

Research Project

Geography of the Swiss Foundation Sector. Atlas and analysis of the Swiss public-benefit foundations, their spatial distribution, their purpose categories and geographical spheres of activities.

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Project title Geography of the Swiss Foundation Sector. Atlas and analysis of the Swiss public-benefit foundations, their spatial distribution, their purpose categories and geographical spheres of activities.

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There are roughly 12'600 registered and hugely diverse public-benefit foundations registered in Switzerland, which fulfill all kinds of functions in society, such as contributing to social needs, promote research and innovations or engage in culture and arts, to name the most important areas of activities. While legal and economic studies are common, the Swiss foundation sector has not been studied from a geographical point of view. The thesis carries out the first empirical research and collects systematically geographic information available on the Swiss public-benefit foundations. The primary objective is to gather, describe and map the spatial distribution of the foundations registered in the commercial registries up to 31.12.2014 on a cantonal and municipal level.

Further, the foundations are classified and mapped according to their purposes into a given nonprofit classification system (National Taxonomy of Exempt Entities), and information on their spheres of activities within and outside Switzerland complete the picture. By analyzing and describing the geographies of the Swiss public-benefit foundations, the thesis intends to create a thematic atlas of the sector, visualizing the spatial patterns of the public-benefit foundations and showing that they are tightly embedded within the Swiss society. Besides, the geographical information gathered and the detailed codification of the purposes areas of the Swiss foundations will lay the groundwork for further studies and research in the field of philanthropy and geography.

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