# European migration without borders. German migration flows to Switzerland before World War I and after 2002

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In the past 20 years, European integration has led to a Europeanization of migration flows. With the 2002 *Agreement on the Free Movement of Persons*, Switzerland became part of an area where borders present few obstacles to people's movement. Already before World War I, Switzerland was characterized by a liberal migration policy, leading to substantial migration flows from neighbouring countries. Despite this, most research focuses on the period after World War II, and no study has compared the current liberal migration regime with its antecedent, although the two cases provide similar macro-contextual conditions for European migrants. This case study on German migration flows to Switzerland provides a better understanding of intra-European migration dynamics by asking whether – in the context of the free movement of persons – international migration can be conceptualized as an extension of internal migration, and when, how and for whom the national or the regional scale matters? The analysis of the period before World War I relies on secondary literature and the statistical yearbook of Switzerland; for more recent migration flows, we rely on datasets provided by the Swiss Federal Statistical Office. Our analyses confirm the importance of the legal setting for the demographic evolution induced by migration flows of the population from neighbouring European countries. At the same time, we find evidence that international migration at the beginning of the 20th century as well as some specific flows at the beginning of the 21st century can be conceptualised as an extension of internal migration.

In the past 20 years, migration in Western Europe has been shaped by a post-Fordist economic setting and a context of expanding globalization. European integration has induced a shift from state-controlled manpower recruiting to a predominately market-regulated migration as well as to a Europeanization of migration flows.[1] «The European Union and its frontier-free ‹Schengenland› have created a borderless zone for mobility».[2] Switzerland, although not a member of the European Union, also underwent this shift, notably since the *Agree-*

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1 Michael Braun, Camelia Arsene, The demographics of movers and stayers in the European Union, in: Ettore Recchi, Adrian Favell (Hg.), Pioneers of European integration. Citizenship and mobility in the EU, Cheltenham 2009, p. 26–51; Adrian Favell, Eurostars and eurocities. Free movement and mobility in an integrating Europe, Malden 2008.

2 Russell King, Ronald Skeldon, Julie Vullnetari, Internal and international migration: Bridging the theoretical divide, in: Sussex Centre for Migration Research Working Paper 52 (2008), https://www.sussex.ac.uk/webteam/gateway/file.php?name=mwp52.pdf&site=252 (20.4.2020).

*ment on the Free Movements of Persons* with the European Union (EU) came into force in June 2002.[3]

Nevertheless, prior to World War I (WWI), the country was already characterised by a liberal migration policy, leading to substantial migration flows from neighbouring countries.[4] Before 1914, nine out of ten foreign residents came from one of the four neighbouring countries.[5]

However, research often focuses on the period after 1945 and no study has so far compared the two periods, which provide similar macro-contextual conditions for European migrants. Our case study on migration flows to Switzerland prior to WWI and after 2002 seeks to provide a better understanding of intra-European migration dynamics by asking whether – in the context of the free movement of persons – international migration can be conceptualised as an extension of internal migration, and when, how and for whom the national or the regional scale matters?

The analysis of the period prior to WWI relies on secondary literature and the historical statistical yearbook of Switzerland as well as on aggregated data published by Urner.[6] Available information includes the size of the German resident population and the distribution of these residents amongst the Swiss cantons as well as their origin. Regarding migration flows since 2002, we rely on datasets provided by the Swiss Federal Statistical Office that provide general socio-demographic characteristics, the city of birth, the commune of residence and the motivations for immigration: the Statistics of the Resident Population of Foreign Nationality (PETRA) and the Population and Household Statistics (STATPOP).

Our paper first discusses the theoretical framework regarding the conceptualization of international migration flows within the framework of the free movement of persons. Second, we present the data and methods used. Third, we address our first hypotheses by providing a overview of the Swiss migration policies since 1848 and their impact on migration flows, thus highlighting the specificities of the two periods – that is 1848–1914 and 2002–2014. Fourth, we compare the spatial distribution of German residents in Switzerland also with regards to their region of origin. Fifth, we assess today's characteristics of border region immigration. The paper closes with a conclusion.

3 Heidi Stutz, Michael Hermann, Corinna Heye, Dominik Matter, Nadia Baghdadi, Lucien Gardiol, Thomas Oesch, Immigration 2030. Szenarien für die Zürcher Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft, Zürich 2010; Daniel Müller-Jentsch (Hg.), Die neue Zuwanderung. Die Schweiz zwischen Brain-Gain und Überfremdungsangst, Zürich 2008.

4 Didier Ruedin, Camilla Alberti, Gianni D'Amato, Immigration and integration policy in Switzerland, 1848 to 2014, in: Swiss Political Science Review 21/1 (2015), p. 5–22.

5 Rudolf Schlaepfer, Die Ausländerfrage in der Schweiz vor dem ersten Weltkrieg, Zürich 1969, p. 17.

6 Klaus Urner, Die Deutschen in der Schweiz. Von den Anfängen der Kolonialbildung bis zum Ausbruch des Ersten Weltkrieges, Frauenfeld 1976.

## International migration in the context of the free movement of persons

Ravenstein's Laws on Migration are one of the most prominent and earliest theories on human mobility that are applied to both internal mobility and international migration.[7] This might be explained by the fact that his research on migration throughout the United Kingdom was essentially imbedded in a context of movements across different counties of England and Wales, Scotland and Ireland. In the context of the free movement of persons between two states, where migrants have the right to move, travel, study, work, settle and retire, the question arises as to whether the «national scale […] is the preeminent delimiter of migration types and processes»[8] and therefore whether a real distinction between international migration and internal mobility exists.

According to Fahrmeir, «the nineteenth century was a century of substantial and ever-increasing mobility».[9] He argues that some scholars interpret the 1860s to 1880s in Europe as decades of complete freedom of movement,[10] whilst others, like himself, suggest that the sole change regards the timing of migration control. Unwanted migration was no longer prevented in advance, but limited by possible expulsion after arrival.[11] A practice that concerned rather the poor, paupers and vagrants, to name a few, and not people with «rank».[12]

Scholars argue, on the one hand, that the territorial state matters because of its power and its associated national social institutions.[13] Hollifield also notes that «states have been and still are deeply involved in organizing and regulating migration».[14] Furthermore, «international migration brings in a political economical perspective that recognises the importance of international relations and the control states exercise over their own borders».[15] For King and Skeldon,

7 E. G. Ravenstein, The laws of migration, in: Journal of the Royal Statistical Society 52/2 (1889), p. 241–305.

8 Mark Ellis, Reinventing US internal migration studies in the age of international migration, in: Population, Space and Place 18/2 (2012), p. 196.

