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## Learning to See the Nation-State History, Geography and Public Schooling in Late 19<sup>th</sup>-Century Switzerland

### Lernen den Nationalstaat zu sehen Geschichte, Geografie und öffentliche Schule in der Schweiz des späten 19. Jahrhunderts

*(Ed.) The following article addresses the role of public schooling in the creation of a national citizenry. It will consider specific types of knowledge that were promoted in the political, cultural and social context of the school of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century with the aim to achieve national identification and integration by fostering so-called “national” values. The authors attempt to determine how these types of knowledge account for a shared national mentality.*

*(Red.) Der nachfolgende Beitrag diskutiert die Rolle der öffentlichen Schule im Rahmen nationaler Bürgerschaft. Dabei geht es um spezifische Wissensformen, die im politischen, kulturellen und sozialen Kontext der Schule des späten 19. Jahrhunderts mit dem Ziel gefördert wurden, nationale Identität und Integration über die Förderung von „nationalen“ Werten zu erzeugen. Ziel ist zu zeigen, inwieweit diese Wissensformen für eine geteilte nationale Mentalität wirksam waren.*

In 19<sup>th</sup>-century Switzerland, educating the future citizen was considered the overall task of the emerging public school systems. The idea that the body of citizens should be made by a public, secular school is rooted in the philosophy of the Enlightenment. In Switzerland, the first attempts to establish such a system were undertaken by the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century (Bütikofer 2006). Although these attempts were not successful, in the centuries to come, the idea of building a modern, democratic, national citizenry by means of public schooling was boosted every time a new constitution – whether cantonal or federal – was introduced. In this article, we will focus on the period following the 1874 federal constitutional reform. Swiss historian Oliver Zimmer summarizes the novelties of this fundamental reform as follows: “Responding to the need for a more efficient organisation of economic ..., social ... and military affairs, the reform of the constitution strengthened federal authority at the expenses of the cantons” (Zimmer 2003, 167). Clive Church and Randolph Head describe this period as a time of “state modernization” (Church/Head 2013, 179). Swiss citizens received enhanced opportunities for political participation through new instruments of democratic

participation and a more pluralistic party structure. It followed that the citizenry became involved with the nation-state more than ever before (with the exception of the short-lived Helvetic Republic, 1798-1803). The last decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century are also a time when “the nation’ established itself as the most potent source of collective identification” (Zimmer 2003, 167): debates, especially debates on education, “were inevitably framed along national lines” (ibid., 179).

In fact, the 1874 revision of the federal constitution introduced for the first time an article on public schooling. It stated that primary schooling was mandatory for all children and that cantons had to provide sufficient public schooling that was required to be free and open to children of all faiths. This article gave rise to heated discussions between radical democrats, liberals and conservatives (Mösch 1945-1953). The Catholic population in particular was afraid of becoming marginalized. In the context of the *Kulturkampf*, the Catholics saw in this school article another scheme against their religion and opposed the liberals’ and democrats’ wishes for the overall centralization of schooling authorities. Federal efforts to take control of education – in a country where cantonal sovereignty had always prevailed in that matter – also evoked the federalists’ opposition, leading to the outright refusal of nearly all cantons to introduce active federal supervision in 1882 (Zimmer 2003, 180f.).

The same constitutional reform also introduced the centralization of the military. Now in charge of conscription as well as recruit training, the federal military department launched a national survey to determine whether the recruits had received sufficient school education. For military service, the department argued, the recruit’s *Bildungszustand* (educational attainment) mattered as much as the young men’s physical abilities (Statistisches Bureau 1876, III). Each recruit was tested in reading, writing, arithmetic, and *Vaterlandskunde* (knowledge of the fatherland). In the latter subject, they were asked about history, geography, the cantonal and federal constitutions, and the federal government’s organization. The results of these tests were published, which proved rather unpleasant for a number of cantons. As a result, the young men’s knowledge or ignorance became topics of public debate. In canton Solothurn, for instance, more than half of the tested youngsters did not have satisfactory knowledge in geography, history and constitutional affairs. To name but two other cantons, although the results were significantly better in canton Vaud, they were even worse in Fribourg (ibid., 14). Because of recruit testing, *Vaterlandskunde* became increasingly central to public schooling in Switzerland. These exams were both a means for control over education on the federal state’s part and a way to improve education levels. Comparisons between cantons and with other countries created emulation and debates on many levels.

Furthermore, according to Zimmer, “from the outset the contest over education was infused with patriotic rhetoric” due to the “close association of education with national sentiment” in a context heated by the *Kulturkampf* and the question of secularization (Zimmer 2003, 184f.). Thus, the ideological battleground that characterizes schooling in the Swiss cantons of the 1880s and 1890s seems particularly interesting, especially if one focuses on *Vaterlandskunde*. Indeed, although sovereign cantons had various school systems and various ideas on how to educate future citizens, the core of citizenship education nearly always consisted of an amalgam of different topics related to subjects as diverse as geography, history, arithmetic, morals, singing, civics, political economics, gymnastics, natural history, and, of course religion. In Switzerland, as in many other nation-states, the idea that – at least in theory – some moral, political, historical, and geographical knowledge was inevitable for future

citizens was rarely denied. However, when it came to the question of what had to be taught, the consensus disappeared, and discussions began.

