

How does the naturalization process affect the naturalization-rate in Switzerland?

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Foreword

The subject of immigration and naturalization has been part of my family's life and mine ever since we arrived in Switzerland from Syria in 1999. As the Syrian Conflict emerged in 2014 and many of our relatives sought refuge in Switzerland and various parts of Europe, I began to notice the considerable variations in immigration policies and naturalization procedures, even within the same nation. When I got an assistant position at the KPM Institute of the University of Bern, my interest in this topic became an integral part of my daily responsibilities. This marked the first occasion where my fascination with the subject melded with my professional engagement. During this period, I delved into a wealth of knowledge concerning diverse municipalities and cantons across Switzerland through the data collection efforts conducted on behalf of the Federal Office of Migration. This unique viewpoint, coupled with my role as an assistant, motivated me to delve into the examination and comparison of distinct naturalization processes within Switzerland.

Abstract

Switzerland's diverse naturalization system empowers municipalities to shape migration policies, given their autonomy in the federal structure. This study examines 232 Swiss municipalities and 26 cantons to understand if disparities in procedures and impact naturalization rates. Using a mixed-methods approach, the present research introduces an administrative angle, evaluating the influence of administrative burden on municipal-level naturalization rates. Quantitative findings reveal the influence of legal requirements, political climate and interactions between deciding body, preparing body and politics, while administrative burden lacks substantial evidence in the quantitative analysis. On the other hand, qualitative insights highlight candidates' concerns about administrative burden. This research underscores the need for further exploration, bridging qualitative and quantitative aspects for a comprehensive understanding of naturalization dynamics.

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1. Introduction

Switzerland has one of the most diverse naturalization systems. Due to its multi-level structure and federal organization, municipalities have significant autonomy in shaping migration policies, notably in the realm of naturalization procedures and the concession of municipal citizenship (Helbling, 2010). This role is particularly crucial due to the fact that municipal citizenship often serves as a prerequisite for obtaining citizenship at both the cantonal and national level (Helbling & Kriesi, 2004). Consequently, municipalities play a pivotal role as the starting point of the entire naturalization process (Wanner & Piguet, 2002).

While the basic criteria are established at the national level, such as language proficiency, duration of residence, adherence to laws, and absence of threat to public safety, the 26 cantons (See *Appendix 1* for a list and abbreviation of all the cantons) have the authority to further specify or expand upon these criteria. Despite most cantons also imposing criteria for municipal citizenship at the cantonal level, some allocate limited discretion to municipalities regarding additional criteria (Steiner, 2004). Moreover, municipalities enjoy substantial flexibility in tailoring procedural specifics, including which bodies adjudicate applications and how the candidate's criteria are verified (Wicker, 2004). This latitude can result in wide procedural heterogeneity among municipalities even within the same canton, yielding disparate processes for candidates based on their residence. Disparities in administrative requirements due to structural distinctions between political units can lead to administrative barriers and consequent exclusion (Moren & Mullins, 2017). In the context of naturalization, this translates to unequal opportunities for successfully completing the process and attaining Swiss citizenship, depending on geographical residency. Prior research has highlighted that this diversity can lead to inequality in the likelihood of successful naturalization for candidates in certain perspectives (Federal Office of Migration, 2005; Federal Commission for Migration Issues, 2010; Federal Commission against Racism, 2007). Investigating these disparities is essential due to the principles of equality, rationality, and transparency fundamental to a constitutional state, enshrined in Switzerland's Federal Constitution. Such an inquiry can enhance understanding among both the population, especially candidates, and the administration, potentially leading to greater efficiency in the administrative naturalization process.

While previous research has delved into the influences of different naturalization policy typologies and their effects on naturalization rates in Switzerland, these studies have predominantly focused on certain aspects. A 2012 report by the Federal Commission on Migration (FCM) examined how migration policy procedures and design impact naturalization

rates at the cantonal level. Another study highlighted the influence of cantonal naturalization practices on naturalization rates (Bolliger, 2004). Nonetheless, according to Wanner et al. (2002), the municipality has the most pivotal role in the naturalization process, underscoring the importance of investigating this level as well. Even if effect of naturalization practice on naturalization rates was found on cantonal level, another comparative case study came to opposite findings on municipal level. Investigating naturalization procedures in specific municipalities within the canton of Solothurn revealed that more favorable naturalization conditions do not always lead to higher naturalization rates (Witmer, 2008). Given these divergent findings, an investigation at the municipal level becomes imperative for further clarifications.

Additionally in 2018, Switzerland underwent a national revision of the Citizenship Act. This should impact naturalization procedures across the country like former studies of former revisions could show (Müller & Sammons, 2012). Consequently, an examination of the nexus between naturalization processes and rates becomes necessary under the revised federal law, as the mentioned previous studies were conducted before this revision.

The central focus of this study is to provide clarity on the dynamics within the naturalization process and their influence on naturalization rates. A specific emphasis lies on identifying the primary mechanisms that impact the naturalization process, particularly at the municipal level, which is regarded as the pivotal administrative entity. Diverging from existing research, this study additionally explores the correlation using the concept of administrative burden, which will be explained more detailed subsequently. This approach seeks to ascertain whether differences in naturalization rates stem from disparities in the process, thereby contributing novel insights from an administrative standpoint. Hence, the research question of this study is:

“How does the naturalization process affect the naturalization rate in Switzerland?”

The current study is organized as follows: The theoretical chapter introduces naturalization processes in Switzerland and explores administrative burdens, establishing a foundation for formulating relevant hypotheses. Subsequently, the empirical design is presented to elucidate the research methodology. This is followed by the presentation of results, and in the discussion chapter, these results are analyzed and contextualized. Finally, the study concludes with a summary of findings in the concluding chapter.

2. Theoretical Framework

In the pursuit of answering the research question, an understanding of the Swiss naturalization process and its unique attributes is essential. Furthermore, the theoretical framework of administrative burden will be harnessed to elucidate how divergent processes are anticipated to impact the ensuing naturalization rates. This chapter aims to provide comprehensive insights into the concept of naturalization itself, while delving into the intricate ways through which administrative burdens influence the subject under investigation.

2.1 Citizenship in Switzerland and naturalization rates

To acquire Swiss citizenship, an individual must successfully navigate the national naturalization process. Common prerequisites across countries typically encompass elements such as residing in the country for a specified duration, proficiency in the national language, adherence to the law, and knowledge of the country's history or political system (Hammar, 1990; Soysal, 1994). While specific criteria vary from state to state, these dimensions are often encompassed (Goodman, 2010). Focusing on Switzerland's political landscape, a noteworthy facet is the autonomy afforded to subnational governments at the federal level, as enshrined in the constitution (Vatter, 2018). Citizenship in Switzerland can be achieved on three levels: municipal, cantonal, and federal. Federal citizenship can only be granted when municipal and cantonal citizenships are also earned. This reflects the interdependence of all three due to Switzerland's federalist history (Steiner, 2004). The study centers on national citizenship and therefore on candidates obtaining all three citizenships simultaneously. Since cantonal and municipal requirements by law cannot be less stringent than national requirements, it's logical to examine regulations at both cantonal and municipal levels for this purpose.

There are various routes for acquiring national citizenship, including parentage, marriage, adoption, and regular naturalization. Among these options, regular naturalization stands out as the most common choice, particularly among immigrants (Federal Statistics Office, 2022). Federal regulations primarily govern naturalization through parentage, marriage, and adoption, rendering the process more uniform across Switzerland in contrast to regular naturalization.

The Swiss Citizenship Act outlines formal requirements in Article nine, including possessing a settlement permit, meeting a minimum residency duration in Switzerland, and determining how to calculate it.

Article 11 enumerates material requirements, chiefly centered around successful integration, absence of threats to internal or external security, and familiarity with Swiss culture and life.

Article 12 further elaborates on specific integration criteria, allowing cantons to establish additional criteria, while Article 15 roughly addresses the process within cantons.

While residency and lawfulness can be easily verified by federal bodies, evaluating integration and cultural familiarity proves more intricate and falls under the competences of municipalities (Helbling, 2010). Municipalities possess autonomy in choosing how to assess these aspects. For instance, they can opt to require candidates to pass a civic test or participate in an interview, commonly used to evaluate language skills, understanding of the political system, Swiss history, and integration status (Galeano et al., 2022). This holds particular significance for regular naturalizations, as these requisites are evaluated not by federal bodies but by cantonal and municipal entities. Given the limited national-level regulations for regular naturalization, cantons and municipalities wield the authority to establish criteria, processes, and verification methods, resulting in considerable heterogeneity in naturalization processes and rates throughout Switzerland. This inconvenience underscores the focus of this study on regular naturalization.