9 Andreas Fahrmeir, Researching the History of Migration Controls, in: Andreas Fahrmeir, Olivier Faron and Patrick Weil (Hg.), Migration Control in the North Atlantic World: The Evolution of State Practices in Europe and the United States from the French Revolution to the Inter-War Period, New York 2003, p. 301–315, p. 309.

10 Noiriel Gérard, La tyrannie du national, Le droit d'asile en Europe 1793–1993, Paris 1991.

11 Andreas Fahrmeir, Klassen-Grenzen: Migrationskontrolle im 19. Jahrhundert, in: Rechtsgeschichte. Zeitschrift des Max-Planck-Instituts für europäische Rechtsgeschichte (2008), p. 125–138, p. 129.

12 Andreas Fahrmeir, Conclusion: Historical Perspectives on Borderlands, Boundaries and Migration Control, in: Journal of Borderlands Studies 34/4 (2019), p. 623–631, p. 626.

13 Ellis, Reinventing, p. 204.

14 James Hollifield, The emerging migration state, in: Alejandro Portes, Josh DeWind (Hg.), Rethinking migration. New theoretical and empirical perspectives, New York 2007, p. 78.

15 Aristide R. Zolberg, The next waves: migration theory for a changing world, in: International Migration Review 23/3 (1989), p. 403–430, p. 405.

«international migration is a ‹distinctive social process› from internal migration because international migrants are moving into a different political entity with its own distinct legal system that impinges on their lives in a way that an internal move does not».[16] In return, internal migration appears to reinforce nationalism and the creation of citizens and therefore operates on a different political as well as geographical scale from international migration.[17]

On the other hand, scholars seem to agree that in order to gain a better understanding of migratory movements as a whole, whether they involve the crossing of a national border or not, the traditional division between internal and international migration needs to be challenged. The territorial state has been privileged in social sciences and migration studies, «presupposing that state boundaries neatly delimit the forces responsible for stimulating, directing, or constraining flows of people».[18]

According to King and Skeldon, the distinction between the two types of movements have become increasingly blurred due to geopolitical events as well as to more complex migratory trajectories.[19] Regarding the former, borders bisecting single ethnic groups or traditional trading routes, as well as the unification or disintegration of countries, question the traditional distinction between the two types.[20] An example is the «European Union and its frontier-free ‹Schengenland› [that] have created a borderless zone for mobility which is more akin to internal migration than ‹traditional› international migration with its regime of passports, visas and border controls».[21] The liberalization of migration within the member states has a long history. The free movement of workers has in fact already been an objective since the Treaty of Rome in 1957.[22] Switzerland, not being part of the European Union, and up to a certain degree, joins this construct of a political space with open internal migration by means of the bilateral treaties.

King and Skeldon argue moreover that distance is not a defining criterion for distinguishing the two types of movements and that linguistic and cultural barriers, although often characterising international migration, are in some cases more evident in internal moves.[23] Belot and Ederveen find evidence that cultural barriers – beyond simple language differences – better explain migration pat-

16 Russell King, Ronald Skeldon, ‹Mind the gap!› Integrating approaches to internal and international migration, in: Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies 36/10 (2010), p. 1619–1646.

17 Ronald Skeldon, Interlinkages between internal and international migration and development in the Asian region, in: Population, Space and Place 12/1 (2006), p. 15–30.

18 Ellis, Reinventing, p. 197.

19 King, ‹Mind the gap!›, p. 1621.

20 Skeldon, Interlinkages.

21 King, ‹Mind the gap!›, p. 1621.

22 Bpb, Geschichte der europäischen Migrationspolitik, https://www.bpb.de/gesellschaft/migration/dossier-migration/252329/europaeische-migrationspolitik (9.4.2021).

23 King, ‹Mind the gap!›, p. 1621.

terns between developed countries than traditional economic variables.[24] In this regard, Switzerland is a good example. Studies have shown that the country's four language regions affect the direction of international as much as internal migratory flows.[25]

However, it is not only the macro-contextual level, but also more complex migratory trajectories, which challenge the traditional distinction between international and internal migration. According to Favell, the new legal context facilitated new European cross border practices and experiences, in terms of «distinct regional – i. e. European – scale and intensity».[26] Arguably, current migration patterns can no longer be captured adequately within a traditional labour migration paradigm.[27]. Due to these changes, temporary forms of migration have become more commonplace.[28] In particular, the increasingly international nature of the labour market gave rise to a new highly mobile class of young professionals and students – the so-called Eurostars – profiting from these new opportunities, which however provides the country of destination with little means to prevent their remigration.[29] Migration within EU/EFTA countries is not driven only by economic factors. According to Santacreu et al., «migrants moving under the provision of free movement generally reflect emerging characteristics of European societies: privileging flexibility in time and space, alternative modes of consumption and leisure, and a search for healthier environments, self-fulfilment, new lifestyles and the search of a better quality of life».[30] Favell argues that these new mobility choices underline the importance of considering agency in the intra-European migration decision-making process.[31] Similarly, de Haas, conceptualised migration as a function of capabilities, aspirations

24 Michèle Belot, Sjef Ederveen, Cultural barriers in migration between OECD countries, in: Journal of Population Economics 25/3 (2012), p. 1077–1105.

25 Ilka Steiner, Spatial selectivity and demographic impact of recent German immigrants in Swiss regions, in: Europa Regional 2 (2014), p. 56–68; Mathias Lerch, La géographie de la migration interne en Suisse, in: Philippe Wanner (Hg.), La démographie des étrangers en Suisse, Zürich 2012; Mathias Lerch, Philippe Wanner, Foreigners internal mobility in Switzerland: interrelation with international immigration and contextual factors, in: European Population Conference (2010).

26 Adrian Favell, Ettore Recchi, Theresa Kuhn, Janne Solgaard Jensen, Juliane Klein, The Europeanisation of everyday life: cross-border practices and transnational identifications among EU and third-country citizens, in: EUCROSS Working Paper 1 (2011), https://pure.au.dk/ws/files/53643017/EUCROSS_D2.1_State_of_the_Art.pdf (20. 4. 2020), p. 5.

27 Russell King, Towards a new map of European migration, in: International Journal of Population Geography 8/2 (2002), p. 89–106.

28 Thomas Faist, Migrants as transnational development agents: An inquiry into the newest round of the migration–development nexus, in: Population, Space and Place 14/1 (2008), p. 21–42.

29 Favell, Eurostars and eurocities; Andreas Ette, Lenore Sauer, Auswanderung aus Deutschland, Wiesbaden 2010, p. 22.

30 Oscar Santacreu, Emiliana Baldoni, Maria Carmen Albert, Deciding to move: migration projects in an integrating Europe, in: Ettore Recchi, Adrian Favell (Hg.), Pioneers of European integration. Citizenship and mobility in the EU, Cheltenham 2009, p. 52–71.