## 1 Concepts of “Seeing” the Nation-State

Our aim in this article is to capture the core aspects of these subjects and establish what they added to the education of the future citizens. Our hypothesis is that the so-called civic subjects aimed to teach students a specific way of “seeing” the nation-state. We argue in this paper that the manner in which someone “sees” the surrounding world is of great importance. This argument is borrowed from a book titled *Seeing Like a State* by the American anthropologist James C. Scott (1998), who argues that one “sees” the world in a way that is neither arbitrary nor given by nature. One may think of nation-states as “imagined communities”, to quote Benedict Anderson’s famous concept (1983), but this imagination also follows certain schemes. Like American historian Stephen L. Harp, who asked “how France and Germany managed to get their inhabitants to imagine the existence of their respective nation-states” (Harp 1998, 5), we are interested in the much-debated process of how Swiss students could be taught not only to imagine but also to “see” their nation-state the way they were supposed to.

Scott’s main argument involves a specific way of seeing the world. His book opens “with a discussion of what a state must know about its society to engage in basic managerial tasks” (Sunstein 1998, 33). Scott argues that a state must produce uniformity in various types of measures, such as in the elaboration of a standardized measurement system, the universalization of family names, or the creation of maps (which is a venture we will explore further in this paper) – in short, endeavors that are too often considered natural and unavoidable when, in fact, they are not in any respect. Such endeavors are undertaken by the state to render society readable, decipherable, or, in Scott’s words, “legible” by means of standardization, rationalization and generalization at the hands of the state (Scott 1998, 339f.).<sup>1</sup> This is made possible, Scott argues, by the newly found role of the state toward society, deeply rooted in the Enlightenment and the French Revolution: the idea that the “central purpose of the state was the improvement of all the members of society” (Scott 1998, 91) in all the aspects of their lives to provide them with progress (Guzzi-Heeb 1998, 133f.). “Social engineering” was born (Scott 1998, 93), based on “the discovery of society as a reified object that was separate from the state and that could be scientifically described” (ibid., 91) and, subsequently, of something that could be managed, transformed and made better. This description particularly characterizes the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, a time when education was considered a prominent way to achieve standardization and to obtain a more “legible” society.<sup>2</sup>

1 To illustrate his understanding of the concept of “legibility”, Scott tells the story of scientific forestry in late 18<sup>th</sup> century Prussia and Saxony, where the tree (the so-called *Normalbaum*) became the basic unit of the forest. As a result, what had been a rather chaotic biological habitat could be turned into a countable and measurable number of trees. This approach led to severe consequences. Not only did the German forest managers create a specific view of the forest, but also, in the long run, this view changed the forests themselves. In the end, forests became corn-row-style monocultures of pine trees (Scott 1998, 11-22, 2013).

2 In a recently published book, Rudolf Künzli et al. argue that administrative behavior and curriculum developed simultaneously and that both developments followed the “logic of an increasing functional differentiation and rationalization” (Künzli et al. 2013, 26).

Although Scott's book is inspiring, it is not exempt from weaknesses. The state, for instance, appears to be somewhat above society, acting on it and impersonated by (scientifically) trained experts, such as scientists and administrators. We believe this is an overly narrow vision of the state, especially with regard to Switzerland, and that Scott's perspective is centered too much on the state. Indeed, although there was no lack of schemes for standardization to improve society and to place different areas under federal control in 19th-century Switzerland, federal state administration remained relatively weak. In contrast to a highly centralized state that can be identified with its bureaucrats, experts and administrators, the Swiss state, due to its strong cantonal structures, republican heritage, democratic organization and strong militia system, actually consisted of its citizens. Therefore, *seeing the nation-state* was a task that was to be managed not only by some experts and bureaucrats but by every citizen. For our purpose, we use Scott's concept of legibility as a tool to ask how people were taught to see the world via the lenses of the nation-state.

Having outlined the historical context and our theoretical framework, we will now proceed to the historiographic part of this article. It is worth mentioning here that although our research so far is based on a large variety of sources including textbooks, parliamentary minutes, reports of meetings, journal and newspaper articles, conference proceedings and letters, we are fully aware that this paper cannot be more than a door opener to a larger discussion and to more extended research. Furthermore, because schooling in Switzerland is so heterogeneous, we cannot possibly cover all of the different topics involved in civic education that we mentioned earlier. Therefore, because we want to study the representations that are to be taught at school, we will focus on two school subjects that appear to be relevant for acquiring a *vision* of Switzerland as well as for exploring what lies behind these images. These are the school subjects history and geography,<sup>3</sup> for which we will aim to address the following questions: what should be taught and learned in history and geography classes, and why this particular knowledge?

## 2 Making the Past Visible

Our first case study focuses on what appears to be a central part of civics, namely, the teaching of history, conceived as a part of moral and patriotic education in the minds of the social actors at the time. In Switzerland, the idea that history should play a pivotal role in educating citizens carries a long tradition. Scholars such as Johann Heinrich Tschudi, Johann Jakob Bodmer and Johann Jakob Breitinger discussed as early as the 18<sup>th</sup> century the role of history as source for a Swiss Republican consciousness (see Böning 1998; Zimmer 2003; Tröhler 2006). Fostering national unity via a national, common history was also one of the main purposes of the Helvetic Society, which was founded in the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century (Erne 1988; Zimmer 2003). Swiss history was considered one of the pillars of national identity in the plan that was developed during the short-lived Helvetic Republic (1798-1803) to educate the "new" citizens (Böning 1998, 225). Although the Helvetic Republic failed without its leaders' being able to accomplish more than plans in education matters, in the decades to come, policy makers would not neglect the value of history as an inherently *useful* subject that was capable of shaping future citizens and true patriots.