On the other hand, there are two most common methods to measure success of naturalization: the rejection rate and the success rate. Rejection rates reflect the number of rejections compared to total number of applications within an political unit. They are challenging to discern, as they fail to account for informal rejections stemming from informal suggestions or dialogues at a street bureaucracy level (Wanner & Piguet, 2002). Additionally, they are not publicly available for all political units and therefore hard to collect. Alternatively, the naturalization rate, which captures the ratio of successful naturalizations to the total number of eligible foreigners, proves valuable. This metric offers precise insights into successful naturalizations in specific regions, making it particularly relevant when scrutinizing particular political units over time for example. However, the naturalization rate overlooks demographic discrepancies among political units, such as differences in population size, age, place of birth, or length of stay – factors shown to influence naturalization rates (Wanner & Piguet, 2002). To mitigate these challenges and make comparison between political units possible, Wanner and Piguet developed the *standardized naturalization rate* for Switzerland in 2000. This metric neutralizes disparities between regions and populations, making it a prominent tool in studies of

naturalization rates in Switzerland (Bolliger, 2004; Galeano et al., 2022; Pecoraro, 2012; Helbling, 2010; Wichmann et al., 2011).

Numerous researches have examined the influence of policy design, individual factors, administrative mechanisms and other factors on naturalization rates. Previous research has shown that individual-level factors like educational attainment, place of birth, and urban residence influence successful naturalization and, consequently, municipal naturalization rates (Pecoraro, 2012). Additionally, studies indicate that personal and cultural perceptions of citizenship impact naturalization rates within a political unit (Burchell, 1995; Zürcher, 2004). In alignment with earlier findings, this understanding of citizenship is mirrored in the political climate of a political unit, further affecting naturalization rates (Helbling, 2010; Helbling & Kriesi, 2004). Politics also exerts influence on the naturalization process through elected officials who shape administrative procedures such as naturalization or determine application outcomes based on ideological considerations (Arn & Fassnacht, 2004). However, earlier studies yield contradictory findings regarding the impact of a municipality's political climate on naturalization rates (Bolliger, 2004; Helbling & Kriesi, 2004). To enhance clarity in this realm, the study introduces a preliminary hypothesis to elucidate the political climate's effect on naturalization rates in Switzerland:

H1: The more restrictive a political unit's climate in migration politics is, the lower the naturalization rate.

Upon closer examination of the naturalization process, distinct mechanisms come into focus, wherein political actors leverage their roles to advance their ideological agendas (Herd & Moynihan, 2018; Helbling & Kriesi, 2004; Zürcher, 2004). The utilization of their positions to align the naturalization process with their ideologies can be perceived both as an individual choice of politicians and as a structural element from the candidate's perspective. This structural aspect pertains to the administrative entity empowered by law or constitution to make naturalization determinations. As previous investigations have demonstrated, discrepancies in naturalization rates can be attributed to variations in the decision-making bodies (Helbling, 2010; Helbling & Kriesi, 2004). One study in Switzerland could show, that the rejection rate is highest when decisions are made in closed ballots and lowest when entrusted to a civic municipality (Helbling & Kriesi, 2004). Furthermore, a separate study found that naturalization rates surged by approximately 50% when politicians assumed decision-making roles instead of citizens (Hainmueller & Hangartner, 2019). Thus, it is posited that the composition of the

decision-making body, coupled with its political climate, significantly shapes the naturalization rate, as articulated in the formulated hypothesis H2a:

H2a: The naturalization rate is influenced by the type of the deciding organ and its political climate.

In certain instances, the entity tasked with the investigation is distinct from the one responsible for making the final decision, often taking on a preparatory role, particularly through conducting interviews to assess specific requisite criteria (Zürcher, 2004). As evidenced, professionalization in the form of a commission bolsters the naturalization process, as engaged actors advance their political agendas through negotiations while adhering to explicit frameworks and maintaining objectivity (Zürcher, 2004). By conducting interviews and thus shaping the foundation for subsequent decisions, the preparatory body gains an avenue to exert influence over the process and consequently impact the naturalization process. The extent of this preparatory body's influence on naturalization rates remains relatively unexplored within this context and warrants examination in this study:

H2b: The naturalization rate is influenced by the type of preparing body and its political climate.

2.2 Administrative burden and naturalization rates

Beside candidate attributes, the political context, and the involved bodies process, additional factors exist that likely influence the naturalization rate from the perspective of candidates. The administrative procedure itself and the variations among municipalities in this context remain largely unexplored. Thus, this study introduces a public-administrative perspective to elucidate the disparities in naturalization rate outcomes by using the theory of administrative burden. To bridge this gap in research, the theory of administrative burden, as mentioned by Herd and Moynihan (2018), is harnessed. The concept of administrative burden, encompasses the interaction between the state and the individual, with a focus on how this interaction is mediated by the process and the associated costs that individuals must invest in that specific interaction. The literature identifies three distinct types of costs, as highlighted in the following *Table 1*:

Table 1. Cost Types of Administrative Burden (Herd & Moynihan, 2018a)

Cost type	Definition
<i>Learning costs</i>	emerge from seeking of information about public services.
<i>Compliance costs</i>	emerge as an individual has to comply with rules and requirements of the process.
<i>Psychological costs</i>	contain the loss of independence, or stigma that come from these encounters.

In the context of naturalization, *learning costs* arise at the outset when candidates must inform themselves with the prerequisites and procedures of citizenship acquisition. The degree of these costs varies based on the accessibility of information and forms. For instance, costs are minimized when individuals can access information and forms conveniently through municipal websites, but rise when a personal visit to the office is mandatory. Field experiments have demonstrated that enhanced accessibility to information and forms can elevate uptake rates for specific public services (Bhargava & Manoli, 2015; Herd & Moynihan, 2018). This dynamic can instigate informal preliminary discussions, serving as a deterrent strategy in the naturalization process and inadvertently creating an informal filtering mechanism (Herd & Moynihan, 2018; Steiner, 2004).

Another facet of learning costs manifests through knowledge tests, which must be successfully completed during the process. Such tests necessitate cognitive resources, thus influencing participation rates in administrative interactions (Christensen et al., 2020). In certain municipalities and cantons, candidates are required to pass tests about civic knowledge. These assessments can be conducted through written exams or incorporated into oral interviews. Irrespective of the testing format, learning costs accrue as individuals invest cognitive capital to prepare for the assessments.

Apart from learning costs, *compliance costs* materialize at various stages of the process. Depending on the jurisdiction, mandatory events and courses—such as civic education classes or obligatory informational sessions—are stipulated in the naturalization journey. Unlike tests that entail preparatory learning costs, these mandatory gatherings solely demand personal presence. Consequently, interviews also give rise to compliance costs, as the candidate's attendance is imperative.

Nonetheless, interviews bear an additional *psychological cost* element (Herd & Moynihan, 2018). This pertains to the power dynamic inherent in interviews, where the interviewer assumes control and dictates the line of questioning. This leads to a diminished sense of autonomy for candidates, who are compelled to shape their responses based on the questions posed. These interviews are of particular significance in Switzerland, where the interviewers possess wide discretion in structuring and evaluating the interview process (Zürcher, 2004).

Some municipalities and cantons even subject citizenship applications to public scrutiny or make them available online, enabling other citizens to raise objections or provide reasons for denial. Analogous to interviews, this practice can also heighten psychological costs for candidates, as they lack agency over who accesses their records or raises objections.

In summation, the administrative burden perspective elucidates the varying costs—learning, compliance, and psychological—accrue for individuals throughout the naturalization process due to the distinct procedures of municipalities and cantons. As these hurdles increase, the anticipated outcome, namely the naturalization rate, is likely to decrease. This proposition gives rise to the following hypothesis:

H3: The higher the administrative hurdles are set, the lower the naturalization rate.

Given Switzerland's intricate multi-level naturalization system, it is prudent to explore whether divergences at the municipal level can be attributed to varying cantonal regulations. Certain cantons have established comprehensive regulations governing municipal-level processes, while others possess more ambiguous directives. Well-defined criteria, particularly those involving indefinite legal terms, tend to limit the scope of discretion (Zürcher, 2004). This, in turn, is expected to result in a narrower spectrum of interpretation for the criteria and, consequently, a diminished range of naturalization rates among municipalities within the same canton. This forms the basis of Hypothesis 4:

H4: The clearer cantonal regulations exist for naturalization, the smaller is the variance of the naturalization rate within the same canton.

The formulated hypotheses serve the purpose of testing the naturalization process and its underlying mechanisms that impact naturalization rates. In addition to verifying and reconciling existing, occasionally contradictory conclusions, a pivotal emphasis is placed on investigating the administrative process and municipal level, thereby contributing novel insights to this realm of study.

3. Empirical Design

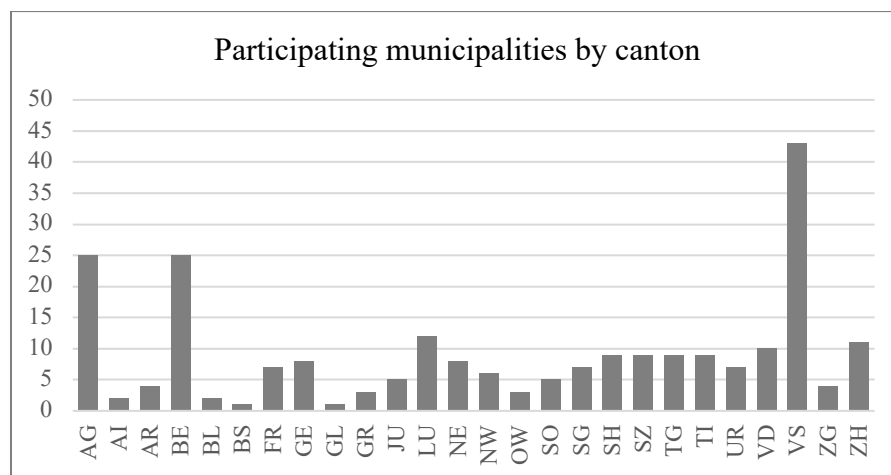
This section introduces the empirical framework, data sources, operationalization of relevant variables for hypothesis testing, and the chosen methodologies.

