Branding the Nation:

Swiss Multilingualism and the Promotional Capitalization on National History under

Late Capitalism (SI P&S #1)[1]

Abstract

This paper discusses how Switzerland is branded by the Swiss state under late capitalism. Drawing on discursive data collected in the framework of a research project investigating the international promotion of Switzerland, I particularly focus on how multilingualism and cultural diversity are constructed by the Swiss government as a capital belonging to Switzerland and its history and on how and why this imagined historical capital is reframed in promotional terms. In doing so, I question the function of the historicity of Swiss multilingualism and cultural diversity in nation branding practices and analyze the logics making that specific tokens of multilingualism and cultural diversity emerge as desirable promotional features. Finally, I research how the promotional investment in Swiss multilingualism and cultural diversity affects the status and value of this historical capital and how this has consequences for what can be said (or not) about Switzerland and its history.

Introduction

In his speech to the Swiss Parliament in 1975, Mr Hofer[i], then head of the Swiss government, defended a controversial bill which would provide a basis for the establishing of a commission for the presence of Switzerland abroad: the *Federal act on the establishing of a coordinating commission for the presence of Switzerland abroad*[ii]. The bill defined the commission's aims as to coordinate propaganda campaigns that would promote Switzerland's politics, economy, culture and tourism internationally. Closing the parliamentarian debate, Mr Hofer insisted that the existing promotional strategies needed enhancing.

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Furthermore, Mr Hofer emphasized the potential of Switzerland's presumed historical multilingualism and cultural diversity for an appealing presentation of the nation. He thus constructed Swiss multilingualism as inherently linked to Swiss nation-state's genesis. Further, while presenting Switzerland's history as shaped by the peaceful coexistence of different cultures, he highlighted the rarity of such a tradition within Europe, where heterogeneity has ever so often resulted in political tensions; hence turning Swiss diversity into a reason for particular pride. Finally, Mr Hofer suggested that the international promotion of Switzerland should be organized around this specific national feature.

After a controversial parliamentarian deliberation on the appropriateness of transforming so-called national identity into a marketing object, the bill was adopted and the commission for the presence of Switzerland abroad was established. In the following decades, the federal act acted as the basis for the implementation of branding campaigns of Switzerland's culture, tourism, and economy. While the legislative framework has been adapted since 1975 because of changing political-economic needs, the investment in the historicity of Swiss diversity for the international positioning of Switzerland remains, in line with Mr Hofer, a constant in the governmental promotional strategies.

While for a large part of the 20th century, governmental discourses on national diversity were produced as a means to legitimize the Swiss nation-state, Hofer's reconceptualization of national history in promotional terms, and particularly his capitalization on the supposedly traditional multilingual nature of the Swiss state, gives us access to new forms of governmental investments in authoritative imaginations of the Swiss nation and its history. Indeed, for a critical scholarship investigating the governmental production and reproduction of ideologies of the nation under late capitalism, the Swiss state's promotional investment in national diversity as a historical capital enables us to better understand the status and value of national culture and national history within the framework of a state practice generally called *nation branding*. This state investment in discourses on the

historical nature of national diversity also enables us to understand the ways these promotional practices affect how national histories are imagined and reimagined by governmental actors under late capitalism, i.e. how these promotional practices define the limits of what can be said and thought about Switzerland and its past. Finally, these practices allow us to highlight the logics, mechanisms and interests regulating these governmental imaginations of the nation and its supposed diversity under late capitalism[iii].

Thus, by focusing on how multilingualism and cultural diversity is constructed by the Swiss government as a capital belonging to Switzerland and its history and by reflecting on how and why this imagined historical capital is reframed in promotional terms, it is the aim of this paper to a) examine the structural conditions under which Swiss history (and more particularly Swiss diversity as historical capital) emerges as a promotional argument, b) question the function of the historicity of Swiss multilingualism in nation branding practices and c) analyze the interests underpinning such discourses.

Therefore, in the *first* section my analysis will be embedded in a tradition that is interested in the role of history for the modern nationalism and in how current political-economic transformations have provided new (or old) forms for the instrumentalization of national history. Related to this, I will present a theoretical approach to the *semiotics of branding*, reflecting on the contribution of branding to both a promotional exploitation and to a reinvention of national history. Thus, the branding of the Swiss nation does not emerge in a vacuum, but is produced in the context of a given governmental practice. To understand nation branding's conditions of possibility, the *second* section discusses Switzerland's nation branding policy, called *Landesmarketing* [country marketing], and how this legislative framework affects the (re)imagination of Swiss history.