<sup>3</sup> According to Stephen J. Harp, geography and history are "the two subjects best suited for patriotic lessons" (Harp 1998, 107).

In the last decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, history was actually the subject of a heated struggle. In particular, the "heroic", remote ages in the Confederation's history were of crucial importance. The dominant historiographic current was marked by both contact with sources and the urgent necessity to explain the building of the federal state. Positivist historians such as Wilhelm Oechsli (1851-1919) challenged the liberation narratives and tradition. Switzerland's founding date was changed from 1307 (the date carried by tradition and myth) to 1291 based on document-related evidence. The Charter of 1291 was subsequently published, with full critical apparatus, as part of a massive book on the Confederation's origins that the Federal Council commissioned Oechsli to write on the occasion of the Helvetic Confederation's 600<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 1891 (Oechsli 1891; see Buchbinder 2002, 101f.; Zimmer 2003, 209f.). The emergence of document-based historical practices led to many historical endeavors related to sources that were rooted and born in that time period (such as the publication of documents related to Swiss history or new historical journals) (Walter 2014), and evidence-based historians benefited a great deal, symbolically, from the 1891 celebration. At the same time, however, this approach was not unanimous. Other scholars expressed concern about it – such as Carl Hilty (1833-1909), who warned against its negative effects on the development of a common history among the youth, and Georg von Wyses (1816-1893), who favored a vision in which tradition mirrored history. Others opposed the document-based history and attempted to defend the myths by attacking the historian's profession or by justifying the stories as poetic. On the other hand, even partisans of the critical approach were reluctant to dismiss the main liberation stories as mere legends, an ambivalence described by Oliver Zimmer as a "janus-faced picture" (Zimmer 2003, 222). Schooling was not excluded from the debates. On the contrary, the knowledge and methods that one needed to teach national history were at the center of an extensive preoccupation, as can be observed in numerous teachers' journals including *L'Éducateur* (the French-speaking educational journal from 1865 onwards) and *Schweizerische pädagogische Zeitung* (first issued in 1891).<sup>4</sup> The main question was the following: *How is history to be taught at school – and what type of history?*

In the year of the aforementioned 600<sup>th</sup> anniversary, in February 1891, the Swiss Society for Public Utility (*Schweizerische Gemeinnützige Gesellschaft*, hereafter the SSPU), the spiritual heir of the Helvetic Society, launched a competition in the form of a call for essays regarding the promotion and teaching of patriotic values at school. The candidates were asked to respond to the following question: "how should the teaching of history, civics and geography be organized in public schools to develop patriotism?" (*L'Éducateur* 1891, N° 6, 90). The best answers, written in German or in French, were to be addressed by May 1, 1892 to Fritz Hunziker (1845-1908), the Zurich industrial school's director and president of the SSPU and of its appointed Commission for the Fostering of National Sentiment (*Kommission zur Pflege des nationalen Sinnes*), founded in 1889 (Hunziker/Wachter 1910, 153). Prize money was granted to the best answers.

The following year, the commission had received a total of eight papers. Although no first prize was granted, three essays were considered deserving of the second prize (100 Swiss francs), and two received the third prize (50 Swiss francs) (*ibid.*, 182). Interestingly, two out of the five rewarded papers came from the French-speaking canton Vaud, where com-

<sup>4</sup> History is a crucial part of articles on patriotism in other cantons see, for instance, Jaquet (1890) and Ernst (1892).

plementary schools for recruits had been established since 1883 (*Règlement provisoire du 13 décembre 1883, pour les cours complémentaires de l'instruction publique primaire*). The teaching of civic education in Vaud public schools was actually under discussion at the beginning of the 1890s as part of the debates over what would become the 1892 secondary school law (*Loi du 19 février 1892 sur l'instruction publique secondaire*). This teaching appears to be a strong tradition in the Vaud school system given that it was already under discussion before 1820 and the subject had been introduced as early as 1834 in the primary school curricula.<sup>5</sup> The two Vaud teachers who were rewarded – L. Bard from Aubonne with *The Sentiment of Nature and Patriotism* (published in 1893; second prize in the SSPU's contest)<sup>6</sup> and C.-M. Silas from Grandcour with *Patriotism: Its Development in Swiss Youth* (published in 1892; third prize) – detail the teaching of all aforementioned school subjects in relation to their effect on fostering patriotism. L. Bard compared the Swiss nation-state with other “powerful states” that maintained internal cohesion through various means, including “race and language unity, the traditional habit of easily following one single will and the fear of being deprived of their position amongst other great rivals” (Bard 1893, 57). Switzerland, he concluded, had only patriotism to hold it together as one nation and to prevent “its absorption into the great people who circle it and attract it by their similarity in matters of customs and language” (ibid.). Moreover, in the minds of the members of the SSPU, public schooling was considered a major means of achieving that goal.<sup>7</sup> The idea was to fight not on the “outside” but by “strengthening from inside the causes for decadence that happen inside” (ibid., 55). The “dangers of cosmopolitanism” had already been explained in Federal Counselor Numa Droz’ famous and widely distributed civics textbook (Droz 1884, 14). Furthermore, both Bard and Silas, as well as influential pedagogues at the time such as Alexander Daguét (1816–1894) a few years earlier (Daguét 1871), underscored that *national* history in particular, was a prominent component of love not only for one’s homeland but also for the set of principles and moral values that accompanied it (Silas 1892, 339). However, Switzerland’s local traditions and the fact that school systems were cantonal led to the following puzzle: how could a citizen from canton Vaud, for instance, identify with historical events and figures that had nothing to do with his strong regional – and possibly cantonal – affiliations, customs or language? In other words, how could the national community be educated into relating to a (relatively new) *common* ground of shared history and values?<sup>8</sup> Both Silas and Bard emphasized the need to teach history in a different, livelier way than what had been the standard according to them (Bard 1893, 111). Their pedagogic ideal, which can be frequently found in educational journals and essays of the time, was most of-