31 Favell, Europeanisation of everyday life, p. 24.

and opportunities, by applying Sen's capability-based development concept to migration: «People will only migrate if they perceive better opportunities elsewhere and have the capabilities to move. Although this assertion implies choice and agency, it also shows that this agency is constrained by historically determined conditions which create concrete opportunity structures.»[32] His framework allows for the integration of internal and international migration within the same explanatory model.

Migratory patterns therefore diverge according to the migrant's aspirations, his or her profile and stage in the life course – with regards to age and family creation – but also according to the spatial attributes of the region of destination.[33]

Inferring from this literature review, we pose the following two hypotheses in order to answer our research question. First, opportunity structures, such as cultural, linguistic and geographic proximity or the economic disparities between two countries, determine migration flows from Germany to Switzerland and are made possible by the context of the free movement of persons. Second, under the provision of the free movement of persons, migration from Germany to a Swiss border or inland region are triggered by differing migratory strategies.

## Data and methods

The research focuses on the specific context of Switzerland, which presents the highest immigration rate as well as, after Luxemburg, the highest share of foreigners in the total population compared to the EU27/EFTA countries.[34] We consider not only the nation as the geographical unit but also the regions; that is, the cantons as political-administrative divisions for Switzerland (26) and the states for Germany (16). In the explanatory model, the main focus lies however on the smaller unit of districts, where a distinction between immigration to Swiss districts bordering Germany and to inland districts is made.

Temporally, the research frame focuses on migrants arrived in Switzerland between the foundation of Switzerland in 1848 and the outbreak of WWI as well as after June 2002. Both periods are characterised by similar macro-contextual conditions for European migrants, namely due to a liberal migration policy. The period in-between is presented and discussed, even though summarily, in order to point out the particularities of the main periods through comparison.

32 Hein de Haas, The determinants of international migration. Conceptualizing policy, origin and destination effects, in: DEMIG project paper 2 (2011), https://www.migrationinstitute.org/publications/wp-32-11 (20.04.2020); Amartya Sen, Development as freedom, New York 1999.

33 Cees Gorter, Peter Nijkamp, Jacques Poot, Crossing borders. Regional and urban perspectives on international migration, Aldershot, Brookfield USA, Singapore, Sydney 1998.

34 See Eurostat: https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/migration-asylum/international-migration-citizenship (16.8.2021).

Finally, the targeted population consists of first generation adult German immigrants in Switzerland. They constitute a prominent example of migration flows from neighbouring countries.[35] Contrary to the UN definition of an international migrant, individuals who have stayed for less than three months are also considered in order to include more mobile migrants into the analysis.[36]

The analysis of the period prior to WWI relies on secondary literature and the historical statistical yearbook of Switzerland as well as on aggregated data published by Urner.[37] Available information includes the size of the German resident population and its distribution amongst the Swiss cantons, as well as the origin of the migrants. German origin is identified by «state of origin», leaving it open whether this refers to the person's state of birth, the state of origin (Heimatland), the nationality or the last place of residence before migration.

Regarding the more recent period, we rely on datasets provided by the Swiss Federal Statistical Office: the Statistics of the Resident Population of Foreign Nationality (PETRA) in 1990 and the Population and Household Statistics (STATPOP) for 2010 to 2012, extracted from municipal population registers. They include general socio-demographic characteristics, such as the commune of residence, as well as migration specific information, for instance motivations for immigration, state of birth and duration of residence. Moreover, the latter contains, contrary to the first dataset, the city of birth in Germany.

In order to obtain more insights into border region immigration and its underlying causes and motivations, we ran a logistic regression, testing the effects of different variables on the probability for immigrants between 2010–2012 to move to a Swiss border district or an inland district.[38]

The following seven intendent variables were considered: age (18–24, 25–34, 35–44, 45–54, 55–64, 65+), gender (men and women), civil status (single, married, divorced, widowed), permit (short-term or resident/settlement permit), reason of immigration (work, retirement, without gainful employment, studies, family reunion, other), state of birth in Germany (border or not), commune of immigration (agglomeration or not). Whereas a justification for the inclusion of the individual factors was already given above, we included the external factors, because the origin region's geographical proximity to the country of destination

35 Ilka Steiner, Migration allemande en Suisse, in: Philippe Wanner (Hg.), La démographie des étrangers en Suisse, Zürich 2012, p. 69–85; Stutz, Immigration 2030; Müller-Jentsch, Die neue Zuwanderung; Marco Pecoraro, Les migrants hautement qualifiés, in: Werner Haug, Philippe Wanner (Hg.), Migrants et marché du travail. Compétences et insertion professionnelle des personnes d'origine étrangère en Suisse, Neuchâtel 2005, p. 71–110.

36 Departement of Social and Economic Affairs United Nations, Statistics Division, Recommendations of statistics of international migration. Revision 1, in: United Nations, Statistical Paper Series M 58/1 (1998), http://www.armstat.am/file/doc/99475948.pdf (20. 4. 2020).

37 Urner, Die Deutschen in der Schweiz.

38 David Roxbee Cox, E. Joyce Snell, Analysis of binary data, Boca Raton, London, New York, Washington DC 1989.

is among the main factors in the migrants' choice of destination.[39] For Lee, the distance of the move is part of the obstacles intervening during the move between the origin and the destination.[40] The factors associated with the area of destination constitute another important determinant of spatial selectivity in international migration.[41] Regions with metropolises and in particular capitals constitute poles of attraction for foreigners. Therefore, the regions' attractiveness, in terms of accessibility or tax-situation, and the urban-rural character influences the migrants' choice of regional settlement.[42]

Finally, based on the regression results, we then calculated for several specific profiles the probability to immigrate, to graphically show different migratory strategies.

## Results: Importance of the legal and economic contexts in migration flows between Switzerland and Germany

With the foundation of the Federal State in 1848, Switzerland entered a phase characterized by a liberal immigration policy (see Figure 1 for a graphical overview). The country concluded bilateral agreements with 23 states until 1914, granting all citizens, on the basis of reciprocity, the freedom of movement and of professional mobility as well as the right to settle anywhere in the respective countries.[43] Although, these agreements served as a legal protection for Swiss emigrants and expatriates, they eventually created the legal framework for the onset of immigration at the turn of the 20th century.[44]

In this context of people's free movement, immigrants outnumbered emigrants for the first time in 1888.[45] German immigration played an important role in this evolution. Their absolute number continuously increased from 28'300 persons in 1850 to 219'500 persons in 1910, constituting the largest foreign community. In 1910, they formed 5.9 % of the total resident population, the highest proportion of Germans Switzerland has known ever since.[46] The increase in the

39 OECD, Regional aspects of migration, in: OECD (Hg.), Trends in international migration, Paris OECD Publishing 2003, p. 89–113.