3.1 Data

The current study uses a mixed-methods approach for investigation, incorporating diverse quantitative and qualitative data sources to achieve its objectives. The core of the quantitative analysis includes three distinct datasets to evaluate the stipulated hypotheses. To test the hypotheses, an in-depth and distinct understanding of the processes carried out by the relevant authorities, the dataset from the study "Studie zur Protokollierung bei Einbürgerungsverfahren" conducted by Hadorn et al. in 2023, is utilized to construct the database (See *Appendix 10*). This study conducted an online survey targeting more than 500 authorities across both cantonal and communal levels, resulting 374 responses. The primary aim of that study was to document interrogations conducted during the naturalization process, thereby providing a comprehensive view of administrative practices. In addition to furnishing insights on this subject, the study also delved into the naturalization procedure and the individuals involved. These insights proved invaluable for validating the hypotheses formulated in this current study. For this research, 232 municipalities and 26 cantons prove instrumental as they provide sufficient information relevant to the predefined hypotheses.

A preliminary examination of the survey responses reveals uneven distributions across cantons. Notably, while only a single municipality each from Basel-Stadt and Glarus provided responses, the canton of Wallis contributed 43 responses, despite the former having a population three times larger. Additionally, the municipalities exhibit varying linguistic compositions, with 161 German-speaking, 62 French-speaking, and only nine Italian-speaking ones. On the cantonal level, there are 19 German-speaking, six French-speaking, and one Italian-speaking response, aligning with the survey's language preference. Consequently, the data is influenced both by cantonal and linguistic biases, resulting in a non-representative dataset. However, this non-representativeness is taken into consideration in the models, by using the legal requirement and language serve as a control variable, as will be explained in greater detail later. This approach helps to address the uneven distribution of responses by canton, enabling cross-canton comparisons among municipalities. The distribution of participating municipalities is visually shown in *Graphic 1*.

Graphic 1. Participating municipalities by cantons



Source: Data from Studie zur Protokollierung bei Einbürgerungsverfahren (Hadorn et. al 2023)

Scrutiny of the data within this study unveils disparities in process-related information across cantons and their respective municipalities. These variations could be due to biases in knowledge and differences in terminologies used for equivalent mechanisms. For instance, there were discrepancies in the entities involved and their respective responsibilities when comparing legal provisions and survey responses within the same municipality. Such discrepancies are, to a large extent, addressed through supplementary desk research which involved the examination of laws and official websites. The primary source in this regard was the law and its provisions (The consulted laws are listed in *Appendix 2*). If these were not sufficiently clear, survey results were consulted to provide clarification. In cases where survey results did not offer adequate information, online guidelines and manuals from the respective political entities were used as additional sources of information. It is noteworthy that disparities in transparency of investigated information, particularly on municipal websites, are contingent upon the canton. Certain municipalities disclose solely the prerequisites or deciding authorities, while others offer comprehensive fact sheets regarding the naturalization process. Interestingly, some municipalities lack any accessible information about naturalization, which will be discussed later.

Regarding the political composition of the political entities under examination, a dataset sourced from the Federal Statistics Office in 2020 is utilized. On the other hand, the dependent variable, the standardized naturalization rate, is sourced from the statistics of the Federal Commission on Migration (FCM) spanning from 2018 to 2020. Additionally, a series of 25 interviews, integral to the Hadorn et al. (2023) study, were conducted with officials and private stakeholders actively engaged in the naturalization processes. The Interview partners are listed

in *Appendix 3*. Interviews were conducted with six cantonal experts, 12 municipal experts, four specialists from the involved parties, and three additional experts in the field of naturalization. Through the comparison and correlation of various aspects within the same mechanisms and challenges, this methodology aims to uncover new insights and a deeper understanding of the key areas of focus in this study. These interviews fulfill a qualitative purpose by enhancing the comprehensiveness of the hypothesis examination, elucidating complex connections within the findings, and strengthening the overall robustness of the study.

3.2 Operationalization

In this chapter, the operationalization process will be outlined. It will begin with a discussion of general considerations, followed by the explanation of the dependent variable's operationalization, then the independent variables, and finally, the operationalization of control variables. A Codebook is assigned in *Appendix 4*.

This study focuses on standard processes applicable to adult individuals within the regular naturalization process. As a consequence, specialized procedures concerning minors, exceptional cases, and specific rules are excluded from the investigation.

Generally, the variables are converted into ordinal and metric scales, with values assigned based on previous research findings, as elaborated in the respective sections. Given the diversity of scales and spectra inherent in the variables, they are primarily translated to a uniform range from 0 to 1, where 0 denotes the lowest value with 1 represents the highest. For instance, political closedness, gauged through voting outcomes ranging from 16% to 66%, is converted to a more interpretable range between 0 and 1, where 16% is 0 and 66% is 1. This transformation was made for every variable in the models to stay consistent and make interpretation valid. This adaptation enhances interpretability by aligning the scales with each variable's maximum and minimum values, although these conversions must be considered during interpretation.

The dependent variable—the *standardized naturalization rate*—represents the ratio between potential naturalization candidates in the target group and the number of successful naturalizations. Developed by Wanner and Piguet in 2002 for the Federal Commission for Migration Affairs, this variable considers structural factors within municipal populations that exert the greatest influence on Switzerland's naturalization rate. In addition to political unit size, the standardized naturalization rate accounts for factors such as average age, duration of residency, and birthplace at the individual level across Switzerland's population. These

attributes emerged as key determinants of successful naturalization. While the standardized naturalization rate diverges from actual naturalization rates, it facilitates inter-municipality and inter-cantonal comparisons (Wanner & Piguet, 2002).

On the independent side, there are politics, deciding bodies, preparing bodies, administrative burdens and stringency of cantonal regulation, which should be operationalized. Drawing from previous studies in the field (Bolliger, 2004; Helbling & Kriesi, 2004; Helbling, 2010), the *political climate* is evaluated through the latest popular vote on migration policy, specifically the "Für eine massvolle Zuwanderung (Begrenzungsinitiative)" of 2020. This initiative aimed to limit the free movement of individuals between Switzerland and the European Union, thereby influencing immigration rates (Bundeskanzlei, 2023). The initiative was rejected on federal level by 61.71% and happened in the political field of immigration, making the vote relevant as a measure of a political unit's closedness on immigration matters. As the results of this popular vote had a big heterogeneity among municipalities, there is also considerable variance in this variable, which is useful to quantitative analysis. Using this approach does not reflect the actual seat distribution, which was also seen as relevant in certain cases in former studies (Helbling & Kriesi, 2004), but on the other side reflect the general political climate of a political unit and its understanding of citizenship, which by other studies was shown to be relevant (Bolliger, 2004; Zürcher, 2004).

The independent variable of *deciding body* is defined as the legal entity authorized to formally grant citizenship to applicants. In certain cantons like Solothurn, Graubünden or Basel-Stadt, citizen corporations are also empowered to confer citizenship within a political municipality. It refers to a local administrative unit or entity that is typically responsible for managing communal and citizenship-related matters within a specific municipality or canton. These entities often have historical roots and may have various functions, including land ownership, naturalization processes, and local governance. They play a role in local affairs and citizenship issues within their respective areas (Wandersman & Florin, 2000). To encompass these entities, the deciding body is approached similarly to political units. This approach makes sense, when considering that citizen corporations are also subject to citizen election, differing primarily in their designated tasks and rights. Apart from this differentiation, deciding bodies take on various forms in practice, ranging from decisions made by municipal mayors to ballot votes and a many other forms and combinations in between. To simplify the diversity of deciding bodies, they are categorized into political bodies (elected executive and legislative bodies), community assemblies, and commissions. While the legal nature of political bodies is

straightforward, the community assembly is a wider legislative entity where each citizen within a political unit participates and votes on candidate naturalization. This distinction is pivotal, as studies have demonstrated that naturalization rates tend to be higher when politicians, rather than citizens, vote on the matter (Hainmueller & Hangartner, 2019; Helbling, 2010; Helbling & Kriesi, 2004). Commissions, on the other hand, often consist of a blend of municipal employees, experts, political actors, and, in some instances, private individuals or volunteers. This composite makeup augments the decision-making body's balance, which should lead to higher naturalization rates (Arn & Fassnacht, 2004).

On the other hand, the *preparing body*, which is necessary for Hypotheses 2b is not always explicitly specified in legal documents, making identification challenging. The used dataset of Hadorn et al. (2023) proves invaluable in addressing this gap, offering a distinctive perspective by disclosing interview participants. Although it doesn't furnish precise details regarding participants' roles and authority, it does indicate whether present individuals are municipal staff, politically active figures, or volunteers.