In such promotional discourses, a central role is given to multilingualism and cultural diversity that represents a semiotic resource on which the branding of the nation draws. In the *third* section, I will therefore present this historical capital, i.e. analyze its "essence" and

reflect on how and why it has been historically "invented" as a key element of national identity.

The *fourth* and *fifth* sections provide a discourse analytical account of the promotion of Switzerland. First, by drawing on an excerpt of a promotional text by *Switzerland Marketing*, I will analyze how Swiss history and, more particularly, Switzerland's presumed traditional multilingualism and cultural diversity, are rethought as promotional resources and entextualized as key features of the brand "Switzerland". Second, I will show how this promotional feature of the brand "Switzerland" (Swiss diversity as historical capital) is appropriated by two other promotional agencies, *SwissEco* and *Swiss National Tourism Board* to promote two specific "products": Switzerland as a business location and Switzerland as a tourist destination. [iv]

From the Invention of the Nation to its Branding

The questions raised in this paper will be approached from a critical perspective embedded in a research tradition that is interested in links between political economy, nationalism and culture and focuses on the invention of national histories at particular moments in time.

Hobsbawm's position (1990; see as well Gellner 1997) on the foundation of the nation-state in the 19th century will serve as a starting point. Linking the foundation of the nation-state with political-economic changes, he emphasizes the hegemonization of industrial capitalism and the need of the economic elite to establish an apparatus for the regulation of the national market. Hobsbawm further argues that national traditions needed to be "invented" in this particular context to gain the citizens' loyalty to their respective emerging nation-states and to neutralize feelings of inequality resulting from the new capitalist order. By making an imagined " other " (e.g. rival nations or newcomers) responsible for economic inequality, states were intent on creating a sense of "us" that would go beyond the solidarity to class

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membership but, instead, would result in national belonging (Duchêne 2008; Hobsbawm 1990).

Yet, for the creation of this "us", a common past was needed. As anthropologists (Gal 2009, 2011; Bauman and Briggs 2003) have shown, powerful theories of intellectuals such as Johann Gottfried Herder, Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz or Étienne Bonnot de Condillac were appropriated to this end, where languages were both the expression of the authentic self of a certain "Volk" [people] living in a specific place, and a sign of deeply felt fellowship and common heritage of their speakers. Consequently, a central concern for the invention of a common past was to cultivate a "common" language and to protect it from the impurity of social mobility and cultural contact. Further, scholars have shown how the composition of national anthems, the creation of national epics and the emergence of national romanticism were conducive to the (re)imagination and protection of a national past (Billig 1995). However, while nation-states might not have actively participated in the production of a common heritage discourse, the key role of the state apparatus in reproducing such discourses should not be ignored. Through the introduction of mandatory education, state funding of the arts, the implementation of a nationwide military casern network, the establishing of a national print market, as well as the creation of national transport and communication systems, the ideology of a common past justifying the creation of and adherence to a specific nation-state could be communicated to the new citizens living within and outside the borders of the imagined new nation-states. This ideology also legitimized the new social order resulting from the emergence of the political and institutional framework represented by the nation-state (Anderson 1983; Hobsbawm 1990; Gal 2006).

In late capitalism – I borrow the concept of *late capitalism* from the Marxist scholar Mandel (1975), who uses this term to designate the current phase within the history of capitalism - the national past still finds itself reinvented for the legitimization of inequality between the "natives" and the "foreigners" (Blommaert 1999). However, current political-

economic transformations characterized by the saturation of national markets, the consequent transnational expansion of capitalism, and the tertiarization, flexibilization and technologization of the economy (Harvey 2005) have added a new dimension to the governmental exploitation of national history. In a political-economic framework where a) capital, products, individuals and semiotic resources circulate freely across national economies and b) both production and consumption are not restricted anymore to specific national locations but change according to the desires of the markets, a new form of transnational market emerges, bringing states into competition. In this context, the competitiveness of states depends on their global distinctiveness (Duchêne & Del Percio 2014; Harvey 2005). As several scholars have shown in diverse terrains such as tourism, the arts, food, religion, and sports, national history emerges as an important promotional resource for making a state appear special and desirable, i.e. enabling differentiation from one state to its competitors (Duchêne and Heller 2011).

As stated in the introduction, this investment in the national past needs to be understood within a framework of state practice generally called *nation branding*, i.e. a governmental strategy transforming the nation into a commodity that can be branded to successfully position the nation internationally. As such, nation branding creates an economic value in forging affective meanings (e.g. feelings of exoticness, internationality, integrity, reliability, stability etc.) that a promotional discourse projects onto the promoted commodity (the nation in this case) (Foster 2007; Lurry 2004).