40 Everett S. Lee, A theory of migration, in: Demography 3/1 (1966), p. 47–57.

41 John Salt, Types of migration in Europe implications and policy concerns, in: European Population Conference (2005).

42 Nicole van der Gaag, Leo van Wissen, Determinants of the subnational distribution of immigration, in: Tijdschrift voor Economische en Sociale Geografie 92/1 (2001), p. 27–41.

43 Wilhelm Bickel, Bevölkerungsgeschichte und Bevölkerungspolitik der Schweiz seit dem Ausgang des Mittelalters, Zürich 1947, p. 169.

44 Noemi Carrel, Schweiz. Länderprofil, in: focus MIGRATION 22 (2012), http://www.bpb.de/gesellschaft/migration/laenderprofile/139678/schweiz (20.4.2020).

45 André Holenstein, Patrick Kury, Kristina Schulz, Schweizer Migrationsgeschichte. Von den Anfängen bis zur Gegenwart, Baden 2018, p. 209.

46 Ilka Steiner, Migration allemande.

number of German residents prior to WWI can be explained by different push factors out of Germany, namely of socio-political and economic nature, and socioeconomic pull factors from Switzerland. The introduction of the antisocial laws (1878–1890) under Bismarck triggered the emigration of many Germans.[47] Moreover, poor job prospects in Germany and craft trades facing an increasing crisis motivated many young qualified craftsmen to move on predetermined routes through Europe and inter alia to Swiss cities.[48] Finally, German farmers who abandoned agriculture due to international competition during the late nineteenth century found migration to Switzerland to be an opportunity to change occupation.[49] These push factors coincided with the Second Industrial Revolution in Switzerland, which took off after the depression in 1895.[50] Metallurgy, in particular related to the construction and densification of the railway network, as well as other economic sectors increased their demand for foreign labour, especially since many Swiss emigrated overseas during the second part of the nineteenth century.[51] In fact, settling in industrial centres was for a long time easier for foreigners than for Swiss citizens, because there were legal restrictions in place for natives limiting internal migration, as well as rigid social structures and mentalities.[52]

Moreover, cross-border commuters between Germany and Switzerland were a common economic phenomenon during this period, because of the economic boom in the High Rhine Valley before WWI. There seemed to be no obstacles to taking up work on either side of the border and cross-border commuters could change jobs at will, while no authorities cared in which state they lived.[53] Many Swiss companies, mainly in the textile industry, setting up branches on the German territory in order to circumvent customs barriers in Germany, marked the beginning of cross-border traffic in the High Rhine Valley.[54] In fact, Swiss companies initially brought part of their core workforce (mainly skilled workers) with them to the new branches.[55] While it is estimated that around 1910 4500 Swiss cross-border commuters worked in neighbouring Baden, the

47 Marc Vuilleumier, Flüchtlinge und Immigranten in der Schweiz: Ein historischer Überblick, Zürich 1987, p. 41.

48 Ibid., p. 18.

49 Madelyn Holmes, Forgotten migrants. Foreign workers in Switzerland before World War I, Rutherford, Madison 1988, p. 41–42.

50 Vuilleumier, Flüchtlinge und Immigranten, p. 38.

51 Bickel, Bevölkerungsgeschichte, p. 168.

52 Vuilleumier, Flüchtlinge und Immigranten, p. 43.

53 Urs Bloch, Grenzgänger aus Südbaden in Basel-Stadt in den ersten Jahren nach dem Zweiten Weltkrieg, in: Basler Zeitschrift für Geschichte und Altertumskunde (1995), p. 207–235; Banz Marcel, Die deutschen und französischen Grenzgänger auf dem baselstädtischen Arbeitsmarkt, Basel 1964.

54 Bloch, Grenzgänger, p. 108

55 Ibid.

estimated number of Germans, working mainly in Schaffhausen and Kreuzlingen, did not exceed 2000 workers.[56]

After WWI, the demand for labour on the Swiss side weakened due to the downturn of the post-war economic conditions that were prolonged by the effects of the Great Depression.[57] Therefore, the bilateral agreements were constantly weakened and the foundation of the Border Police (Fremdenpolizei) in 1917 allowed for more effective (border and immigrant) controls,[58] also regarding cross-border commuters.[59] Moreover, regarding the particular context of German migration, the «push» factors on the German side had faded. The German government prevented its citizens to leave the country and tried to repatriate its emigrants – in most cases young men needed to defend the country or for its industry. For these reasons, immigration to Switzerland was virtually non-existent and return movements to the country of origin took place. The number of Germans living in Switzerland halved, from 163'770 in 1918 to 88'510 in 1939.

The fear of a renewed recession led the Swiss government to introduce a migratory rotation-model in 1931. With this, the seasonal work permit allowed for a high level of recruitment of foreign workers, without granting them the right to stay on an annual basis. Settlement and family reunification were only possible for those having worked for five consecutive years in Switzerland.

After WWII, an economically prosperous period began. Swiss demand for labour was high, and the recruitment of foreign labour became necessary to sustain economic development. However, the Swiss authorities failed in their attempt to revive the traditional immigration from neighbouring German regions.[60] In fact, initially, German emigration flows were small and mainly directed to the occupying forces' countries, due to restrictive emigration policies that were introduced by France in Germany.[61] Moreover, male labourers were needed in Germany for the reconstruction of the country. The small increase in the German resident population in Switzerland can mainly be attributable to the arrival of young and single women, employed in domestic work, the textile or alimentary industries.[62] Later, emigration from Germany became rare, because of

56 Ibid.

57 Hans-Joachim Hoffmann-Nowotny, Internationale Migration und das Fremde in der Schweiz, in: Edda Currle, Tanja Wunderlich, Friedrich Heckmann (Hg.), Deutschland, ein Einwanderungsland?: Rückblick, Bilanz und neue Fragen, Stuttgart 2001, p. 461–480.

58 Holenstein, Schweizer Migrationsgeschichte.

59 Georg Kreis, Grenzgänger, in: Historisches Lexikon der Schweiz (HLS), Version vom 23.01.2007. Online: https://hls-dhs-dss.ch/de/articles/007843/2007-01-23/ (06.07.2021).

60 Etienne Piguet, L'immigration en Suisse depuis 1948: Une analyse des flux migratoires, Zürich 2005, p. 91.

61 Etienne Piguet, L'immigration en Suisse: Soixante ans d'entrouverture, Lausanne Presses polytechniques et universitaires romandes 2009, p. 15.