As previously mentioned, both the deciding and preparing bodies are likely to be influenced by their own political inclinations and functions (Arn & Fassnacht, 2004; Helbling & Kriesi, 2004). Consequently, a second model is introduced for each hypothesis to explore potential interactions between the political climate of the political unit, the deciding body, and the preparing body. Given that certain municipalities, respectively cantons, may exclusively have preparing and deciding bodies at the cantonal level, this consideration was factored into the process of operationalization and coding. In cases where these bodies were absent at the municipal level, they were replaced with the cantonal ones to ensure comprehensive reflection of this aspect.

Considering the diverse processes and their distinct *administrative burdens*, the concept of operationalizing of administrative burdens posits that hurdles are assessed from the applicant's perspective (Herd & Moynihan, 2018a). Essentially, applicants opt for the least burdensome option when choices are available (e.g., skipping a voluntary event). Conversely, for hurdles where governmental authority dictates the burden, the potential administrative load is considered. For instance, an optional interrogation is regarded in the same light as a mandatory one, acknowledging that the candidate might need to participate regardless of personal preference. To accommodate multilevel aspects—where certain municipalities exclusively engage one level of investigative body (e.g., solely cantonal-level interviews)—the processes are adapted and operationalized to reflect a candidate-centric point of view.

Within the context of administrative costs, several mechanisms include different types of cost of administrative burdens. For instance, interviews encompass learning, compliance, and psychological costs. To this end, certain mechanisms are attributed to multiple cost types, elucidated further in the subsequent section. Given the absence of analogous prior studies in quantitative analysis of naturalization processes using administrative burdens, no such weighting was made for the different type of costs. This approach facilitates inter-variable comparison, potentially paving the way for varied weighting in future studies. Mechanism-to-cost type allocation primarily draws from theory and earlier research, occasionally necessitating adaptation to the realm of naturalization within Switzerland's specific context. For instance, the variable "availability of the formal form" is organized into an ordinal scale, encompassing options such as "online available," "orderable from home" (e.g., via email or phone), and "personal meeting." Information and legal form accessibility has been classified as *learning costs* in related fields, with online accessibility being associated with increased participation rates (Herd & Moynihan, 2018; Wolfe & Scrivner, 2005; Bartlett et al., 2004). Consequently, the operationalization aligns previous findings by assigning the lowest learning cost value to 'online-accessible' forms and the highest to 'face-to-face interviews' and 'orderable from home' in between. In other words, lower learning costs lead to higher participation rates (Herd & Moynihan, 2018b; Wolfe & Scrivner, 2005). Meanwhile, simplification characterizes the learning costs associated with civic tests, measured by counting the number of tests an applicant must pass throughout the process. This approach omits distinctions between oral and written tests, as the relative difficulty is subjective. Instead, the total number of civic tests is computed and subsequently converted to an ordinal scale. Given that interviews already account for the oral civic test, interviews are not separately factored into learning costs.

Moreover, *compliance costs* manifest through mandatory interviews, compulsory courses, and events that require the candidate's presence and time. In this context, home visits are considered equivalent to interviews, recognizing that both scenarios involve candidate participation. Notably, home visits focus on assessing integration and the candidate's lifestyle, rather than testing civic knowledge or incurring additional costs. This categorization pertains to the cost types of compliance and psychological burdens.

Lastly, *psychological costs* encompass various interview types, home visits, and the visibility of an application. Each mechanism is translated to comparable scales and aggregated into a total psychological cost index, with uniform variable weighting.

To ascertain whether the cumulative administrative burden correlates with reduced naturalization rates, all three cost types are equally weighted within an administrative burden

in total model. Since no previous research dictates differential weighting of the different type of costs, this approach fosters cross-variable comparisons. Additionally, an aggregate administrative burden is incorporated into the individual models, allowing for separate exploration of each variable's impact on naturalization rates, regardless of cost type.

Lastly, to ascertain the stringency of *cantonal regulations*, the variable's determination depends on the precision with which deciding bodies, preparing bodies, and all administrative burden mechanisms are defined at the cantonal level. This categorization classifies regulations as mandatory, allowing interpretation and discretion, or absent.

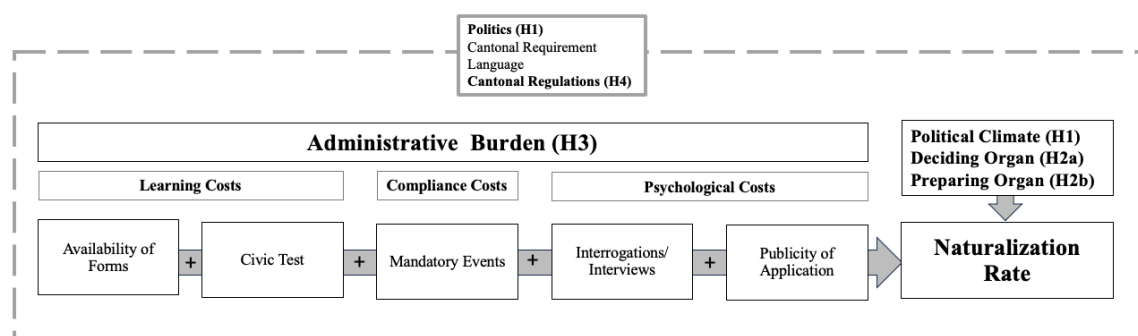
To test the reliability of results stemming from the "Studie zur Protokollierung bei Einbürgerungsverfahren" (Hadorn et al., 2023) and address data-related concerns, a broader dataset encompassing 2094 municipalities from the Federal Office for Statistics is used in a secondary model to Test Hypotheses 4.

Concerning the control variable of *legal requirements*, national criteria for federal citizenship are omitted from consideration like in a similar former study (Bolliger, 2004), as these criteria uniformly apply to all cantons and municipalities. Likewise, the criterion of lawfulness and public safety is excluded due to its standard application across cantons and municipalities, as it is typically derived from federal regulations and assessed uniformly through governmental investigations.

The main differences in criteria among political units relate to additional details regarding residency and language proficiency. Therefore, these criteria are considered as the defining legal requirements in this study. To operationalize these criteria into the variable of legal requirements, language proficiency and residency are categorized into an ordinal scale, generating an legal requirement index that equally accounts for both attributes and also covers values from 0 to 1.

The fundamental causal model of this study is succinctly presented in *Graphic 2*.

Graphic 2. Causal Model of the Study



3.3 Method

Utilizing a mixed-methods approach, this study delves into the impact of naturalization processes and their mechanism design on the standardized naturalization rate. Following in the quantitative part a similar trajectory as prior studies exploring comparable variables and correlations (Bolliger, 2004; Briceno Mosquera, 2021; Wanner & Steiner, 2012), a bivariate and multivariate analysis using linear regression aims to uncover potential linear correlations involving the variable of interest. However, it is important to note that the normality of variables, as determined by the Shapiro-Wilk test, deviates from the underlying assumptions of standard ordinary least squares (OLS) regression. While OLS assumes normal distribution for both dependent and independent variables, the non-normal distribution of this data prevents its direct application. Hence, the methodology for this study needs to be adapted as follows: instead of discarding significant observations or compromising data integrity, a pragmatic solution involves methodically standardizing the variables into z-scores. Moreover, conventional linear regression gives way to robust linear regression, a more resilient choice for addressing this data issue. While the results under this approach might not be directly interpretable as numerical values, they offer insights into correlation direction, comparative strength, and model-level significance with enhanced robustness and validity (Huber & Ronchetti, 2009: 7 ff.; Witte & Witte, 2017: 86 ff.).

Controlling variables play a crucial role in isolating the effects of the scrutinized variables and reduce the effect of other not included variables, making the models more valid. Since the standardized naturalization rate already accounts for the individual impact of age, residency time, and birthplace, there is no need to reintroduce these factors as additional control variables. Given the absence of a consistent distribution of municipalities per canton, using the canton as a control variable is not viable. Therefore, the legal requirement is adopted as a proxy. It serves twofold, accounting for cantonal disparities and facilitating cross-canton comparisons. The role of this variable as a control is highlighted due to the widely recognized association between heightened legal requirements and more challenging naturalization processes, leading to lower standardized naturalization rates (Bolliger 2004; Wichmann et al., 2011). These attributes are primarily governed by regulations at the cantonal level. Therefore, the variable serves as a crucial factor for analysis in this study. An additional facet of cantonal diversity is incorporated through the *language* variable, which stands as a valid cultural proxy within Switzerland (Hofstede, 1984; Volonté, 2015). While the variable of *Political Climate* is separately

scrutinized in hypothesis 1 it is used as control variable for the other hypotheses following the same operationalization in both cases.

