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Accessibility Long Term Perspectives

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Abstract

Improved accessibility and its correlate lower generalized cost of contact, travel and trade have been sought by dynamic human societies for their economic and social benefits throughout recorded history. The paper will reflect about this process at a number of different scales and temporal scales based on a conceptual model. Looking back at European history, it traces the interaction between Christaller's logic of local market areas and the idea of (low contact cost) network cities. Focusing on Switzerland since 1950 it will show how network investment changed the relative distribution of population and employment and how this interacted with changes in the preferences of the travelers. Using a recent snapshot of household travel data from a substantial sample of Swiss maintain their social networks over often very large areas, the paper tries to answer the question of what will happen in the future, if the current trend of ever increasing costs of contact will persist.

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