62 Ibid., p. 17.

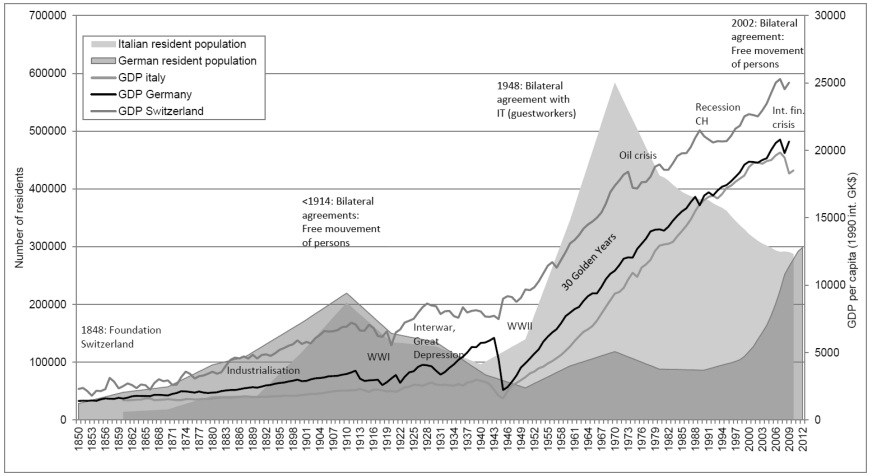


**Figure 1:** Evolution of German and Italian resident populations in Switzerland, Italian, German and Swiss GDP per capita, 1850–2012.

**Source: own design based on data from the Swiss Federal Statistics Office: 1850–1990 Census data (linear extrapolation for inter-decennial data), 1995–2009 PETRA, since 2010 STATPOP. GDP data adopted from the New Maddison Project Database, Bolt and van Zanden (2013).**

the improvement in economic conditions, especially the economic miracle after WWII.

In order to satisfy the high demand of the labour market, the Swiss government turned to Italy and concluded a recruitment agreement in 1948, leading to large-scale immigration of Italian «Guestworkers».[63] During the ‹Trente Glorieuses› (the 30-year period from 1945–1975), Switzerland experienced in relative terms the largest immigration wave in its history. Also, due to the increasing conversion of seasonal work permits into annual residence permits as well as their resulting family reunification and the increasing birth rates of foreigners, the foreign resident population continued to increase. Therefore, growing criticism of the rotation-model as well as increasing xenophobia, led the government to try to limit foreign immigration by introducing contingents from the mid-1960s. But only when Switzerland was hit by the first oil shock in 1975, the foreign resident population declined. Because the renewal of the annual residence permit was conditional on having a work contract, many foreigners returned to their home country.

The introduction of a new immigration policy in 1991 laid the cornerstone for the Europeanization of migration flows to Switzerland. The so called «three-circle model» was based on the country of origin and provided different tiers of rights: immigrants from the first circle, composed of EU/EFTA citizens, were

63 Ibid., p. 15.

granted simplified admission and settlement. The second circle concerned «culturally close» states that had historically well-established migration relations with Switzerland (e.g. North America, Central and Eastern European Countries). Finally, the remaining countries were affiliated with the third circle and were granted immigration only in exceptional circumstances, namely when highly qualified. Finally, the three circles model was abandoned in 1998, when immigration from EU/EFTA countries was privileged.

The bilateral Agreement on the Free Movement of Persons between Switzerland and the EU, which entered into force in June 2002, further affirmed a dual admission policy. For EU15/EFTA citizens, a transitory period was in place.[64] First, from 2002 until mid-2004, whereas the national workers were privileged on the labour market and wages and working conditions were controlled, the annual quotas for EU15/EFTA-citizens increased. Second, from 2004 until 2007, only quotas regulated the immigration of the latter. Finally, the transition period ended in 2007 when EU-15 and EFTA citizens gained equal privileges in this regard.

In this context of free movement of persons, the German resident population experienced hitherto unknown growth rates, reaching in 2006 the level of 1910 with 219,500 residents. However, since the total resident population had increased as well, the share of Germans only reached 3.5 % in 2010.

A similar conclusion can be drawn for German cross-border commuters, because, on the one hand, their number has increased from 34'000 persons at the end of 2002 to 47'000 at the end of 2010.[65] Indeed, despite the transformation of the daily into a weekly return obligation of cross-border commuters in mid-2002, the increase stagnated in at first (less than 1 % between 2002 and 2004) and was highest in 2006 and 2007 (with 9.7 % and 8.4 % respectively), when the priority for Swiss nationals and wage controls were abolished, before ranging around 4 % until 2010. On the other hand, when considering the increase in German immigration, the share of cross-border commuters in comparison with the number of immigrants is rather small.

This review of Switzerland's migration history shows that in the case of immigration from Germany to Switzerland, the legal and economic context have played crucial roles, confirming therefore our first hypothesis. Whereas during the periods of free movement of persons before WWI as well as after 2002 the

64 For more information on other origin groups, see https://www.sem.admin.ch/sem/en/home/themen/fza_schweiz-eu-efta.html (20.4.2020). For cross-border commuters, this transition period started even earlier in 1999. According to Andreas Beerli, Giovanni Peri, The Labor Market Effects of Opening the Border. New Evidence from Switzerland (2015) and the National Bureau of Economic Research, from June 1999 until May 2004, the cantonal immigration offices in the border region were given more autonomy in allowing firms to hire cross-border workers. While full liberalization for cross-border workers was adopted since 2004 in border regions, this right was granted since 2007 in inland regions.

65 Bundesamt für Statistik (BFS), STAT-TAB, Neuchâtel 2010.

German resident population's growth rates were highest, the Italian community presented an exceptional increase during the «Trente Glorieuses», where a bilateral agreement with Italy allowed for the recruitment of seasonal workers.[66] During the same decades that were characterised by a prosperous economic development, the restrictive legal context in Germany decelerated the migration of German citizens to Switzerland and therefore the growth of their resident population.

## Origin and destination

In order to test our second research hypothesis – that opportunity structures, such as cultural, linguistic and geographic proximity or the economic disparities between two countries, determine migration flows from neighbouring countries and are made possible by the context of the free movement of persons –, we now analyse the spatial distribution of German migrants and their state of origin at the turn of the 20th and 21st century by comparing respectively two points in time, before and after the introduction of free movement of persons: 1860–1910 and 1990–2010.