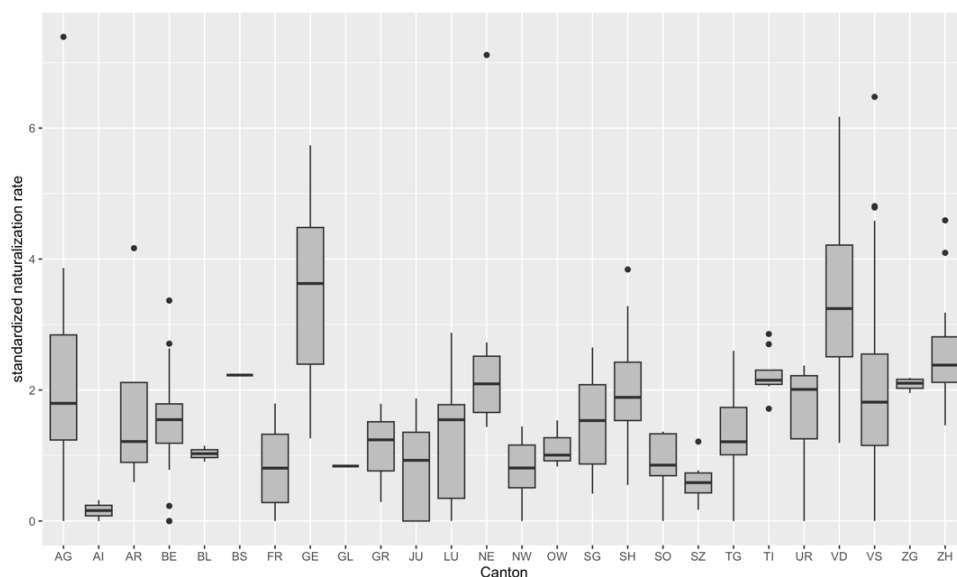
4. Results and Analysis

The subsequent chapter presents the analysis results, starting with a descriptive examination of the distribution of key variables. This initial exploration aims to identify any trends that should be considered when interpreting the results. Subsequently, the chapter delves into the findings related to the hypotheses. Detailed univariate statistics for the variables of interest are available in *Appendix 5*.

4.1 Results of Standardized Naturalization Rates and Legal Requirements

Examining the dependent variable of this study reveals noticeable disparities in the standardized naturalization rate across different cantons. Given that the analysis for hypotheses involve comparisons between cantons and not solely within them, retaining moderate outliers within the dataset is reasonable. It is worth to mention that merely three observations characterized by exceptionally high values of standardized naturalization rates exceeding 10.0 were excluded to prevent potential distortions in the results. The subsequent boxplots, illustrated in *Graphic 3*, provide a concise summary of the standardized naturalization rate distribution at the cantonal level including the municipalities of the underlying dataset of the present study.

Graphic 3. Standardized Naturalization Rate by Canton

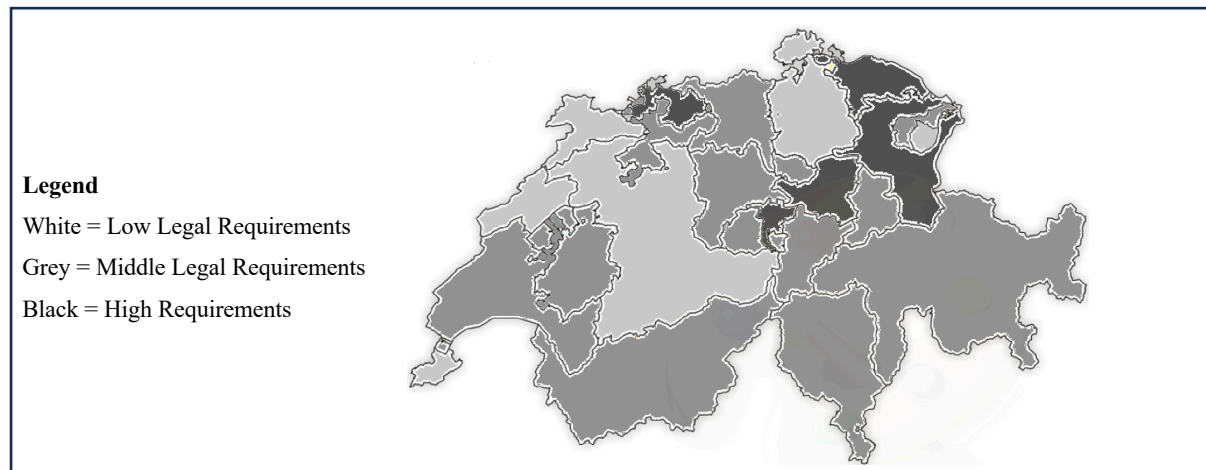


As indicated in Graphic 3, certain observations remain outliers, but reflect their actual values according to the Federal Statistics Office. The notably low variance observed in the cantons of AI, BL, GL, and ZG (See *Appendix 1* for full names of cantons) can be attributed to the limited number (between one and four) of observations within our dataset for these particular cantons. On the other hand, the variances can not only be explained by the number of observations per canton. For instance, the variance of the standardized naturalization rate in Geneva (with eight observations) is bigger than in Wallis (with 42 observations) as can be seen in Graphic 3. This makes a further investigation of this differences necessary, which should be done through Hypothesis 4. Further, when comparing values across cantons, the graph unveils discrepancies in the mean values of the naturalization rates. For instance, Geneva exhibits a notably high mean, while the cantons of Jura and Fribourg display considerably lower mean values.

Taking a look on the values of the cantons in total by using the data from the Federal Office of Statistics, the standardized naturalization rate at the cantonal level spans from 0.75 in the canton of Glarus to 3.22 in the canton of Geneva, with an average of 1.64 and a median of 1.15. It's important to note that this is no absolutely in line with the boxplot illustrated in Graphic 3, given that the aforementioned graphic exclusively encompasses municipalities from the mentioned survey, whereas the values at the cantonal level from the Federal Office of Statistics encompass all municipalities. Using the data of the municipalities of the present study, at municipality level, the range extends from 0.00 to 14.5, with an average of 2.0 and a median of 1.68. These figures surpass those at the cantonal level, implying that the dataset incorporates municipalities with higher standardized naturalization rate values than when all municipalities of Switzerland were included in the dataset.

The control variable of the constructed Requirement Index, designed to function as a control variable, is established on a scale ranging from 0 to 1. By considering the natural quantiles of 0.25 and 0.75, it is observed that 10 cantons feature low requirements (AI, BS, BE, FR, GE, JU, NE, SH, VD, ZH), 11 cantons possess moderately high requirements (AG, AR, GL, GR, LU, OW, SO, TI, UR, VS, ZG), and five cantons impose high requirements (BL, NW, SG, SZ, TG). Given that a majority of municipalities align with the requirements of their respective cantons, the ensuing *Graphic 4* aims to provide a comprehensive overview of the requirements observed across municipalities as well.

Graphic 4. Cantonal Legal Requirement for Citizenship



An examination of *Graphic 4* indicates that four out of the five cantons with high requirements are situated in the eastern region of Switzerland, and all five of them primarily speak German. Conversely, five of the cantons with low requirements are German-speaking, while the remaining five are French-speaking. To ensure that there is no collinearity between language and requirements, a collinearity test should be conducted later to validate them both as control variables.

The mean and median values of the Requirement Index at the cantonal level amounted to 0.38. At the municipality level, the mean value was 0.35, while the median was 0.38, demonstrating a close resemblance to the cantonal level figures. After methodically standardizing both the standardized naturalization rate and the Requirement Index to enhance the robustness and validity of the tests, a Spearman's rank correlation test was conducted. This non-parametric test enables the examination of bivariate correlations between two variables, even when their distribution is not normal (Witte & Witte, 2017). The test yielded a highly significant negative correlation at the cantonal level. This signifies that an increase in the Requirement Index results in a lower standardized naturalization rate at the cantonal level. With a p-value of 0.002 and a rho-coefficient of -0.58, this correlation is both highly significant and moderately strong (Witte & Witte, 2017). The municipal level test yielded a parallel correlation, with a p-value of 8.089e-06 and a rho-coefficient of -0.29. These findings align with the anticipated outcomes, thereby confirming the suitability of the Requirement Index as a control variable.

Conversely, the nominal variable of language, which serves as a representation of culture as explained earlier, was assessed using a Kruskal-Wallis test, yielding a highly significant p-value of 0.0007644 (7.644e-04). Consequently, it is appropriate to use language as a control variable. It is important to note, however, that the dataset is skewed towards German-speaking

observations, with a limited representation of French-speaking municipalities and merely nine Italian-speaking municipalities.

The absence of collinearity between the control variables is crucial for adopting linear regression as the appropriate regression model (Faraway, 2015). The results of this assessment affirm the lack of such a relationship, thereby validating the utilization of the Requirement Index, political climate, and language as control variables within the models as can be seen in *Appendix 6*.

4.2 Results of the Hypotheses

Applying Spearman's rank correlation test, a statistically significant negative relationship between political closedness and the standardized naturalization rate has been found. The p-value for this relationship resulted in 0.002, with a rho-coefficient of -0.58 at the cantonal level. Similarly, at the municipal level, the Spearman test yielded a p-value of 8.097e-06 and a rho-coefficient of -0.29, reaffirming the same observed effect across both levels. This signifies the presence of a bivariate correlation between the political climate and the standardized naturalization rate. However, the precise nature of this correlation warrants further exploration. To ascertain whether this correlation remains consistent in a linear manner and persists even when accounting for the influence of the language and requirements, a robust linear regression model has been conducted. The outcomes of this analysis are visually presented in the following *Table 2*.