According to Nakassis (2012) such branding practices (e.g. of a nation) are both *performative* and *citational*. The discursive enactment of a brand performatively attributes a specific feeling and value to its indexed commodity (e.g. a nation) and creates a desire in the public for the branded commodity and for its enacted aura (Mazzarella 2003). Yet, branding is also citational because "the performative is always only the leading event in a larger interdiscursive field or 'chain' of signification: any performative cites a previous instantiation

of the 'norm' it brings into being, harkening back to some presumed original moment"
(Nakassis 2012: 634, referring to Butler 2011; see as well Silverstein 2005). The citational
renders a brand recognizable by its consumers, and is thus performatively brought into being.
Yet, no citation is neutral. Emphasizing the "uniqueness" of the national past does not simply
entail the discursive indexing of a previous instantiation of this national past as unique and, as
such, does not just reproduce this event as equivalent. It further results in the erasure and
neutralization of the historicity of this past semiotic event, i.e. of its ideological, potentially
conflictual markedness and contingent social function. Finally, it transforms the national past
into something new by recontextualizing it in a new social context and with new functions.

This promotional investment in the national past might differ from the nationalist
discourses described by Hobsbawm (1990) on several levels, primarily in terms of their
addressees and their political-economic motivation: While nation branding discourses are
produced to strategically position the nation in the global markets, modern nationalist
discourses usually address the domestic public in the legitimization of the nation-state (always
also addressing rival nations to protect national borders). Yet, the consequences of both
discourses are similar. Scholars relying on critical theory have shown that nation branding is
never neutral, but rather ideologically loaded and, in line with modern nationalisms,
impacting on how nations are imagined and relations of domination are legitimized. (Duchêne
and Del Percio 2014; Kaneva 2011). Further, both discourses are similar in the way they
operate as instruments of power. First, modern nationalisms and nation branding practices are
both produced by authoritative power institutions (by governments or marketing agencies
mandated (and as such legitimated) by state actors), thus defining, through these discourses,
the limits of how the nation can be thought (Foucault 1969). Second, both discourses
obfuscate the possibility of alternative national histories. Third, from a bourdieusian
perspective, both discourses are materializations of the positioning of actors who have
specific interests and ideologies (Bourdieu 1984). As such, these discourses are both the

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result, and the condition of a symbolic market, affecting processes of societal structuration and, consequently, impacting on the (de)capitalization of individuals. Finally, both discourses are ideological, in that they erase the political "loadedness" as well as the tensions and struggles reproduced through the promotional feature of the branded nation. Yet, they also neutralize their ideological motivation. According to Irvine and Gal (2000), such neutralization is realized through three interrelated semiotic processes: iconization, erasure and fractal recursivity. *Iconization* is the process that accords a specific identity to the nation and marks this link as necessary, consequential and natural; the process of *erasure* erases any centrifugal, heterogeneous and diverse aspects of this national identity and consequently neutralizes the political implication of the hegemonization of a given identity; finally, the process of *fractal recursivity* projects the iconic relation between the nation and its identity ("the unique national past") onto other levels of the nation.

Consequently, I argue that these three semiotic processes act as conditions of possibility for the mobilization of Switzerland's national past as part of the brand "Switzerland" and for its appropriation and consumption by new actors, in new contexts and for new purposes.

Switzerland's "Landesmarketing" in Motion

Switzerland's branding practices have their roots in back to the late 1920s, when the economic crises and the emerging political instability of Europe risked to affect national integrity and sovereignty. To support the national export activities and the international visibility of the national culture and tourism destinations, the Swiss government launched the financial support of already existing private organizations operating in this "promotional" sector.

While the governmental involvement in these organizations was stable for the first part of the 20th century, the changes occurring in the 1970s (the two oil crises, the resulting

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hegemonization of neoliberalism, the accelerated deregulation of the national economies; see Harvey 2005 for an account of these transformations) forced the federal authorities to rethink the international promotion of the national economy.

The oil crises in the 1970s and the increasingly negative international reputation of Switzerland caused by its restrictive treatment of the migration population and the denial of voting rights to women resulted in intense parliamentarian debates on the necessity of new instruments, which would counter possible attacks on the integrity of the Swiss government and would pose a threat to the national economy. These debates resulted in the implementation of the *Federal act establishing a coordinating commission for the presence of Switzerland abroad* in 1975, which provided the basis for a centralized governmental institution in charge of the coordination of the promotion of Switzerland's economy, culture and tourism.

