ICA Commission on Atlases
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Infographics in Digital Thematic Atlases – Possible Applications
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In digital atlases, the access to thematic information is generally given by firstly selecting a topic from a hierarchical menu, subsequently followed by the display of the chosen map. A temporal access, or even an access via text is rarely offered, or only as a second option possible. This shows a structural weakness of many digital atlases, which are not capable to use the full power of the inherently available interconnections of its geographic information and statistical data. On the one hand, this weakness results in the fact, that only a global view of the map's content/substance can be conveyed, while interesting individual aspects or facts are not discovered. On the other hand, the group of atlas users may be restricted to people solely with great interest in maps.
As the new trend in data journalism shows, infographics as a means for communication and design – partly together with storytelling techniques – offers new interactive opportunities. Using infographics in atlases can act as a door opener to attract people and acquire additional user groups. For map exploration, infographics possesses an indication function: they can show additional temporal, spatial or thematic dimensions of the data. Taking the example of the "Atlas of Switzerland – online", the contribution will present ideas and possible applications, thus serving as a basis for further discussion.