now has 401 followers, and we are grateful for our 274 friends on Facebook. We will invest particular efforts in 2021 to gain visibility on social media.

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## **5. Cooperations, Networking & Anchoring of Gender Studies**

### **SAGW-founded project "Sustainable Development Goals" (SDGs) for Seed Money in view of the Agenda 2030: To build up a sustainable structure of cooperation between Swiss Gender Networks**

For the first time in 2020, the SAGW supported small projects intending to pursue the SDG of the UN Agenda 2030. With Goal 5 (Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls), the UN Agenda 2030 attributes a vital role to gender issues in the spectrum of current and future sustainability challenges. Through critical analysis and development of conceptual and methodological approaches, gender studies contribute significantly to the knowledge building for goal 5. Other SDG targets (Goal 10: Reduce inequality within and among countries; Goal 16: Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development) also seem to rely on gender research.

The SAGS responded to the SAGW call (September 2019) for a network project to build a sustainable structure of cooperation between the different networks of gender studies in Switzerland (SAGS, Gender Campus, Network Gender Studies, Think Tank Gender & Diversity). We have been pleased that our project gained the interest of the SAGW and secured funding.

The project achieved its three objectives: (1) clarification of roles and responsibilities; (2) clarification of cooperation structure to promote the exchange of knowledge between Gender Studies, Gender Equality and Diversity officers at universities, university administrations, political and administrative bodies in Higher Education; (3) creation of a working group to support and promote the development and the institutionalization of gender studies in Switzerland.

The project enabled the formation of a network for further necessary steps in this process. Together with the Gender Campus and the Think Tank Gender & Diversity, the SAGS will be a central player in this network and will continue to actively contribute to the anchoring and strengthening of Gender Studies in Switzerland. The first meeting of this network will take place in March 2021.

## **6. Working Groups**

The SAGS hosts working groups. For the moment being, two are active. It is up to members to launch new working groups, in which case we ask members to refer to the secretariat.

### **6.1. Working group Affects, Feelings and Emotions**

Debates surrounding feelings, emotional labour, affects, and intimacy have been central to gender studies since their inception. In the working group "Affects, Feelings and Emotions", we discuss research at the intersection of gender, affect, feelings and emotions. Due to the pandemic, our spring meeting was cancelled. In our second meeting in fall 2020, we discussed two members' contributions: A text on discomforts in the academy and another on the entanglements of affect and desire. Group members have already been collaborating, such as in the proposition of an intervention on comics and feminism at a

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seminar in Basel. Our next meeting will take place in May 2021, probably via Zoom. New members are always welcome.

*Laura Perler for the working group*

## **6.2. Working group Transformation of Masculinities (TransforMen)**

The working group "Transformations of Masculinities (TransforMen)" is an interdisciplinary and cross-institutional research group, independent of location, conceived to strengthen critical studies on men and masculinities in Switzerland and make them more visible.

The working group activities in 2020 focused on the final steps to the publication of the book *Zeitdiagnose Männlichkeiten Schweiz*. As announced, it will be published this spring by Seismo. The outcome is an anthology with 11 exciting articles from different disciplines that discuss various topics, plus a detailed exploratory introduction by the working group members. The articles are divided into four sub-topics: (1) Change and persistence of masculinities; (2) Crisis of hegemonic masculinities and significance of non-hegemonic masculinities; (3) Masculinities in the context of care work and employment; (4) Men and gender equality.

The authors provide an overview of current aspects around masculinities and critical studies on men and masculinities in Switzerland. This publication aims to make a decisive next step towards more visibility and strengthen critical studies on men and masculinities in Switzerland. The working group is also planning a public vernissage and other general discussion events in 2021 (TBA – Keep your eyes open). The working group has agreed to continue its activities in the future and to further discussions, especially on the new topics and fields of discussion that the book opens up. New members are welcome for these next steps.

*Matthias Luterbach for the working group*

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## **7. Impressum**

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