The reorganization of Switzerland's promotion is an ongoing process and has led to what has come to be commonly called *Landesmarketing* [country marketing]. This represents a network of promotional organizations, which are mandated and financed by the federal state. This reorganization involved as well a) the professionalization of promotional practices, i.e. the recruitment of marketing and PR experts and b) the adoption of promotional strategies with their origin marketing. This implied a shift in the promotional practices themselves: in the 20th century, Switzerland's promotion was conceptualized as facilitating the access to target markets, i.e. in creating the conditions for the presence of Switzerland abroad. Since the late 1990s, however, the rethinking of Switzerland as a *brand* can be observed. This brand was supposed to imply a set of location factors: linguistic and cultural diversity, humanitarian tradition, sense of quality, innovation and proximity to citizens.

This paper will focus on three promotion organizations included in the federal *Landesmarketing* policy: a) the *Swiss National Tourism Board*, which is a consortium promoting Switzerland as a tourism destination; b) *SwissEco*, aiming to market Switzerland as

a business location; c) *Switzerland Marketing*, which assumes the supra-sectorial promotion of Switzerland. The first two organizations are financed by the state, but legally independent; the third is entirely part of the Swiss government. My focus on these organizations is based on their major weight in the federal *Landesmarketing*, since they are mandated to promote the two most strategic sectors: national tourism and economy. Furthermore, while these organizations differ in their objectives, they strongly cooperate in the promotion of the nation. Thus, the branding practices of these institutions are conducive for the analysis of the circulation and (re)invention, i.e. the decontextualization, entextualization and recontextualization (Silverstein & Urban 1996), of national history across time and space.

Linguistic and Cultural Diversity as a National Historical Capital

Before analyzing how and why Swiss history has been enacted for the promotion of the nation, I will discuss the semiotic resources on which nation branding discourses draw. As a starting point I will take an excerpt of the *Dispatch concerning the maintenance and promotion of the spiritual[v] heritage of the Confederation* [Message du Conseil fédéral à l'Assemblée fédérale concernant les moyens de maintenir et de faire connaître le patrimoine spirituel de la Confédération] (1938). This document – which, according to Swiss historians (see Sarasin 2003 or Mooser 2000), represents one of the most powerful state imagination of Swiss national history - was produced as a reaction to the transformations leading to World War II and should be analyzed in the zeitgeist of these years. More particularly, it was submitted to the parliament by the former federal government with the aim to create a legislative framework for a civic reaction against the fascists' regimes bordering on Switzerland and their military expansion strategies. While the military defense of the nation was to be provided by the state's army, the dispatch aimed to provide the means for the spiritual mobilization of intellectual circles to protect the national identity and the cultural independence of Switzerland. This focus on culture has political implications. Since it was the

Nazis' strategy to regroup all territories belonging to a "common" German culture, the spiritual defense was a practice aimed at strengthening national culture and to emphasize the cultural independence of (German-speaking) Switzerland from Germany. How this ideology of spiritual defense in turn is used to (re)imagine Switzerland's history will be shown in the following excerpt:

Excerpt 1 (Dispatch concerning the maintenance and promotion of the spiritual heritage of the Confederation, 1938)[vi]
What are the constants that form the face of our country and determine the particular nature of the Confederation? […] Those are Switzerland's affiliation to three great western civilizations and the fusion of these three civilizations on our territory; […] Precisely because we refuse the theory that a state and its frontiers are determined by race, we keep the liberty and the strength of being conscious about our affinity with the three German, French and Italian cultures. The Swiss idea is not the product of race, i.e. of flesh, but the work of the spirit. The circumstances are admirable that a great idea, a European and universal idea, could emerge and become political reality around the Gotthard, a dividing and unifying mountain at the same time: the idea of a spiritual community of western peoples and cultures. […] One of the major tasks of the spiritual defense is to intensify contact between these different cultures in order for the richness and the diversity of our spiritual life to become manifest and for us to be always aware of our homogeneity. [author's translation]

In this excerpt, Switzerland is constructed as THE place (geographically marked by the Alps) where the three European cultures (German, Italian and French) have come together to form THE essence of European culture ("*be always aware of our homogeneity*"); while Switzerland is constructed in *"affiliation to three great western civilizations"*, its national identity is not the product of these three national cultures, but transcends and transforms them into a universal political reality ("*the idea of a spiritual community of western peoples and cultures").* In rupture with what is happening in its neighboring countries, Switzerland's identity finally is neither seen as the product of an ethnic ideology ("*the product of race, i.e.*

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of flesh") nor of a civic ideology of the nation; rather, it is the product of reason. The notion of "constants" is used here as a synonym for "national identity"; however the notion further implies historical stability for this identity and insinuates that, consequently, this "*affiliation to three great western cultures*" is intrinsically tied to Switzerland's history.

