

International Students on the Move

How did their mobility become public policy in Switzerland?

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In 2010, the Swiss Parliament adopted the Neyrinck initiative.

The new law facilitates the admission and integration of Non-EU students into the labour market after completion of their tertiary studies.

The new law represents an opening of Switzerland's foreigner's law.

How can the adoption of this initiative be explained?

Research questions

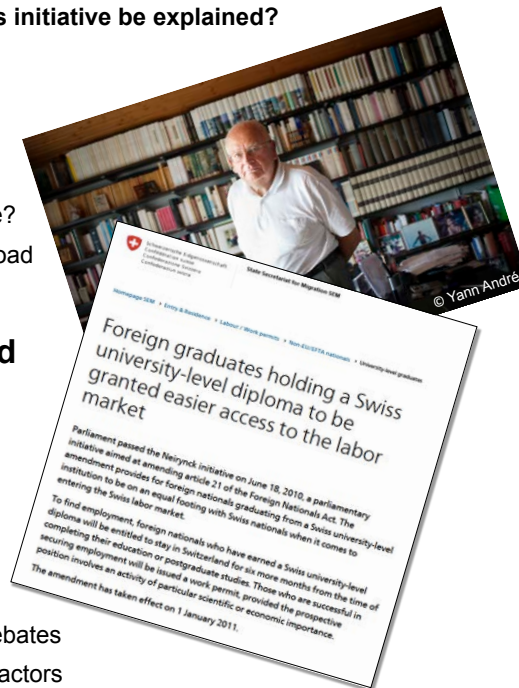
- What representations of international students were used to support the initiative?
- Why did these ideas find broad consensus?

..to better understand

- the power of arguments in political decision-making
- the politics of highly skilled immigration

..through

- analysis of parliamentary debates
- interviews with key political actors



Neyrinck's arguments

"...if we have a highly valuable candidate, who has for example finished his doctorate, if he has a job offer and if we deny him the opportunity to stay here, he will not return to his country because a researcher in African countries cannot do research because the means are non-existent. So he goes to the United States..."

"The argument that I used before the two assemblies, and the commissions of the two assemblies, was simple enough: what is the point of spending public money to train individuals to give them away to the competition?"

".... The law as it stood was a suicidal act that was contrary to the interests of the country"

(Interview 15.04.2016)

Hypotheses

- Prof. Jacques Neyrinck's biography plays a key role
- International students are viewed as agents of technical innovation
- Students' mobility: tension between openness and protective policies

Authors that inspire us

- Boswell, C., Geddes, A. and Scholten, 2011
- Cerny, P. G. 1997

Preliminary interpretations

- As an immigrant, EPFL professor, Parliamentarian, and promoter of "research without passport", Jacques Neyrinck effectively connects the interests of international students, universities, and the Parliament.
- His arguments of "brain loss" and "brain gain" were persuasive narratives in gaining the Swiss Parliamentarians' support.
- Such narratives coincide with Switzerland's transition to a "competitive state", whereby political actors try to capture global economic potentials.
- The initiative is emblematic of Switzerland's paradigm shift from migration to mobility.
- The popular initiative "Stop Mass Immigration", accepted in 2014, tends to weaken the changes brought by the Neyrinck initiative.