In 1860 most of the German residents lived in Basel-City (see Table 1), which is located on the German border. The canton recruited German workers for its emerging industry, since the rural catchment area on the Swiss side proved to be insufficient.[67] This canton presented the highest share of Germans in the total resident population for the whole period. In 1860, one out of four residents was of German origin in Basel-City. Due to considerable immigration flows at the turn of the 20th century, this proportion even increased to one in three in 1910. In Schaffhausen, another canton located on the German border and presenting the second highest share of Germans in the total resident population over the whole period, this share increased from 5.5 % in 1860 to 17.5 % in 1910. Finally, even though not located on the border with Germany, the city of Zurich has always been an urban attraction pole, due to its high demand for labour, explaining its high number of German residents (see Table 1).

66 Piguet, entrouverture.
67 Urner, Die Deutschen in der Schweiz, p. 575.

| Year | Number of German residents | | Proportion of German residents |
|---|---|---|---|
| | Ranking | Proportion of Germans living in the five cantons | Ranking |
| 1860 | **BS**, **ZH**, **SG**, BE, NE* | 61 % | **BS**, **SH**, NE, **ZH**, **TG/BL** |
| 1910 | **ZH**, **BS**, **SG**, **TG**, BE | 71 % | **BS**, **SH**, **TG**, **ZH**, **BL** |
| 1990 | **ZH**, **AG**, BE, **SG**, **BS** | 58 % | **BS**, **SH**, **ZH/TG**/ZG |
| 2010 | **ZH**, **AG**, BE, **SG**, **TG** | 62 % | **BS**, **SH/TG**, **ZH**, ZG |

**Table 1:** Five cantons with the largest communities and highest proportion of German residents, selected years between 1860 and 2010

**Notes: Cantons in bold border Germany. In total, seven cantons border Germany: Basel-City (BS), Basel-Country (BL), Aargau (AG), Zurich (ZH), Schaffhausen (SH), Thurgau (TG) and St. Gallen (SG).**
***Neuchâtel is the only canton in this table that is located in the French-speaking part of Switzerland. Its importance can be explained by the King of Prussia's sovereign rights over this canton until 1857.**
**Sources: own presentation based for 1860 and 1910 on Urner (1976: 575); for 1990 and 2010 on SFSO online – PETRA and STATPOP**

The concentration of German residents was therefore most likely in regions bordering Germany as well as in German-speaking urban areas where the cultural and linguistic proximity fostered integration and the industry and commerce offered work opportunities.[68]

This phenomenon was even accentuated when considering the region of origin. According to Urner, «while the Germans from the South were attracted far beyond the scope of natural population osmosis by the border cantons and their considerable economic potential, the proximity of the border only played a subordinate role for the Germans from northern Germany».[69] For Holmes, the territory between Germany and Switzerland can be seen as having formed one social, cultural and industrial region, which underwent one of the largest economic expansions of the country before WWI.[70] She therefore considers migration from the German border regions into a Swiss industrial centre, such as Basel, St. Gall, Schaffhausen and even Zurich, «although technically in another country, as a population movement within one region» and «as part of a larger framework of regional development, including the movement of capital and technology».[71]

Of all German residents living in 1910 in Switzerland, four out of five came from a bordering state: 36 % originated from Baden, 26 % from Württemberg, 11 % from Bavaria and 7 % from Elsass-Lothringen. Only 11 % immigrated to Switzerland from the enormous territory of Prussia in the north and 7 % from the remaining regions.[72]

68 Ibid., p. 581.
69 Ibid., p. 573. Own translation by the author.
70 Holmes, Forgotten migrants, p. 31.
71 Ibid., p. 28 and p. 39.
72 Urner, Die Deutschen in der Schweiz, p. 575.

Schaffhausen again presents a good example of the specific situation of a border region: It was the preferred work and residential canton for the neighbouring Badeners and Württembergers. In contrast, for the Germans from the northern states, Schaffhausen was of no importance. Even for the Bavarians, who came from a bordering region, it offered little incentive for settlement, in spite of the geographic, cultural and linguistic proximity as well as work opportunities.[73] The spatial distribution of Bavarians is in general noteworthy. Aside from their concentration in eastern Switzerland, their spread tended to be more geographically balanced. According to Urner (1976) and in line with Lee, it seems that Lake Constance, presenting a natural barrier for migration, fostered more distant migration flows.[74]

However, many foreigners also moved to construction sites in tourist centres, such as in the Grisons canton, and to industries that were not necessarily located in urban areas.[75] For instance, the canton of Thurgau, which borders Germany, continuously gained new German residents and has therefore been listed among the five cantons with the biggest German community ever since 1910. For the period before 1914, a possible explanation lies in the expanding textile industry but also in its geographic and cultural proximity to Germany.[76]

An exception was the canton of Neuchâtel (see also Table 1), which is located in the French-speaking part. High German immigration flows were made possible by the King of Prussia's sovereign rights over the canton until the mid-1850s. When abandoning his rights in 1857, immigration flows decreased. This specific case, presenting the perfect setting for the free movement of persons between two territories, confirms our finding regarding the crucial role of the legal context in neighbouring European migration.

Table 1 underlines the dominance of the seven border cantons in terms of migration flows from Germany to Switzerland. It shows that over the whole period the numerical or relative importance of German residents amongst the cantons barely changed. The perpetuation of these migration flows between 1860 and 1914 was enabled by social transformations triggered by migration itself.[77] However, with the changes in the macro-contextual conditions for European migrants, that is, the introduction of more restrictive immigration policies after WWI as well as changed economic conditions, especially the economic miracle after WWII, migration flows of Germans to Switzerland and therefore also their

73 Ibid.

74 Lee, A theory of migration.

75 Holmes, Forgotten migrants, p. 35.

76 Johannes Zemmrich, Die Bevölkerung der Schweiz nach der Zählung vom 1. Dezember 1900, in: Geographische Zeitschrift 8/3 (1902), p. 163–169, p. 164.

77 Douglas S. Massey, Joaquin Arango, Graeme Hugo, Ali Kouaouci, Adela Pellegrino, J. Edward Taylor, Theories of international migration: a review and appraisal, in: Population and Development Review 19/3 (1993), p. 431–466.

spatial concentration decreased, while they increased within the framework of the free movement of persons.