This definition of national identity in the *Dispatch* (1938) results from the political-economic context in which this text was produced. Staging Switzerland as being at the heart of Europe where European culture itself is represented as historically existing *in nuce*, allows Switzerland both to perform its uniqueness and to claim an universality to its identity. This enabled Switzerland not only to assure its independence from its neighbors, but also to construct the Swiss nation as part of a broader European cultural project and, as such, to keep a privileged economic access to the bordering markets and to profit from their political and military position in Europe.

The reference to the Swiss Alps *("as a dividing and unifying mountain at the same time")* has yet another implication. It is related to the construction of common identitarian features at the time of the foundation of the modern Swiss nation-state in 1848, drawing on the one hand on the alps, characterized as the common landscape of Switzerland, and, on the other, on the so called *homo alpinus helveticus*, defined by a sense of liberalism (i.e. independence from any monarchical power) (Sarasin 2003). However, the ideology of the *homo alpinus helveticus* proved to be neither specific nor different enough to legitimate a border between Switzerland and its neighbors – after all, every bordering nation-state was populated by their own versions of the *homo alpinus*. In the political-economic context preceding World War II, a new identitarian feature emerged that was conducive to highlight the difference of Switzerland's national past: linguistic and cultural diversity (Sarasin 2003). This example of the Alps as a reference for the emerging discourse of national diversity demonstrates how "new" discourses on national identity need to cite past semiotic events (the *homo alpinus* and the *alps*) to be legitimate, authoritative, and intelligible. Thus, there is no

such thing as a point zero from where a discourse is created (or creates itself as Maingueneau suggests). Discourses are rather the product of strategic decontextualization, recontextualization and entextualization practices of already existing discourses.

Finally, the insistence on the fusion of European culture on Swiss territory needs to be understood in relation to the ideology of *spiritual defense* itself. While a focus on the *racial* or *ethnic* would not suffice to legitimize the borders between Switzerland and its neighbors, drawing on the *spiritual* as the condition for Switzerland's homogeneity allows the construction of national culture as the product of intellectuals, artists and other cultural workers. Such an approach to national culture helps to legitimize spiritual defense as a governmental policy, i.e. the nationalization of cultural production. This policy not only creates financial, institutional and legislative conditions for the support of this spiritual work, but it also contributes to a reinforcement of Switzerland's homogeneity and is thus conducive to render its national heritage as unique and different from the neighboring ones.

Yet, the ideology of linguistic and cultural diversity as a historical essence of the Swiss identity is not a specificity of these interwar years, but has circulated across time and space. More particularly, the emergence of such discourses in new, unexpected contexts were observed over the last years, where diversity as national capital was made the object of economic capitalization by the nation-state itself. More particularly in the frame of nation branding, diversity and its supposed key role in national history has emerged as central argument in the promotion of Switzerland's culture, tourism, and economy.

Entexualizing a Historical Capital

The semiotic resource of Swiss linguistic and cultural diversity as key element of national history is thus cited and performatively transformed into what could be called brand "Switzerland". Focusing on the semiotic processes of iconization, erasure and fractal recursivity, I show how the indexed semiotic resources are depoliticized in order to make

them fruitful for new forms of governmental practice. Thus, in this section, I will analyze an excerpt produced by *Switzerland Marketing*, which is a unit of the *Federal Department of Foreign Affairs* and is mandated to "support the communication of general knowledge about Switzerland, the stimulation of positive feelings towards Switzerland and the presentation of Switzerland's diversity and attractiveness" (SR 194.1) by comparing it with the above-mentioned excerpt of the dispatch. In other words, *Switzerland Marketing* is the marketing agency of the Swiss government and is responsible for the conceptualization and implementation of promotional campaigns, the definition of the brand "Switzerland", and for the organization and staging of supra-sectorial nation branding events. As such, *Switzerland Marketing* de facto takes the lead in Swiss nation branding activities.

The excerpt subject to analysis in this section was extracted from *Switzerland Marketing's* website (*swissworld.org*) in December 2012, which is the organization's promotional online platform. Continuously updated, the website is a communication instrument with information on Switzerland and intends to ameliorate the image of Switzerland abroad. In opposition to other, more focused promotional practices, *swissworld.org* communicates Switzerland strengths in a rather appealing way to a broad public. It is constructed as an interactive platform where users can consume texts, pictures, audio material and videos that perform Switzerland and present the "typical" life of Swiss people. Available in eight languages (English, German, French, Italian, Spanish, Chinese, Russian, Japanese), it is structured along ten sections (People, Culture, Leisure, Geography, Environment, Science, Education, Economy, Politics, History).