5 Civics was discussed from 1818 onwards when the legislative authorities wished for a civics textbook (ACV KXI-II 231/1-Préavis). In comparison, most cantons introduced civics either in approximately 1848 or in the 1870s. Whether this precocity is attributable to a need to favour cantonal and national identity in Vaud after more than 200 years of Bernese domination or to other paradigms is subject to further research.

6 Bard describes the program more thoroughly than Silas, primarily by stating which knowledge should be taught at each school level, which very likely explains why the Commission liked his project best.

7 Regarding the “external” as well as “domestic” reasons for the need for patriotic education, see Zimmer (2003, 179).

8 This common ground was not always such a consensual goal. For instance, when the project for a new and modern school law was still under discussion at the time in canton Vaud, we find in the *Nouvelliste vaudois* 97, 18 November 1825, a contribution by Samuel Clavel, who wanted to stress cantonal history in schools, contrary to the government’s idea to use symbolic figures from the “legendary” Swiss past. On the question of the cantonal vs. the national fatherland, see Guzzi-Heeb (1998).

ten described as *Anschauung*. Teaching, according to that vision, should be organized to first present the people close to the child (his family, his village, the nearby town) and then move gradually to foreign places and people. In the *anschaulich* view, biography was preferable to the arid, “scientific” and “abstract” presentation of chronological events that was the current state of the art in Bard’s mind, a position shared by Silas. The former explained it quite clearly: “Biography provides us with a point of view that is more concrete, more intimate and at the same time as large as possible because historical context can be fully related to an outstanding character of the period” (ibid.). Biographical narratives thus present prominent historical figures in context, emphasizing their “civic virtues” (modesty, simplicity and honesty) directed toward “patriotic unselfishness”.

A good illustration of this approach can be found in *Le jeune citoyen*, an educational journal designed from 1884 onward by teachers from cantons Vaud, Geneva, Fribourg and Bernese Jura. During its 74 years of existence, it offered reading material as well as exercises for recruits who were preparing for the famous pedagogical exams. Among subjects as varied as Swiss industries, agriculture, geographic descriptions of regions and cantons, and hygiene, history occupied a considerable part and was, for the most part, structured in a biographical way, following the method Bard and Silas found so superior. The nation’s great men are listed, presented with a picture; their service to the country is depicted, often at length and closely tied with the moral values that they required to achieve their patriotic action. The most prominent, such as Vaud Federal Counselor Louis Ruchonnet (1834–1893), are clearly cited as being given to the youth “as an example” (*Le jeune citoyen* 1888, N° 5, 84).

*Le jeune citoyen* was also a means of establishing a common ground of shared history between different linguistic identities in Switzerland. Indeed, despite many differences, similarities in the structure and, more interestingly, commonalities in the list of national historical figures can be found in its model, a journal from Solothurn called *Der Fortbildungsschüler* that was first published in 1880. This enumeration of “shared” great men (one per journal issue) would be used by children, at least in Bard’s general views, to judge, in a rather Manichean way, every action’s value *in favor or against* the nation-state, that is, the common good. History, therefore, must be seen “not as a collection of amusing narratives, but as a *thing* that has to be reflected upon and used in real life” (Bard 1893, 112).<sup>9</sup>

With regard to using history for the greater good, the discussion on the relevance of source-centered history (especially at school) was partly focused on a special type of historical figure amid the discussions on history and biography: figures who were closer to legendary heroes, such as Wilhelm Tell or Arnold Winkelried, to cite only the most well known. Debates on the historicity of Tell had been ongoing for more than a century already<sup>10</sup> and were renewed from the 1830s onward in the hands of liberal and radical historians. The controversy was additionally heated by the discovery of the *White Book of Sarnen* (1856) (Wyss 2010, 217f.; Oechslis 1891). As part of the 1891 celebration, this issue was quite crucial.

9 The same goes for the non-biographical parts of history teaching, which consists of selected episodes (wars, quite often) or specific time periods of history as well as constitutions. The chosen themes are frequently the same in both the German- and the French-speaking journals.