The maps in Figure 2 graphically show that the demographic growth and decline took place mainly in the border regions as well as in the German-speaking cantons. For 1910, Urner observes, «the German-speaking parts with their massive economic growth attracted more and more Germans, while at the same time the difficulties of linguistic integration [in French or Italian-speaking parts] had a negative effect on German immigration».[78] More distant regions from the border as well as French- or Italian-speaking regions seemed less affected by the legal changes, since the proportions of German residents in the cantonal populations remained rather stable over the analysed time frame. Migration over longer distances, to culturally and linguistically more different regions, could be explained by more permanent migratory aspirations and plans. This tendency for spatial concentration at destination within the framework of the free movement of persons was however stronger at the turn of the 20th century than at that of the 21st century: whereas the proportion of Germans living in five out of 25 cantons passed from 61 % in 1860 to 71 % in 1910, it increased from 58 % in 1990 to 62 % in 2010.[79]

However, the spatial concentrations of immigrants within Switzerland as well as within their origin were lower at the turn of the 21st century compared to the turn of the 20th century. In 2010, and surely due to the development of modern transport, only 35.1 % of the German residents living in Switzerland originated from a neighbouring state, with Elsass-Lothringen no longer belonging to Germany: 23.3 % from Baden-Württemberg and 11.8 % from Bavaria. A further 13.5 % came from Nordrhein-Westfalien. These states are at the same time the most populated ones, explaining the high number of German immigrants originating from these areas.[80] When weighted for the demographic importance of the state of origin, we find that 10.8 % came from Sachsen, 10.5 % from Thüringen and 10.3 % from Baden-Württemberg. These first two states are not situated on the border and were part of the former German Democratic Republic (GDR).

In our dataset, we see in fact that migrants who were born in the former GDR were less educated than those born in the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG). Therefore, it seems that they aimed at different labour market sectors. If jobs in sectors requiring lower qualifications were already occupied in Germany by other Germans or immigrants, Switzerland, with its workforce shortage in all sectors, probably presented an interesting opportunity. When checking for their occupation, they indeed frequently worked in tourism or gastronomy, sectors

78 Urner, Die Deutschen in der Schweiz, p. 577. Own translation by the author.

79 Ibid.

80 Nordrhein-Westfalen accounts for 22 % of the total German population in 2010, Bavaria for 15 % and Baden-Württemberg for 13 %.

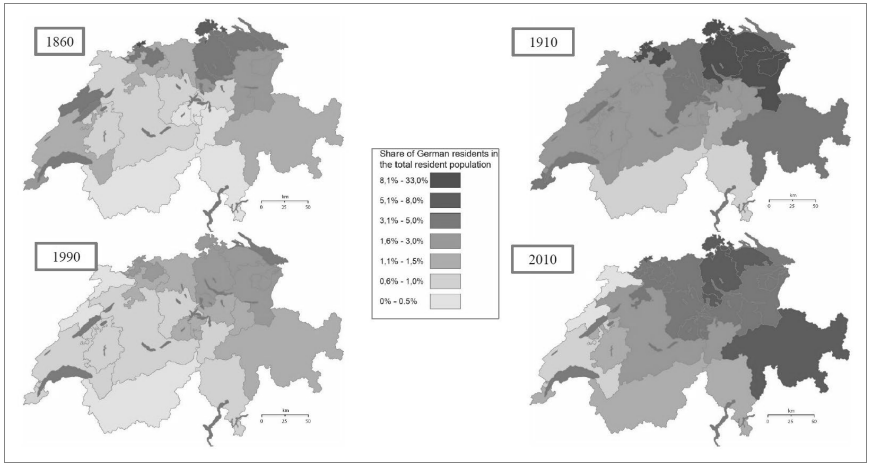


**Figure 2:** Proportion of the German resident population in the total resident population, 1860, 1910, 1990 and 2010, Switzerland.

**Note: The shading categories have been chosen by the author in order to visualize both the extreme values reached in 1910 and 2010, during the period of free movement of persons, and the low values of 1860 and 1990.**
**Sources: own presentation based for 1860 and 1910 on Urner (1976: 575); for 1990 and 2010 on SFSO – PETRA and STATPOP. / Maps: Philcarto and SFSO ThemaKart.**

that often provide only seasonal work; this would confirm the existence of migratory strategies, enabled by a specific labour demand, as already observed for the period 1860–1910.

These findings confirm our second hypothesis and underline the importance of the linguistic, cultural and geographic proximity in explaining migratory movements.[81] Moreover, the high labour demand, triggered by the favourable economic situation, fostered migratory movements. These opportunity structures were further accentuated within the context of a liberal migration regime at the turn of the 20th and 21st centuries, accentuating migration flows from the German border regions to Swiss border regions; the result being a veritable population osmosis along the border between Switzerland and Germany.

## Today's border region immigrants

On the basis of individual data from 2010, we have the possibility to test our third hypothesis regarding the existence of differing migratory strategies when arriving in a border or inland region under the provision of the free movement of persons. Therefore, we ran a logistic regression (see Table 2), based on which we calculated the probability to immigrate to a border region for different profiles (see Figure 3).

81 Steiner, Spatial selectivity.

The finding that the probability to immigrate to a border region is higher for all age categories except for Germans aged 18–24 is little surprising, because all universities, except for Basel, are situated in an inland region. However, the odds ratios show a clear tendency that, with increasing age, German immigrants tend to move to a border region. The odds ratios for retirees are statistically insignificant, which can be due to the fact that the effects of this age category are captured by the variable reason of immigration. Retirees present lower probabilities of moving to a border region than Germans entering the Swiss labour market. This result is consistent with earlier findings, showing higher probabilities for retirees to move to the warmer cantons in the south of Switzerland.[82]

We find important differences regarding the family configuration. Married and divorced German immigrants, rather than singles, as well as family migrants rather than immigrants entering the labour market, tend to move to a border region. On the one hand, these findings show that German immigrants who are part of some kind of family configuration might be seeking a certain proximity with their country of origin. On the other hand, the result highlights that the absence of a family and therefore commitments undoubtedly permits a broader spectrum of migratory choices and projects.

| | **Odds Ratios** | **Sig.** |
|---|---|---|
| *Age group* | | *** |
| 18–24 | 0.818 | *** |
| 25–29 | 0.93 | ** |
| 30–39 | 0.925 | *** |
| 40–49 (ref.) | 1 | |
| 50–64 | 1.069 | * |
| 65+ | 1.015 | |
| *Gender* | | ** |
| Women (ref.) | 1 | |
| Men | 1.054 | ** |
| *Civil status* | | *** |
| Single | 0.825 | *** |
| Married (ref.) | 1 | |
| Divorced | 1.074 | * |
| Widowed | 0.812 | |
| *Permit* | | *** |
| Short-term permit | 0.696 | *** |
| Residence or settlement permit (ref.) | 1 | |

82 Ibid.

| | Odds Ratios | Sig. |
|---|---|---|
| *Reason of immigration* | | ** |
| Work | 0.92 | ** |
| Retirement | 0.628 | *** |
| Without gainful employment | 1.073 | |
| Studies | 0.705 | *** |
| Family reunion (ref.) | 1 | |
| Other | 0.872 | |
| *Born in a border state of Germany* | | *** |
| Yes (ref.) | 1 | |
| No | 0.73 | *** |
| *Commune of immigration* | | *** |
| Part of an agglomeration (ref.) | 1 | |
| Not part of an agglomeration | 1.947 | *** |
| N | 68474 | |

**Table 2:** Factors influencing the choice of a Swiss border region for German immigrants, 2010

**Note: ***=p<0.01, **=p<0.05, *=p<0.01**
**Source: own calculations based on data from the SFSO – STATPOP, 2010.**

Swiss border regions are then rather associated with longer durations of residence by German residents. People detaining a short-term permit present a higher probability to move to an inland region than a Germans with an annual residence permit.