The text excerpt, in English, is entitled "Swissness" and placed under the section *Culture*. The title "Swissness" intends to designate and define national identity; at the same time, "Swissness" is a term commonly used by *Switzerland Marketing* and other organizations to index the brand "Switzerland" and to make it internationally recognizable. Consequently, this text can be understood as a definition of the brand "Switzerland" and it

will be shown at a later point how this definition is appropriated by other branding

organizations. In the excerpt here, the construction of the brand "Switzerland" on the basis of

the cited historical capital becomes evident through entextualization processes that include

similar discursive materializations as the dispatch.

Excerpt 2a (Dispatch concerning the maintenance and promotion of the spiritual heritage of the Confederation, 1938)	Excerpt 2b (Swissness)
What are the constants that form the face of our country and determine the particular nature of the Confederation? […] Those are Switzerland's affiliation to three great western civilizations and the fusion of these three civilizations on our territory; […] Precisely because we refuse the theory that a state and its frontiers are determined by race, we keep the liberty and the strength of being conscious about our affinity with the three German, French and Italian cultures. The Swiss idea is not the product of race, i.e. of flesh, but the work of the spirit. The circumstances are admirable that a great idea, a European and universal idea could emerge and become political reality around the Gotthard, a dividing and unifying mountain at the same time: the idea of a spiritual community of western peoples and cultures. […] **One of the major tasks of the spiritual defense is to intensify contact between these different cultures in order for the**	What is Swissness? Switzerland is in the highly unusual situation of being the home of three of Europe's major languages […]. Whichever language group they belong to, the different Swiss communities have linguistic and cultural ties with one of their larger neighbors. The language communities eat different things and have different traditions and customs. Even their shared history only goes back about two centuries. Before the Napoleonic invasion of 1798, some of the cantons even ruled other parts of Switzerland. The inhabitants of what is now Canton Vaud, for example, were the subjects of Bern, and did not enjoy the same rights as the Bernese. […] **The Swiss say they are held together by the desire to stay united. The general attitude is summed up in the formula "unity, but not uniformity".** [www.swissworld.org]

richness and the diversity of our spiritual life to become manifest and for us to be always aware of our homogeneity. [author's translation from French]	

The excerpt of the website *swissworld.org* shows strong interdiscursive links with the dispatch from 1938. On a structural level, both start with a rhetoric question on the essence of Swiss identity (cf. underlined part), then continue with an answer, which emphasizes diversity as the key element of national identity (cf. highlighted part) and, finally, end with a synthesis of what was said (cf. text in bold). On an argumentative level, both highlight Swiss history's uniqueness and, at the same time, its cultural affinity with its neighbors.

Despite this strong intertextuality, the entextualization of the historical capital results in the transformation of imagined Swiss history. While the dispatch performs the nation as the place were European culture materializes and is, as such, part of the history of European civilization, the excerpt from *Switzerland Marketing* insists more on the particularity of Switzerland's history ("*highly unusual situation*"), discursively weakening Switzerland's relations with Europe. While in the dispatch Switzerland "belongs" to three western cultures, the "*ties with one of their larger neighbors*" are reduced to the respective communities in the more recent excerpt rather than being attributed to Switzerland as a nation.

A second rupture emerges at the level of national cohesion. If in 1938 Switzerland's diversity was conceived as the fusion of three European civilizations, the excerpt of *Switzerland Marketing* pinpoints the historical differences between the Swiss linguistic communities and insists on the conflictuality of this coexistence. While this could appear counterproductive for the promotion of Switzerland, it is actually in line with the overall intention of the text. The emphasis on the divergences and conflictuality highlights the willingness of Swiss citizens to live together and to create a common nation. In 1938, it was

the intellectual elite, who created the condition for homogeneity, whereas today the ideology of the "Willensnation" [a nation shaped by the will of its people] is underlined, which invokes not just an elite but all "regular" citizens. Finally, the excerpts address different publics. While the first explicitly addresses a domestic public (primarily, parliamentarians are addressed, but generally all Swiss citizens are addressed as well, since the dispatch is a public governmental text), the latter is conceived for a foreign public. The same distinction is noticeable on an enunciative level: The dispatch discursively constructs a national "us" by the use of pronouns such as "*we*" and "*our*". In the second excerpt, however, the enunciator is discursively erased which renders the text neutral and "objective", thus authoritative.

