

# “Rethinking” school atlases with the AtlaSH

Pascal Tschudi<sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup> Pädagogische Hochschule Zürich/Kantonsschule Schaffhausen, Lehrerbildung Geografie SEK I/Lehrperson Geografie – pascal.tschudi@phzh.ch

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## Abstract:

How should traditional school atlases be redesigned in order to do justice to modern geography teaching? What should individual maps look like and in what form should they be presented as a holistic teaching aid? And which topics and regions should be mapped and how can methodological and didactic requirements be met?



Figure 1. AtlaSH - maps tell many a story themselves

The technical-cartographic and formal construction of school atlases has changed significantly over time, mainly due to the advent of digitization. However, if we look at the thematic content and the underlying methodological and didactic approaches, we can still find countless traces of the past. This becomes particularly apparent when current geography textbooks are taken into account, which have undergone this change much more stringently than school atlases.

In this teaching aid “AtlaSH - Schaffhauser Kartengeschichten”, an attempt has been made to put these initial questions into practice. The following seven didactic approaches were anchored in it:

- 1. Away from area studies:** Map stories structured according to curriculum competencies, starting with physical-geographical basics, through social spatial issues to human-environment relationships, break through the regional studies principle of material organization and the principle “from near to far”.
- 2. More than basic topographical knowledge:** Promotion of spatial orientation skills combined with factual content in map images, infographics and aerial photographs.

3. **Practical teaching of cartography:** Learners are immersed in the technical world of cartography at a low threshold through approaches, concepts and methods that are contextualized and relevant to the map stories.
4. **Interlinked questions and problems:** Didactic and methodological tips encourage questions/problems to match the map story and enable interlinked thinking through given card combinations and comparisons.
5. **Everyday/lifeworld references:** The spatial proximity of the locations of the map stories for the learners, supported by aerial photographs and initiated with exemplary regional case studies.
6. **Extracurricular learning:** Extracurricular activities can be easily combined with atlas work (and spatial orientation in real space), as map stories take place in the local area.
7. **Multimedia:** The strengths and weaknesses of individual geomeia can be balanced out through clever combinations and varied, motivating and individualized teaching/learning settings are possible.

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