Table 2. Quantitative Results of Hypotheses 1

	Standardized Naturalization Rate:	
	canton (1)	municipality (2)
Politics	-0.454* (0.276)	-0.157*** (0.045)
Requirement	-0.281 (0.236)	-0.138*** (0.042)
Language French	0.177 (0.550)	0.047 (0.102)
Language Italian	1.241 (1.018)	0.486** (0.207)
Constant	-0.106 (0.223)	-0.168*** (0.049)
Observations	26	232
Residual Std. Error.	0.754 (df = 21)	0.501 (df = 227)
Note:	*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01	

Model 1 reveals a negative correlation between the political climate and the standardized naturalization rate at the cantonal level, achieving significance only at a 90% level. Moreover, at the municipal level, this relationship remains negative, attaining even higher significance at a 99% level. In essence, this suggests that an increased degree of political closedness within the political units corresponds to a decrease in standardized naturalization rates.

Further, the requirement index demonstrates a negative influence at both levels, though it only achieves statistical significance at the municipal level. This outcome can be attributed to the limited number of observations and a smaller variance in both the naturalization rate and the requirement index on cantonal level. Additionally, the findings uncover a correlation between the predominant language of the political unit and the naturalization rate. When compared to German-speaking municipalities, those where Italian is the primary language exhibit a higher naturalization rate. It's crucial to interpret these results cautiously, particularly considering the small number (nine observations) of Italian-speaking municipalities.

Given that the robust linear regression does not inherently provide a measure of model fit, an estimated scale parameter is used to compare observed values with calculated ones. Generally, a lower value indicates a more suitable fit (Kutner et al., 2005). This comparison yields a value of 0.97 at the municipal level, signifying that the model moderately aligns with the utilized data and is therefore considered acceptable. At the cantonal level, this value reaches 0.78, indicating that the model explains more variance in the dependent variable at this level compared to the municipal level. This divergence can be attributed to the greater variance in naturalization rates and explanatory variables at the municipal level.

Based on these quantitative findings, Hypothesis 1 – which posits a negative impact of a politically closed climate on the naturalization rate – can be substantiated at a 90% significance level for the cantonal level and at a 99% significance level for the municipal level. Thus, Hypothesis 1 can be validated for both levels in the quantitative part.

The influence of politics on the naturalization process and the success of candidates is also affirmed by interview data. Interviews with experienced administrative personnel operating at both cantonal and municipal levels reveal that politics indeed shapes the naturalization process, although the extent of this influence varies based on the political unit and its composition. This holds especially when combined with preparing or deciding body, as be mentioned later.

Moving to Hypotheses 2b and the deciding bodies, only 27 commissions at the municipal level possess the formal authority to decide about candidates' applications. In 154 instances, executive bodies or parliaments make these decisions, while in 51 cases, the municipality assembly assumes this role. A Spearman-correlation test investigating the relationship between

the type of deciding body and naturalization rates indicates a slightly non-significant negative effect, with a rho-value of -0.127 and a p-value of 0.054, achieving significance only at a 10% level.

On the other hand, the preparing body in 38 municipalities exclusively comprises government staff, 26 municipalities consist solely of politically active individuals, while no cases involve a body composed entirely of volunteers. In 154 cases, a combination of these three forms constitutes the preparing body, alongside 14 instances with missing data. As the dependent variable (standardized naturalization rate) is not normally distributed and the independent variable (preparing body) is nominally scaled, a Kruskal-Wallis test is used to assess the correlation. This test yields a p-value of 0.16, implying no statistical significance when treated nominally.

When categorized ordinally across the seven potential constellations of preparing bodies, the means of standardized naturalization rates among groups do not reveal a discernible pattern of increasing or decreasing mean values. Furthermore, testing for statistically significant differences between groups through the Dunn Test results in a p-value of 0.16, indicating no significance. Further simplification into three ordinal categories – 'Government staff,' 'politicians,' and 'mixed/commission' – also fails to reveal any clear mean pattern. The Dunn-Test for this simplified categorization yields a p-value of 0.15, signifying no statistically significant difference in mean values among the three groups. To test both hypotheses, robust linear regressions incorporating variables of interest, as well as interaction terms between politics and the deciding body and the preparing body, are performed. The outcomes of these regressions are visually presented in *Table 3*.

Table 3. *Quantitative Results of Hypotheses 2a and 2b*

	Dependent variable:				
	Standardized Naturalization Rate				
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Preparing body	0.016 (0.040)		0.014 (0.040)		-0.005 (0.041)
Deciding Body		-0.025 (0.040)		-0.039 (0.041)	-0.032 (0.041)
Preparing Body: Politics			-0.046 (0.035)		-0.050 (0.037)
Preparing Body : Deciding Body					0.094** (0.044)
Deciding Body : Politics				0.075* (0.043)	0.051 (0.044)
Politics : Preparing Body : Deciding Body					0.014 (0.045)
Politics	-0.157*** (0.044)	-0.150*** (0.045)	-0.158*** (0.044)	-0.162*** (0.045)	-0.164*** (0.045)
Requirements	-0.138*** (0.042)	-0.135*** (0.042)	-0.139*** (0.042)	-0.145*** (0.043)	-0.143*** (0.042)
Language French	0.052 (0.101)	0.053 (0.102)	0.052 (0.100)	0.057 (0.101)	0.069 (0.101)
Language Italian	0.504** (0.210)	0.477** (0.206)	0.461** (0.210)	0.519** (0.207)	0.442** (0.213)
Constant	-0.171*** (0.048)	-0.171*** (0.048)	-0.165*** (0.048)	-0.187*** (0.049)	-0.179*** (0.048)
Observations	232	232	232	232	232
Residual Std. Error	0.485 (df = 226) 0.489 (df = 226) 0.478 (df = 225) 0.490 (df = 225) 0.457 (df = 221)				

Note:

*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

In the context of Models 1 to 5, the primary focus lies on identifying linear and interaction effects between the deciding and preparing bodies, politics, and the standardized naturalization rate. The outcomes reveal that across all models, there is no isolated significant impact of either the preparing or deciding body on the naturalization rate. Surprisingly, the coefficient for the preparing body is even positive in Models 1 and 3, contrary to expectations, but is nearly to zero. Conversely, the deciding body exhibits a negative effect in Models 2, 4, and 5, although this effect is not statistically significant at a conventional level. To explore whether the lack of significance in the deciding body's effect is due to the ranking of deciding body types, a

regression utilizing deciding type as a categorical variable is performed. However, this analysis also fails to show a significant influence of the deciding body on naturalization rates, even when treated nominally as shown in *Appendix 7*.

Although Model 3 indicates no interaction effect between politics and the preparing body, a significant interaction term between politics and the deciding body is found in Model 4. The effect is positive and statistically significant at a 90% confidence level. This suggests that when both politics and the deciding body exhibit high values, the standardized naturalization rate increases. Furthermore, Model 5 demonstrates a similar positive interaction effect between preparing and deciding bodies on the naturalization rate at a 95% significance level. The residual standard error of the estimated scale parameter for each model is around 0.97, indicating an acceptable model fit.

Thus, Hypothesis 2a and 2b can only be confirmed for the interaction effect between politics and the deciding body and between deciding and preparing body on the naturalization rate, not for the isolated effect of the deciding body. Conversely, Hypothesis 2b regarding preparing bodies cannot be substantiated through quantitative analysis.

Comparing these quantitative outcomes with insights from interviews reveals that distinguishing between material and formal decision-making bodies can be complex in practice. Some municipalities exhibit clear divisions of competence, while others experience uncertainty regarding who holds authority for formal decisions or merely offers recommendations. Moreover, multi-level decisions are prevalent in some cantons, allowing decisions made on the municipal level to be overruled at the cantonal level. The composition of preparing bodies also varies widely, ranging from commissions to police involvement. Interviews suggest that these bodies can sometimes be misused to pursue political interests, impacting the naturalization process. The contrast between quantitative and qualitative results necessitates further discussion.

Transitioning to Hypothesis 3, the analysis indicates that 47 municipalities offer online accessible application forms, 55 require remote contact, and 130 necessitate in-person meetings. Interviews suggest that these meetings can serve as a filtering mechanism to exclude candidates without formal decisions, but can also be advisory to guide applicants. Some municipalities, like Schübelbach in the canton of Schwyz, use an online self-evaluation to inform candidates about their chances of successful citizenship, followed by the option to submit an application. Regarding civic tests, 36 municipalities do not mention them at all, 186 incorporate them in written or oral formats, and 9 municipalities use both formats.

An index of learning costs is constructed by incorporating civic tests and form availability. These components are weighted equally and transformed into an index ranging from 0 to 1, with a mean of 0.56 and a median of 0.75.