Yet, neither these continuities nor these shifts are neutral, but tied to specific interest and needs. The reasons conditioning the reinvention of national history can be explained in relation to the communicative functions of the discourses on national history and the conditions under which these discourses emerge. The core interests of the dispatch are the legitimization for the implementation of a spiritual defense policy. In the second excerpt, a promotional discourse comes to the forefront that constructs an appealing image of the nation. The promotional objective to perform a nation that is different and special is served by insisting on Switzerland being a historically exceptional case, by focusing on a fundamental heterogeneity ("*The language communities eat different things and have different traditions and customs*"), by mentioning a possible conflictuality among the Swiss population ("*some of the cantons even ruled other parts of Switzerland*") and, finally, by emphasizing the desire of the Swiss "*to stay united*". By this discourse, Switzerland is consequently positioned in implicit opposition to other heterogeneous societies where conflicts are supposed to characterize citizens' everyday life. However, presenting Switzerland as too unique would also alienate other publics. Since the major addressees of these promotional campaigns are the three neighboring countries as well as the European Union, all of which are critical of Switzerland's taxing and banking policies and its conservative migration politics, an

accentuation of the historical ties with these countries is instrumental. Indeed, it aims to maintain contact with Switzerland's major economic and political partners and to count on their solidarity in the name of history and cultural ties. At this point, then, the question emerges of why linguistic and cultural diversity was chosen for the branding of Switzerland in late capitalism rather than other historically invoked aspects of Swiss identity like the nature or the *homo alpinus*?

In line with Duchêne and Heller (2011) I argue that it was the logics of late capitalism itself that transformed diversity and, more particularly, Switzerland's historical tradition into such an attractive promotional feature for Switzerland's branding. Drawing on interviews conducted with actors involved in the (re)definition of the brand "Switzerland", I will extract three points that seemed central for the decision to exploit Swiss diversity promotionally.

First, the transnationalization of the economy has resulted in a liberalization of the labor markets since the 1960s. Consequently, western societies became more diverse, which implied new forms in the division of labor with migrants often working in lowly paid and precarious work places. Following the crises of the western welfare states after 1980s, these processes gave rise to socioeconomic inequalities and to a destabilization of the social peace that the western industrialized states were meant to have attained after World War II. These states were accused of not doing enough for a fair (re)distribution of income and wealth. Switzerland was no exception and was heavily criticized in the 1970s by the international media and its neighboring states because of the precarious living conditions of the migrant population in the country. This is why the Swiss government decided to deploy a strategy of shifting public attention onto Switzerland's history which was presented to be characterized by a co-existence of culturally and linguistically diverse communities and thus to claim an expertise in terms of management of sociocultural diversity.

Furthermore, the transformation of capitalism itself can be considered as the second reason for the emergence of diversity as key feature of the brand "Switzerland". Since the

transnationalization of the economy asked for multilingual exchanges with economic partners and consumers, linguistic diversity emerged as the precondition for economic growth. More particularly, multilingual Switzerland, with its supposedly long tradition of multilingual communication, sells itself as providing both the primary resource for these labor practices, i.e. multilingual individuals, and the expertise in multilingual communication. Moreover, since Switzerland is geographically placed in the middle of three major European economies (Germany, France and Italy) which facilitates contact with these markets on geographical but also linguistic and cultural grounds, multilingualism seemed to be the ideal promotional argument in a highly technologized and network-ized global economy.

Finally, as a result of the transformations of global capitalism, categories such as the "self", a "culture", a "society" as well a "nation" and an "economy" were not regarded as essentialized, natural and stable categories any more, but as highly relative, fluctuating and socially decentered imagined entities. This ideological shift also resulted in a shift of discourses on multilingualism and multiculturalism. While until then multilingualism had been suspected to be the source of psychological illness or social and national instability, from this moment on they were recognized as symbols of liberalism, emancipation and social resistance to oppressing regimes. It was in this context that Switzerland's diversity emerged as a privileged terrain onto which ideologies of hybridity were projected. The politicians and marketing experts mandated with defining the brand "Switzerland" by a traditionally conservative Swiss government, realized the promotional potential of the (supposed) uniqueness of Switzerland's sociolinguistic situation and thus integrated it in the ideal image of the brand.

These reasons for a promotional investment in linguistic and cultural diversity point to a similar process as in value building: Switzerland's diversity is conducive to the appearance of the nation as unique in the geopolitical landscape of Europe that is seemingly characterized

by linguistic and cultural uniformity, which, in the end, allows for the capitalization of this difference.

Capitalizing and Reinventing National History

The appropriation of linguistic diversity as a key feature of the brand "Switzerland" implies a destabilization of this very brand, because it involves a discursive adaptation to the indexed product, service or place. In this section it will be shown how such promotional adaptation results in the redefinition of the brand "Switzerland" and, as such, in the reinvention of Swiss history. I will demonstrate this by drawing on two excerpts of promotional brochures of *SwissEco* and of the *Swiss National Tourism Board*.

