

# The Introduction Chapter of the Swiss World Atlas 2017 – An Innovative Cartographic Education Tool in Switzerland

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## Abstract:

Many printed school atlases do not only comprise a collection of topographic and thematic maps or illustrations to convey geographic topics at different school levels, but also infographics and text introducing key concepts and methods of cartography and geo-information. However, this was not the case for previous editions of the printed Swiss World Atlas, the most commonly used student atlas for the secondary school level in Switzerland. This omission of a dedicated introductory part may be explained by the atlas' long tradition of more than 100 years and the strong influence on the atlas design by former editors-in-chief. In this tradition, selected cartographic aspects were covered on different pages throughout the atlas. In contrast, other printed school atlases have included a general introductory part for many decades.

This contribution presents the concept and implementation of a new, coherent, and innovative introduction chapter for the 2017 edition of the printed Swiss World Atlas (Figure 1). A comparison to similar chapters of other widely used school atlas examples from Europe and North America serves to evaluate the didactical value of this introductory part of the Swiss World Atlas.



Figure 1. The Swiss World Atlas 2017 in three language versions. The open double page of the introduction chapter shows a comparison between reality and map models (Photograph by A. Eggenberger, 2017).

The first part of the presentation specifies the didactical and cartographic fundamentals, with a focus on developing the student's map reading and interpretation competences. The new introduction chapter of the Swiss World Atlas 2017 is structured as follows: After four pages of the atlas table of contents and a two-page list of map topics, the different steps in geomatics are illustrated with infographics that explain the data capturing methods of geodesy and photogrammetry and the processing of geodata by GIS. The following double page presents the principles of map projection and reference systems, enriched by illustrative models and graphics. Another two pages provide an introduction to