10 Together with a certain criticism toward historical sources that first appeared in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, doubts on the historicity of central characters such as Wilhelm Tell arose from the 1730s on. The debate started in earnest in 1760 with Gortlieb Emanuel von Haller’s and Uriel Freudenberger’s exposition of Tell’s story as a “Danish fable”, which would come to be highly criticized (Walter 2014; Wyss 2010; see also Morerod 2010; Zimmer 2003).

Skeptical caution toward sources can be found in an 1891 issue of *Le jeune citoyen*: Wilhelm Tell's story is "supposed to have happened around 1307 or 1308", and it comes from the *White Book*, which "entails next to lots of legendary stories and traditions some charts and authentic documents" (*Le jeune citoyen* 1891, N° 9, 138).

This vision was not at all shared by the aforementioned teachers Bard and Silas, who addressed the debate on historicity by firmly condemning what they denounced as scientific skepticism in education in the name of the usefulness of knowledge. Early in their texts, they both established a clear distinction between the scientific presentation of knowledge – in scientific treatises, even in the abridged form that Bard criticized as too "abstract" – and a more pedagogical presentation that could be found in schools, according to one teacher from Aubonne, who suggested, "to render the popular teaching of history, civics, geography and natural history completely independent from a properly scientific point of view, and also concentrate the teaching, as vigorously as possible, on the matter that, in these subjects, bears a direct relation to patriotic feelings and the sentiment of nature" (Bard 1893, 61).

Bard concluded by observing that the failure of current teaching methods was because the conception of history they expressed, which consisted of a chronological enumeration of events and dates was simply "not a conception for the people's use" (*ibid.*).<sup>11</sup> Interestingly, Bard placed himself under the patronage of Johannes von Müller by quoting him in his foreword. Von Müller (1752-1809), who published a *History of the Swiss Confederacy* (1786-1808), famously embodied the mythical approach (Zimmer 2003, 217; see also De Capitani 1987, 29).

A trace of the same dichotomy between scientific knowledge and "popular" knowledge can be found in Vaud in 1880. When assessing the value of the second edition of a history textbook by Jules Magnenat (which would be widely distributed in schools) (*Compte-rendu VD* 1893, 170), an expert mandated by the cantonal authorities of Vaud, Monsieur Tharin, deeply regretted the presentation of national heroes as legendary figures, condemning the historian's attitude as "antipatriotic" (ACV KXIII 231/1-Report). Similar attacks against scholars can be found in Silas' answer to the SSPU's 1891 competition, where he stated that scholars "spread mistrust in their pupils' minds, they discussed, reasoned, argued ... and far from developing the child's patriotism, they inoculated him with doubt, this corrosive morality that atrophies the heart's qualities and diverts from the beautiful and the good. What does it matter if Tell's story is a *fiction!* ... If the narrative, instead of being a fact, is only a *symbol*, isn't there still a lesson, a moral consequence to be learned?" (Silas 1892, 339f.; our italics). The irrelevance of the entire discussion of the historicity of mythical characters is a topic found in both Silas' and Tharin's texts.

All three discourses – Bard's, Tharin's, and Silas' – on teaching national history in school have the same outline: the aim of (popular) schooling is to develop civic and patriotic abilities via historical *exempla*, not by learning historical knowledge. In that discourse, heroic figures can be symbolic *exempla* who inspire virtues and the love of the fatherland, but their meaning is placed on a metaphorical level (which is useful for real life). In contrast to non-heroic historical figures, however, once they are put in a historical context, Tell's and

11 We find a trace of the heated debate already in an 1884 article in the *Aargauer Schulblatt* by Solothurn teacher Bernhard Wyss (1833-1889). Wyss spends numerous pages discussing the historical vs. the legendary aspects of Winkelried, quoting previous studies on the subject, only to conclude that "history without poetry remains a dead letter for the people as a whole" (Wyss 1884, 98).

Winkelried's repeatedly praised actions have no meaning *per se*; they must be explained in the light of patriotic love and Christian virtues. Accordingly, they are not to be taken as concrete behavioral models but rather as a symbolic crystallization of a *competent* citizenry: "The hero in the ancient meaning ... must not be presented to new generations as *the model and type of citizen* ... The great man's role has to be considered as shared between all the citizens. Nowadays, a set of united abilities and wills has to replace hero's will and power" (Bard 1893, 113; our italics).

In the particular context of the beginning of the 1890s in Switzerland, the main element that can be observed is a fierce debate on whether teaching history should be taken from the hands of the scholars to be adapted to the people – to be simplified and standardized, to use Scott's terminology. According to Scott's theory, teaching carefully selected historical knowledge would create a very clear, defined and easily decipherable picture of the national past as well as of the attitudes that one should adopt toward that past (act like great men in everyday life, be inspired by heroes). To use Scott's words, this carefully selected teaching would produce a *legible* vision of time, allowing for the creation of shared visions on a national ground that could be used by citizens to look at – or rather to "see" – the nation-state in a united way.