Finally, when analysing the context, we find that immigrants moving to the border region tend to move to places outside an agglomeration.

We therefore observe two types of migration flows under the provision of the free movement of persons. On the one hand, the so called Eurostars tend to realise their work or study motivated migratory projects in inland regions and in agglomerations. This tends to concern younger migrants without any family commitments.[83] On the other hand, migration to border regions is motivated by family reasons or other non-labour market related intentions. The migrant population tends to be composed of annual residents, born in a border region of Germany. The migration is therefore of short distance but of higher durability. One could qualify this type as an «osmosis-settlement» migration. The latter also needs to be put in perspective with cross-border commuting, which, addi-

83 Favell, Eurostars and eurocities.

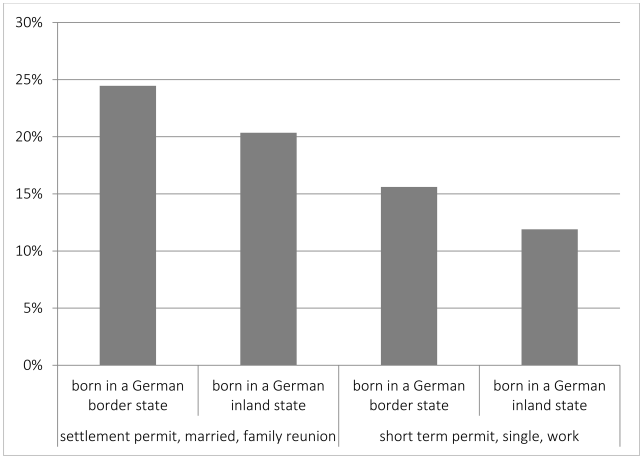


**Figure 3:** Probability to migrate to a Swiss border region for a 30–39 year old woman, according to different characteristics (in %), based on logistic regression results presented in Table 4-2.

**Note: Since there are very little gender differences, the probabilities for men are somewhat higher (up to + 1%). These four profiles were chosen by the author in order to graphically display the different migratory strategies.**
**Source: own calculations based on data from the SFSO – STATPOP, 2010.**

tionally to immigration, provides the border regions with workers of all age groups.[84]

## Conclusions

The paper provides a case study on German migration flows to Switzerland prior to WWI and after 2002 in order to gain a better understanding of intra-European migration dynamics in the context of the free movement of persons. Switzerland presents a very specific case with its four linguistic regions and small size. According to Bickel, whenever an economic gap has existed compared to the surrounding nations, the linguistic and cultural affinities render the settlement of foreign citizens much easier and are therefore a basic precondition for high immigration to Switzerland.[85] The smaller a country is the relatively bigger are the border areas, where the populations from two neighbouring states mix.

However, our analysis shows that the macro context and namely the immigration policy in place also seem to be decisive in the demographic evolution of the foreign resident population. Whereas during the periods of free movement

84 24% of cross-border commuters in BS, BL, TG, and SH are aged between 30 and 39 years, 36% between 40 and 49 years, while 26% are aged over 50 years.

85 Bickel, Bevölkerungsgeschichte, p. 168.

of persons before WWI as well as after 2002 the German resident population's growth rates were highest, the Italian community presented an exceptional increase during the «Trente Glorieuses». During the same decades, the rapid economic development in Germany and consequently the labour force shortage decelerated the migration of German citizens to Switzerland and therefore the growth of their resident population.

The group of German nationals presented quite an unequal geographical distribution over the Swiss cantons since they were mainly concentrated in the seven border cantons and more generally in the German-speaking regions. This finding underlines the importance of the linguistic and cultural as well as the geographic proximity in explaining migratory movements.[86] However, it seems to be even accentuated within the context of liberal migration regimes.[87] Furthermore, the depopulation in the French-speaking regions between 1910 and 1990 was less pronounced than in the German-speaking regions and namely in the border regions. The costs of the migration when crossing a language border seem to be too high to envisage a short-term migratory project right from the outset.

Whereas between 1860 and 1910 a veritable population osmosis took place along the border between Switzerland and Germany, different migratory strategies can be observed for the contemporary migratory movements between the two countries. On the one hand, we observe an «osmosis-settlement» in the border regions that is most often motivated by family reasons or other non-labour market related intentions. On the other hand, the so-called Eurostar-mobility population tends to undertake its work or study motivated migratory projects in inland regions (or Basel) and in agglomerations. It concerns rather younger migrants without any family commitments.

Our findings confirm other work showing that the national scale does matter and that the distinction between internal and international movements needs to be maintained. As Hollifield argues, «migration […] does not take place in a legal or institutional void. […] states have been and still are deeply involved in organising and regulating migration».[88] This is also the case in cross-border economic areas, where commuting over a national border takes place. The latter is subject to regulations and require a special permit. However, we support that the national scale should rather be viewed as contingent rather than absolute in its differentiation of migration types and processes.[89] The aforementioned «osmosis-settlement» migration can therefore rather be viewed as a prolongation of internal movements, often within the same cross-border economic area, even though a national border is crossed.

86 Belot, Cultural barriers; Lee, A theory of migration.
87 King, ‹Mind the gap!›.
88 Hollifiel, The emerging migration state, p. 78.
89 Ellis, Reinventing.

Applying Sen's capability-based development concept to migration, de Haas conceptualised migration as a function of capabilities, aspirations and opportunities: «People will only migrate if they perceive better opportunities elsewhere and have the capabilities to move. Although this assertion implies choice and agency, it also shows that this agency is constrained by historically determined conditions which create concrete opportunity structures.»[90] His framework allows for the integration of internal and international migration within the same explanatory model. While it is the aspiration to settle down in a culturally close environment that explains family motivated and non-work related short-distance migration to the border districts, long-distance and short-term inland migration can better be explained by work or study-related ambitions. The recent liberalization of the migration regime seems to have fostered the opportunities and therefore rendered the aspirations to move for whatever reason from Germany to Switzerland achievable.

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90 Senn, Development as freedom; de Haas, Determinants of international migration.