In terms of mandatory courses or events, 199 municipalities do not have such an obligation, while 32 municipalities require either a course or an event. The data indicate that interviews are included in 73 municipalities, with 141 municipalities featuring two interviews and 18 municipalities having three interviews. This suggests that in every naturalization process, at least one interview is conducted, and additional interviews are held as needed. Home visits are conducted in only three municipalities, and applications are made public for objections from citizens in 49 municipalities.

The quantitative analysis reveals as expected negative effect for each type of cost on the standardized naturalization rate, as illustrated in *Appendix 8*.

However, none of these effects achieve statistical significance at a conventional level. Therefore, a further examination is necessary, to explain these results. Examining the isolated effects of variables for each cost type and considering them collectively provides additional insights, as presented in *Table 4*.

Table 4. Quantitative Results of Hypotheses 3

	Dependent variable:			
	Standardized Naturalization Rate			
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Form Availability	-0.031 (0.041)			-0.017 (0.043)
Civic Tests	0.061 (0.040)			0.074* (0.042)
Mandatory Events		-0.033 (0.046)		-0.047 (0.046)
Interviews		-0.055 (0.042)	-0.046 (0.041)	-0.060 (0.042)
Publicity of Applications			0.030 (0.046)	0.019 (0.046)
Requirements	-0.142*** (0.043)	-0.141*** (0.044)	-0.150*** (0.046)	-0.155*** (0.047)
Politics	-0.154*** (0.045)	-0.157*** (0.046)	-0.158*** (0.046)	-0.158*** (0.046)
Language French	0.054 (0.102)	0.066 (0.106)	0.069 (0.107)	0.088 (0.107)
Language Italian	0.460** (0.208)	0.589** (0.239)	0.535** (0.216)	0.613** (0.241)
Constant	-0.167*** (0.049)	-0.170*** (0.051)	-0.172*** (0.050)	-0.175*** (0.051)
Observations	232	232	232	232
Residual Std. Error	0.507 (df = 225)	0.510 (df = 225)	0.517 (df = 225)	0.509 (df = 222)

Note: *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

In the current model, the availability of the form shows a negative effect, while civic tests seem to have a positive impact. This divergence of directions might contribute to the absence of significance when these factors are combined into learning costs. Similarly, in Model 3, psychological costs involve interviews with a negative effect, while the publication of the application has a positive effect. However, both the number of interviews and mandatory events – components of psychological costs – demonstrate negative effects. When all these components are integrated into Model 4, the same trends persist. Notably, the civic test in this model becomes statistically significant at a 90% confidence level and exhibits a positive effect. The estimated scale parameter values range from approximately 0.97 for Models 1 to 3, signifying a satisfactory fit to the data. For Model 4, this value increases to around 1.2, which is still acceptable but less good. This increase can be attributed to Model 4 incorporating more variables than Model 1 to 3, resulting in increased variance.

In sum, only seems to have a significant effect on naturalization rate, whereas no such evidence could be found for any other type of administrative burden or cost type. Therefore, Hypothesis 3 has to be denied in the quantitative analysis.

Conversely, interviews indicate that making applications public can lead to considerable psychological distress and humiliation for candidates. A spokesperson for the affected individuals deems it unreasonable that any citizen can level allegations, even for personal motives, asserting that the procedure itself is degrading, encroaching upon candidates' personal liberties on multiple fronts, and should not be allowed. According to an interview, objections from other citizens are rarely raised. However, a different interview in the same canton views this as a concern, as the psychological barrier to submitting an application is heightened. Moreover, the mandatory interviews, tests, and the unavailability of application forms result in increasing expenses for candidates and may even serve as a pre-screening mechanism, dissuading candidates from pursuing the process altogether due to their apprehensions regarding these obstacles.

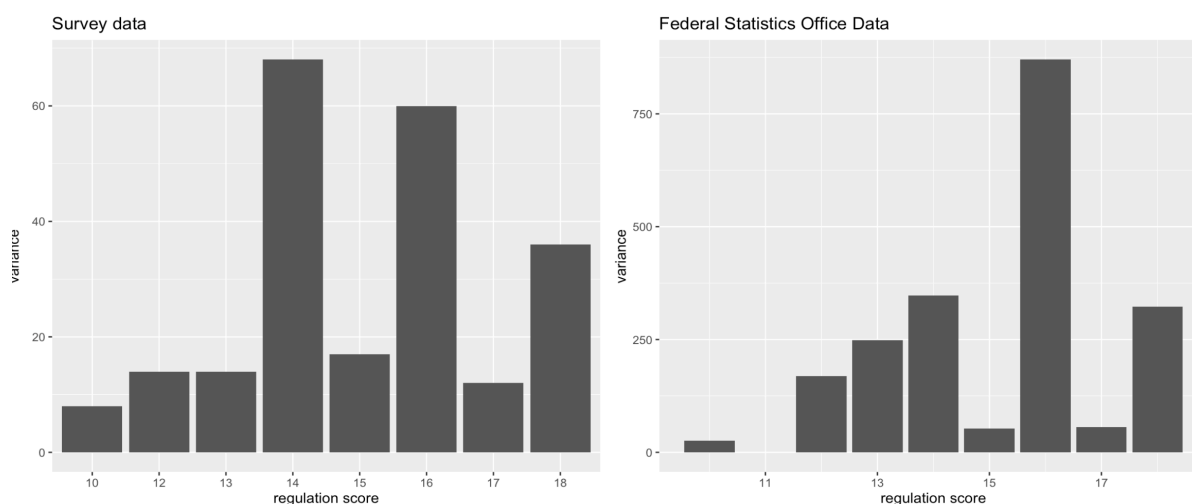
Therefore, the quantitative and the qualitative results for hypothesis 4 are not congruent, what will be discussed later.

Upon examining the cantonal level, it becomes evident that requirements are primarily established at this level. Only three cantons leave room for municipalities to determine municipal residency requirements by defining a range of potential years (GR, BL, FR). Regarding form availability, regulations are in place in 20 cantons, particularly when the process begins at the cantonal level. A comparison of regulations between preparing and

deciding bodies indicates that 16 cantons do not regulate the preparing body, while binding regulations for the deciding body at the municipal level are established in 13 cantons. Interestingly, every canton mandates the possibility of an interview, with 20 making it mandatory through cantonal law and 6 stipulating it as an option. The civic test is specifically regulated in 13 cantons, leaving no room for municipalities to decide whether to administer it. Three cantons make the publication of the application obligatory (AG, LU, SZ). Additional details about regulations in each canton can be found in *Appendix 9*

When the nine regulatable variables are aggregated, *regulation scores* for cantons range from 10 to 18. While Schaffhausen has the lowest regulation score of 10, Aargau, Jura, and St. Gallen have the highest scores of 18. When assigned to the corresponding municipalities in our dataset, the median regulation score is 15.00, with a mean of 14.88. For the larger dataset encompassing 2094 municipalities, the median regulation score is 16, with a mean of 15.22 – a value not far away from that of our dataset. However, interpreting these figures requires consideration of the substantial variation in the number of municipalities per canton. Therefore, a more meaningful comparison lies in assessing variances within the same regulation score, as depicted in *Graphic 5*.

Graphic 5. The Variance of Standardized Naturalization Rates by Cantons



As evident, there are substantial differences in the variance of the standardized naturalization rate across the groups in both datasets. However, contrary to initial expectations, the variance does not exhibit a straightforward negative linear pattern with higher regulation scores. It is important to note that the groups categorized by regulation scores do not have an equal number of observations. The group with a regulation score of 16 comprises the largest number of observations in the larger dataset, including 870 municipalities, while the group with a

regulation score of 10 includes only 26 municipalities. These disparities in number of observations likely contribute to the variations in naturalization rate variances.

To assess whether significant differences in variances exist when the dataset is divided by regulation score, a Brown-Forsythe Test was conducted (Witte & Witte, 2017). When analyzing the survey dataset, the test yields a p-value of 0.10, indicating marginal non-significance within a 90% confidence interval. However, in the case of the larger dataset consisting of 2094 municipalities, the results differ significantly. Here, the Brown-Forsythe Test generates a much smaller p-value of $2.2e-16$, indicating high significance. This result implies that the variance of at least one group significantly differs from that of another, and this effect is attributable to the regulation score.

Therefore, Hypothesis 4 is partly confirmed, as there are significant influences of the stringency of cantonal regulations on the variance of naturalization rates, but they are not monotonically negative as expected.

One interviewee underscores that higher standardization at the cantonal level results in more qualitative applications. Increased transparency in the requirements and process equips candidates with a clearer understanding of what to expect, ultimately leading to fewer rejection requests. Moreover, enhanced standardization facilitates the implementation of the process at the municipal level, an approach embraced by certain municipalities. On the other hand, political units are motivated to uphold their political independence and autonomy, thereby advocating against excessive regulations and constraints.

5. Discussion

The present study highlights the compelling influence of cantonal requirements on standardized naturalization rates across various models and levels. This aligns with Bolliger's (2004) "cantonal hurdles by law" concept, even as the definitions of these hurdles partly differ. The present definition of legal requirements underscores that language and residency duration requirements significantly impact naturalization rates. However, the influence of Italian language, while significant in the models, is constrained due to the limited number of observations (only nine instances). Achieving more robust results would necessitate a more balanced distribution of official languages in the dataset.