However, this picture needs nuancing. Although there were attempts at referring to culturally shared *exempla* to foster morals and cultural unity, as illustrated in cultural transfers from *Der Fortbildungsschüler* to *Le jeune citoyen*, the very same *Le jeune citoyen* that was supposed to be used at school was critical of Tell's legend, and was subsequently at odds with claims from other members of public schooling. Scott provides an interesting analytical tool for observing representations of *the nation-state*. He suggests, however, that it is the state that created these selected representations of the national past. But, where is this state? Although the SSPU certainly played a "role of national integration and of state support" (Schumacher 2013) and its goals were likely aligned with the body of administrators and scientists that were the state in Scott's theory, it was not *the state*. In 1891, despite its claims, the Swiss federal state was not legitimized to conduct a national patriotism competition. The SSPU, however, was, and by long tradition: its ancestor, the Helvetic Society, had already launched a first competition on patriotic education in 1786 (Zimmer 2003, 69). The 1891 competition and its winners' discourse on the integration of citizens in the Swiss state can be seen as endeavors that are close to the state but distinct from it; this applies as well to Vaud expert Tharin.

Moreover, Scott's theory was about a scientific way of organizing the world. In the heated discussions reflected in *L'Éducateur* and in Tharin's report, it was both the scientific nature of history and its relevance to educating the people who were being dismissed. Scholars who used critical history to undermine the great patriotic myths were seen as no less than traitors to the fatherland. There was a debate among historians themselves at the time on the best way to practice history and teach it in school. As a result, the *vision* of the nation's past was subject to struggles rather than to a consensual use of "control mechanisms by the state and/or dominant elites" to transfer selected parts of historical knowledge (Schissler/Soysal 2005, 1). Although such attempts did exist, they were neither unanimous nor single-minded.

### 3 Making the *Heimat* Visible

Our first case depicts a discourse in which, although national identity was at stake, the federal government played only a marginal part. In the absence of a federal education department, para-state organizations such as the SSPU took the lead, which is a characteristic pattern in Swiss education discourses on a national level. However, when considering the cantonal level, this pattern is no longer predominant. In many cantons, centralized administrations were key players in educational discourses, as the following case study will show. For this second case study, we focus on the canton of Solothurn, but it also places the focus on another part of civic education, geography.

In geography classes, maps constituted the main teaching material apart from textbooks. Many a scholar has noted the importance of maps in the making of the modern nation-state (Winichakul 1994; Harp 1998; Gugerli/Speich 2002). In Scott's view, modern maps are a perfect expression of "seeing like a state". Maps "summarize precisely those aspects of a complex world that are of immediate interest to the map-maker and to ignore the rest", he writes (Scott 1998, 87). Therefore, one can conclude that learning to draw a proper, modern map also means learning to see *like* a state. This is exactly what was happening in the canton Solothurn, as we will show in the following.

From the mid-1870s to the 1890s, geography as a school subject, the corresponding curriculum, and the teaching material were widely discussed in the canton of Solothurn. Between 1873 and 1875, a number of new laws concerning the primary school, the secondary school and the *Kantonsschule* (the public grammar school) were passed. Those laws defined geography – together with history and *Verfassungskunde* (knowledge of the constitution) – as a school subject (Gesetz über die Primarschulen 1873), but the corresponding syllabi were long in coming. The first steps in adjusting the curricula to the new school laws were taken by rewriting the reading books and by introducing new maps. Although this procedure was not generally accepted, it appeared to be the most suitable way to proceed until the long-awaited syllabi were finally introduced in 1884 and 1885 (Derendinger 1937). At the same time, geography as a science as well as a school subject underwent a major shift toward the so-called new geography (MacKinder 1895, 1921). In contrast to history teaching, in which new scientific approaches were vividly debated, they were warmly welcomed in geography. The new geography's champions emphasized teaching students to decipher the world properly or, to use the English geographer Halford MacKinder's (1861-1947) words, "what is important is not to send them [the students, ND/LB] out with the rudiments of history as such and the rudiments of geography as such in their minds, but to send them out with some sort of orderly conception of the world around them" (MacKinder, cit. in: Goodson 1993, 146; see also Meynen 2013, 215f.).

Although no one used the term "new geography" in canton Solothurn, a similar concept can be found in the analyzed sources. Throughout the decade from 1880 to 1890, a number of school superintendents praised the progress that had been made in geography courses, which – according to them – was the result of the new teaching materials. The new books and maps were praised for forcing teachers as well as students to invest more time in map reading rather than memorizing facts.

In May 1891, the government of Solothurn – or, more precisely, the Department of Education – announced the acquisition of a relief map of the canton of Solothurn on behalf of the

*Kantonsschule*. From 1881 to 1888, captain Benedikt Schlappner (1849-1922) had built this relief map<sup>12</sup> of the canton of Solothurn based on the so-called Siegfried map, the state-authorized map series of Switzerland. Schlappner praised his relief map as a perfect aid to teach students geographical knowledge and, in particular, to teach them how to read maps.<sup>13</sup> In a letter addressed to the authorities, he explained why geography was an important subject and why future citizens should learn to read maps properly: "In my view, it [the knowledge of the map of Switzerland, ND/LB] should be turned into common knowledge by school. Besides all the benefits this knowledge yields in the field of military, every citizen can make good use of it in civic life as well as in industry" (SO BA 2,1: s.p.-Relief).

Unfortunately, the relief map was rather expensive, and the canton of Solothurn was still recovering from a major political and financial crisis. In this specific situation, more than ever, the authorities had to think carefully about the value of the knowledge at stake.

