Moving of Materials and Spatial Concentration
World Corn Trade and the Exploitation of Milk in Switzerland since 1853

As a phenomenon, importing corn can be traced back even to premodern times in some regions belonging to what is now Switzerland. Nevertheless, it took the construction of the railway infrastructure in the 1850s for corn prices to decrease to an extent that enabled the conversion of agriculture from cultivation to livestock farming – first of all, to dairy farming. Moreover, new transportation prospects allowed for a more directed application of fodders. As a consequence of the increasing milk and cheese production, new ways of exploitation have been becoming economically interesting. Milk powder and processed cheese production are two prominent examples. That the monetary contribution of agriculture to economic welfare in today‘s so-called developed societies and states is small, must historically be understood in correlation with the rise of transport facilities as railways, shipping and traffic. The PhD project aims at contributing to the investigation of those techniques, which are pertinent to world corn trade, such as stocking and processing, and considering their relevance for milk exploitation in Switzerland. Thus, it is supposed to highlight the changing importance of spatial referents and to reveal the correlated spatial concentration of specific working tasks.