Hypothesis 1, examining the role of politics in standardized naturalization rates, yields consistent results at both cantonal and municipal levels. This persistent effect, reinforced by its

role as a control variable in other models, diverges from Bolliger's (2004) findings but concurs with the insights of Helbling and Kriesi (Helbling, 2010; Helbling & Kriesi, 2004). It is crucial to acknowledge that the data of political climate and legal requirements were for every political unit available and operationalization was more straightforward compared to the other concepts like involved bodies or administrative burden, which bolster their significance and reliability in the models.

Turning to Hypothesis 2a, the anticipated negative influence of the deciding body on naturalization rates is evident, although not statistically significant. This outcome resonates with Bolliger's (2004) findings but contradicts Helbling's (2010) results. The absence of significance can be attributed to both the dataset and the nuanced classification of deciding bodies. Helbling's focus on popular votes, now less common, contrasts with the current study's broader examination spanning commissions, political governmental bodies, and municipal assemblies. Despite the ranking based on prior findings and a significant relationship in the bivariate Spearman test, these distinctions fail to manifest in significant impacts on naturalization rates across regression models and therefore needs further exploration. Similar observations emerge regarding the preparing body, wherein the absence of significance is accompanied by a counterintuitive positive effect. The assumption that government staff, politicians, and mixed commissions dictate corresponding naturalization rates appears oversimplified in the quantitative context, and may not be aligned with the reality of the processes. Additionally, limitations in data clarity about the actual roles and interview partners impede precise quantification, as evident in the Kruskal-Wallis test's non-significant results across all possible preparing body combinations even when treated as nominal variables.

The novel exploration of the interaction between politics, deciding body, and preparing body presents interesting results. While counter to expectations, the positive impact of politics and the deciding body on naturalization rates is noteworthy, hinting at complex relationships within the naturalization process. This effect persists when the preparing body is integrated into the model. Despite the deviation from the initial hypothesis, these results suggest that the deciding body's influence is dependent on the interplay with politics or the preparing body. This phenomenon is congruent with the qualitative insights of this study and the one of Arn and Fassnacht (2004).

Regarding the impact of learning and psychological costs, their multifaceted nature complicates their overall effect. Notably, the civic test surprisingly exhibits a significant positive effect in one model, a departure from typical patterns in similar studies (Herd & Moynihan, 2018). Distinctively, the lack of federal-level regulation contributes to greater variance in the burden

landscape, with individual burdens manifesting diverse qualitative dimensions. This diversity is reflected in interviews, with certain interactions being burdensome for some candidates while amicable for others. The scarcity of information on burdens, compounded by disparate availability compared to other variables, compromises the quantitative analysis.

In light of Hypothesis 4, assessing the influence of cantonal regulation on variance in standardized naturalization rates reveals a nuanced scenario. While the current dataset doesn't evince a clear connection, a larger dataset does yield significant results. Contrary to intuition, the variance does not monotonically increase with decreasing cantonal regulations. This observation stems from the practical constraints that limit municipalities to feasible organizational possibilities. In reality, only a subset of these possibilities aligns with operational needs, underscoring the importance of pragmatic considerations. Further, observable patterns within cantons, even without formal regulation, hint at historical, cultural, or internal guidelines influencing processes.

In summation, this study underscores the multi-dimensional nature of the factors and mechanisms influencing naturalization rates. It emphasizes the influence of legal requirements, the intricate cantonal context, the political climate, and their interplay with deciding and preparing bodies. Despite limited significance, the civic test's impact on administrative burden is discernible, validating these findings qualitatively. Additionally, while cantonal regulations foster uniformity, they don't linearly amplify variance in naturalization rates.

While the dataset's uniqueness facilitates insights into municipal processes, its limitations arise from variable supplementation and diverse terminology. The complexities of interpreting federal knowledge requirements and addressing representation imbalances are notable challenges. Additional aspects like social welfare criteria or monetary costs could enhance future studies.

Moreover, the data sourced from the "Studie zur Protokollierung bei Einbürgerungsverfahren" is from 2023, while the data concerning the Standardized Naturalization Rate and population vote originates from 2020. This temporal gap could potentially introduce some distortion, as there might have been revisions or alterations to the naturalization processes during the intervening period.

In general, Switzerland's federal structure presents in theory a promising avenue for administrative burden research, although its complexity in reality necessitates nuanced consideration for robust quantitative analysis. Expanding the analysis to include a multilevel

approach could uncover how factors interact at different levels of governance. This would acknowledge the hierarchical nature of decision-making and its impact on naturalization rates. Finally, recognizing biases in interviews, respectively in the interview partner and accounting for qualitative aspects could enrich future investigations and progression of the construct of standardized naturalization rates and the field of naturalization processes in general. In a qualitative way, using social network analysis could illuminate the influence of social connections and networks on the naturalization process. Understanding how social ties impact candidates' experiences could inform policy interventions. Based on qualitative insights, refining the interview processes to minimize costs, in sense of administrative burdens, and ensure a fair assessment of candidates' eligibility could enhance the overall naturalization experience. Establishing mechanisms for candidates to provide feedback on their naturalization experiences could identify areas for improvement and enable iterative enhancements to the process. On the other hand, a longitudinal quantitative analysis utilizing panel data could be conducted to explore particular municipalities or cantons where there have been significant changes in naturalization rates, in the processes or both. Using methods like the Qualitative Comparative Analysis (QCA), such an investigation could reveal the key mechanisms and factors that play a crucial role in determining changes in naturalization rates.

From a more governmental perspective, investigating the role of citizenship education programs and their impact on naturalization rates could shed light on the effectiveness of such initiatives in promoting civic engagement and integration. On intercantonal level, encouraging cantons with successful naturalization processes to share their approaches and best practices could lead to knowledge sharing and improved outcomes across the nation. Further, examining how global migration patterns and geopolitical events impact naturalization processes could reveal how external factors shape domestic policies and integration efforts as well.

6. Conclusion

The primary aim of this study was to assess how variations in naturalization processes and their underlying mechanisms impact naturalization rates. By analyzing data from 232 municipalities and 26 cantons, the findings demonstrated significant influences on naturalization rates related to legal requirements, politics, the interaction between deciding bodies and politics, the interaction between deciding and preparing bodies, cantonal regulations, language and civic tests within the naturalization process. Conversely, impacts on other aspects of preparing and deciding bodies individually or administrative burdens, lacked substantial corroboration in the quantitative analysis.

The study's outcomes hold theoretical significance by advancing our understanding of cantonal and municipal variations in naturalization processes. The recognition of cantonal regulations and their impact on naturalization rates underscores the pivotal role of regional factors in shaping citizenship policies. Additionally, acknowledging pragmatic considerations in these regulations contributes to the discourse surrounding the interplay between policy design and operational feasibility.

The exploration of the interplay between politics, deciding bodies, and preparing bodies introduces a novel perspective on the dynamics of the naturalization process. This aligns with qualitative insights and extends the theoretical foundations of naturalization studies. Meanwhile, the study validated existing findings while also introducing new dimensions by scrutinizing legal prerequisites, cantonal regulations, the preparing body's role, and administrative burdens, the study broadened the discourse. By encompassing legal, political, and administrative aspects, the study emphasizes the multidimensional nature of factors that influence naturalization rates. This enriches the theoretical framework by acknowledging the intricate process dynamics beyond singular factors. Moreover, the consistency observed in relation to the influence of language and residency duration requirements, along with political factors, underscores their ongoing relevance for further exploration.

Although the quantitative analysis regarding preparing and deciding bodies did not yield statistically significant outcomes, qualitative examination indicated their potential significance, particularly in terms of psychological costs associated with personal interactions such as interviews. Similarly, administrative burdens, while lacking quantitative substantiation, revealed ongoing relevance based on interview insights. Despite a lack of established quantitative impacts, the study's consideration of administrative burdens stimulated a novel, more quantitative-oriented research avenue within the realm of political processes.

The study's identification of gaps and avenues for further research offers a roadmap for future scholars to delve into specific mechanisms, explore longitudinal trends, and use advanced analytical techniques. The investigation into the role of preparing bodies holds particular significance due to its opacity at the municipal level in Switzerland. Qualitative findings illuminate the importance of informal, preceding dialogues, urging comprehensive investigation despite the scarcity of research on these informal mechanisms.

A broader research landscape could immensely benefit from standardized data derived from an expanded pool of municipalities and cantons. This augmentation would enhance the validity and feasibility of future inquiries. Furthermore, the analysis of desk research revealed

disparities in process transparency, primarily contingent on cantonal variations. This underscores cantonal authority in shaping information accessibility and transparency, aligning with governmental values of transparency, rationality and equality, potentially leading to reduced administrative costs. Practically, policymakers can leverage the study's insights to refine naturalization regulations, and the findings can guide the development of integration programs. By understanding the factors influencing naturalization rates, authorities can tailor citizenship education programs more effectively. Additionally, identifying successful practices among cantons can encourage knowledge exchange, leading to the adoption of strategies that streamline procedures and promote integration.

7. References

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