According to Schlappner, the commission on teaching materials led by the principal of the teachers training college, Peter Gunzinger (1844-1919), recommended acquiring the relief map (SO BA 2,1: s.p.-Relief). This committee was an important opinion leader when it came to curriculum issues. Not only were its members in charge of approving teaching materials, but they were also the authors of the 1885 primary school syllabus (Rechenschaftsbericht SO 1885, 342f.), which included geography and history. Nevertheless, the decision of whether to buy the relief map was not up to the commission on teaching materials; it had to be made by the Department of Education under the command of Oskar Munzinger (1849-1932)<sup>14</sup>.

Before a decision was made, Munzinger asked for more information. At first, the well-known school superintendent Gottlieb Stucki (1854-1908) from Bern was asked to give an opinion.<sup>15</sup> Unfortunately, Stucki's answer – in addition to all following expert reports – appears to be lost. Nevertheless, from another source, we know what his response must have been: Stucki answered that it was not worth buying the relief map because it was not of any use for either primary or secondary schools. However, he ignored the question of whether the relief map could be useful for teaching boys to read maps (Verhandlungen SO 1891, 176f.). Unsatisfied with this answer, the Department of Education asked another specialist to give his opinion. A member of the permanent school exhibition in Zurich provided this second opinion (ibid., 177). He contradicted Stucki by stating that the relief map was "eminently suitable" for learning to comprehend topographical maps (ibid.). He also highly recommended acquiring the relief map. Now that the score was tied, at least among independent experts, the Department of Education asked the secondary school teachers' conference and the education council (the so-called *Erziehungsrat*) for help.<sup>16</sup> Unable to make a decision based on the presented reports, the latter asked a third independent expert, Anton-Philip

12 Relief maps have had a long tradition in Switzerland. One of the most well known relief maps was built by Franz Ludwig Pfyster between 1762 and 1786 (Bürgi 1998).

13 Schlappner most likely thought foremost of the boys. However, there are other authors who wanted girls to obtain geographical knowledge as well (see Rechenschaftsbericht SO 1888, 308).

14 At the same time, Oskar Munzinger was the president of the Solothurn liberal party and a member of the Swiss council of states.

15 Stucki was also the editor of the Swiss teachers journal. Shortly after this request, he took up a post as a geography teacher at the women's teacher training college in Bern (Grunder 2011).

16 Although the idea of the *Erziehungsrat* dates back to the Helvetic republic, in Solothurn, it was only founded in 1888.

Largiadèr (1831-1903), a school superintendent from Basel, for his opinion. This man also supported acquiring the relief map. Based on this report, the education council recommended purchasing the relief map. Because the secondary school teachers had agreed as well, the map was finally purchased and stored in the *Kantonsschule*.

This story poses some questions. Why did two independent experts, the commission on teaching material and the secondary school teachers all agree to spend a great deal of money on an expensive, large, heavy, cumbersome piece of paper and plaster? Why did they think the relief map was of any worth?

Referring to Ivor Goodson's study on school subjects and curriculum change, it could be argued that this relief map combined three traditions in school subjects (Goodson 1993): the preparatory tradition (the relief map referred to scientific knowledge and the corresponding academic field),<sup>17</sup> the utilitarian tradition (knowing how to read a map is considered useful in the military, industry and trade fields), and the pedagogical tradition (the relief map corresponded to the call for *Anschauung*, which dominated much of the pedagogical discussions at the time). In a way, the education council also referred to those three traditions when it wrote that the relief map should be of good use for grammar school (preparatory tradition), industrial school (utilitarian tradition), and teacher training (pedagogical tradition). That Schlappner's relief map appeared to appeal to all of those traditions almost perfectly may explain why it was so warmly welcomed.

In addition to this interpretation, we focus on the dimensions of *politics* and *power*. Of course, the information contained in a modern topographic map is the result of meticulously performed scientific research. Of course, to a travelling salesman, a map is most useful. And of course, the map allows *Anschauung* insofar as it brings the nation-state or canton into the classroom. However, it is more than that: it is also the manifestation of an orderly conception of the world, which is at least as political in origin as it is scientific, useful and pedagogic. A modern map such as the Dufour or the Siegfried map contains much more than useful, scientific, didactically arranged information. To the citizen, it is the only image of the physical appearance of the nation-state (or the canton) he will ever get, and this is more than *Anschauung* inasmuch as the map *constructs* the nation-state or canton it represents. David Gugerli and Daniel Speich argue that measuring and mapping Switzerland not only provided an image of what Switzerland was; it was also an act of *making* Switzerland (Gugerli/Speich 2002), and following this argumentation, the production of the Schlappner relief map can also be interpreted as an act of *making* Solothurn – at least in the eyes of the future citizens. In this sense, cartography reveals its “productive power”.<sup>18</sup>

The Solothurn government bought Schlappner's relief map to teach the future citizens to see Solothurn not only as a canton but also as a part of the Swiss nation. Together with a map of Switzerland, the relief map of Solothurn should be used in schools to show students what the nation-state looked like. However, the Solothurn magistrates also wanted their students to learn to see like a state. Therefore, they had to learn not only how to read a map but also how to draw one. In 1889, a correspondent described in the annual report of the Solothurn

government how the students climbed up a hill to get a look at the grounds beneath them. Then, they went back to school, where they drew a sketch of what they saw on the black board “with the result that an image of the home [*Heimat*] and therewith a simple map emerges before their eyes” (Rechenschaftsbericht SO 1889, 238). *Heimat* was not just “out there”: it emerged through the act of drawing a map.<sup>19</sup> The student who proved to be able to draw a proper map also proved that he could see the *right* way, which meant being able to see what was important to the state and what was not. Rendering the *Heimat* visible was therefore not only a question of technology but also a question of mental imagery. In Swiss public schools, maps were used specifically “to strengthen the national identification” (Gugerli/Speich 2002, 91). Moreover, “the now legible book of landscape could be filled with political messages” (ibid.).

#### 4 Conclusion – Turning Private Individuals into *Competent Citizens*<sup>20</sup>

In late 19th-century Switzerland, there was no doubt that “the teaching of the collective past, the shaping of spatial and temporal memory, [was] loaded with meaning” (Schissler/Soysal 2005, 2). Although discussions about how to teach the national past in school were quite fierce, the question of geography appears to have been consensual in the sense that new geographic and scientific approaches did not pose important problems. In contrast, as François de Capitani emphasized, history could unite but also powerfully separate the Swiss. Local scientific history in particular had more to offer in terms of reminding citizens of the immense linguistic and cultural differences between them than in terms of binding them together. Tell's and Winkelried's legends as well as stories about great men were a way of using what *could* be used as a common past. Understandably, dismissing these liberation stories as mere legends was subsequently seen as problematic (De Capitani 1987, 34).

Some of Scott's arguments have proven useful for analyzing the Swiss case, if not as a basis for all of our conclusions. Traces of large-scale standardization, rationalization, and centralization of the government and the administration and social engineering schemes can be found in the sources we analyzed. In the late 19th century, rendering the state and the society legible through schooling was undoubtedly a major objective of at least part of the social actors, an objective whose realization had to be carried out by state administrators, politicians, statisticians, physicians, architects, army officers, geographers, scientists, teachers and many others. Although this legibility goal was not always consensual, the two case studies we just presented confirm that one way or another, textbooks and maps that were written and drawn by experts and intended for use in history and geography classes made Switzerland *visible*. With the use of these teaching materials, pupils were supposed to learn to *see* the nation-state. By reading textbooks, they were to learn which historical events were important for Switzerland – and which were not. By drawing maps, they were to learn which geographical characteristics were important and which were not.

In Switzerland, the notion of the citizen consisted of multiple levels of reference. One was the citizen of a commune, a canton and the federal state. Although each of these levels was related to its own specific body of knowledge, one overall goal in the education of the future

<sup>17</sup> By this time, a number of chairs for geography were established at Swiss universities: Bern 1886, Zürich 1895, Fribourg 1896 (Egli 2007).

<sup>18</sup> The productive power of maps was by no means a new discovery of the late 19th century. Shortly after the Helvetic Republic had been established in 1798, a number of maps were published. In August 1800, one of these maps, produced by Wilhelm Hass in Basel, was enclosed with Heinrich Zschokke's weekly paper, the *Schweizerbote* (see Höhener 1998).

<sup>19</sup> This is the reason superintendents repeatedly asked for more teaching of map drawing.

<sup>20</sup> The idea of educating “competent citizens” was not an invention of the 1880s and 1890s. Zimmer notes that some of the liberal champions of the 1848 federal unification considered the same scheme.

citizens – although it was much debated – remained the same: to provide them with a common conception of the temporal, spatial and social organization of what was called *Heimat*, the *fatherland* or the *nation-state*.

If we were to convert this assumption (i.e., the hypothesis that someone “sees” the world in a specific way because he or she is exposed to an orderly conception of the world) into today’s pedagogical lexicon, we would most likely talk about *competences*. As documents from both our case studies suggest, the teaching of history and geography in Swiss schools was meant to produce *competent national citizens*, a notion that does not conflict with the *knowledge* at stake that we have been discussing. On the contrary, both notions are interdependent; the former is based on the latter.

This understanding leads us to the thesis that the overall task of Swiss schools, or, more precisely, of schools in the cantons Solothurn and Vaud in the last decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century was to turn private individuals into *competent citizens*. The data we gathered concerning history content in Vaud and geography content in Solothurn might not be sufficient evidence to draw such a broad thesis, and a study of other cantons as well as the other bodies of knowledge that were explicitly developed to educate the future citizens in Switzerland whom we mentioned at the beginning of our article would be of great interest. However, for the time being, a look at geography in Vaud (Magnenat-Gloor 1870; Renaud-Blanchard 1889; Cornuz 1893) and, particularly, at the discussions about history teaching in Solothurn appears to indicate that even in light of additional historical data, the thesis still holds true. Finally, by approaching “curriculum [as] a disciplining technology that directs how the individual is to act, feel, talk, and ‘see’ the world” (Popkewitz 2001, 152) and by developing our thesis in that direction, we also attempted to address the question of how a history of curriculum can focus on “knowledge as a governing practice” (ibid.). This question, as well as the question of practices that are hardly graspable, opens the door for much more research.

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