I will start with the text produced by *SwissEco*, an organization mandated to promote Switzerland as a business location. To fulfill its mandate, *SwissEco* stages different promotional campaigns. Its major promotional instruments are brochures that are distributed to potential investors at promotional events. The most important brochure, tellingly called "the bible" by *SwissEco's* staff, is the "Handbook for Investors – Business Location Switzerland". This handbook provides detailed information on Switzerland and addresses potential international investors and entrepreneurs aiming to found new companies or to establish their European headquarters in Switzerland. The Handbook is 143 pages long, features a red cover, thus representing the colors of the Swiss flag, and is translated into the nine languages (German, French, Italian, Portuguese, Mandarin, Japanese, Russian, British English, American English) of the nine target markets (the British English version first and foremost addresses the emerging Indian market). There are the following 14 chapters: 1. *Switzerland – facts and figures; 2. Economic structure; 3. Economic framework; 4. Switzerland and Europe; 5. Establishing and managing a company; 6. Visas, residence and work permits; 7. Real estate; 8. Labor market and labor laws; 9. Financial center and capital*

market; 10. Overview of the Swiss tax system; 11. Infrastructure; 12. Education and research; 13. Living in Switzerland; 14. Promoting Switzerland.

The first chapter *Switzerland – facts and figures* is further divided into several sub-chapters: *1.1 Geography; 1.2 Climate; 1.3 Political system; 1.4 Public finances; 1.5 Neutrality; 1.6 Population; 1.7 Cosmopolitan and international outlook; 1.8 Switzerland in figures*. It introduces the "Handbook" with an overview of Switzerland's political system. The text I will analyze is an excerpt of the section *1.3.1 Federal structure* in the sub-chapter *1.3 Political system*, treating Swiss federalism.

Excerpt 3 (Handbook for Investors – Business Location Switzerland)

Switzerland is a nation created by its own will and formed from several ethnic groups with different languages and religions. The modern Swiss state was founded in 1848. Before this time, Switzerland consisted of a loose association of independent cantons. […]

The state has a federal structure and is divided into three political levels: municipal, cantonal and federal. The federal government is responsible for everything assigned to it under the constitution, such as foreign and security policy, customs and excise, the monetary system, national legislation and defense. By global comparison, the 26 cantons have a high degree of control. Healthcare, education and culture are among the political areas in which they have a great deal of influence. As small and flexible political entities, the cantons also compete with each other in various areas.

The proximity of politics to the business community and citizens is achieved through the federal structure, in which many public functions are executed at cantonal or municipal level. These in turn have a certain amount of autonomy and can thus implement solutions that are designed to meet local requirements.

In this excerpt, Switzerland is constructed as a highly federal state with clearly defined political responsibilities. This focus underlines the political stability of Switzerland and the liberal ideology regimenting the co-existence of highly autonomous cantons. Further, the Swiss political system is performed as creating the conditions for reliable relations between

the private sector and its public partners. It is also staged as providing effective and flexible solutions for companies searching to establish new locations.

In this context, the historical capital of diversity emerges as an argument providing the foundations of the historical roots of political stability in Switzerland. Put differently, the political stability is not determined by "nature" (as it would be in an ethnic nation-state), but by the explicit wish of different communities to live together. Moreover, the thus constructed historicity of Swiss federalism invokes the sustainability of this political system.

Thus, Switzerland's political system is constructed as unique through the appropriation of Switzerland's linguistic diversity and is performed as the ideal location for successful business. The adaptation of the historical capital to market Switzerland as a business location, has consequences for the (re)invention of Swiss history: While Excerpt 3 stresses the strong wish among the people to be united despite their diversity, the "Handbook" highlights the historical coexistence of several preexisting, but independent, ethnic groups. The focus lies hereby on the ethnic and religious affiliation of the groups rather than on their linguistic background, which stresses the historical and ethnic differences between the communities. Yet, this insistence on existing differences is not intended to draw out a propensity for conflict; but to stress the unusual historical peaceful coexistence of these communities and the proximity of the local governmental authorities to the local economy. To sum up, Excerpt 3 shows how the historical capital of linguistic and cultural diversity is entextualized to promote the federalist state as a unique business location. However, as was also shown, the appropriation historical capital as such does not suffice for a successful promotion, but requires an adaptation of this historical capital to the promoted object.

The second excerpt was produced by the *Swiss National Tourism Board*, the organization mandated by the Swiss government for the branding of the nation as a tourist destination. While the board collaborates with several regional tourist boards and runs a call-center hotline as well as a website, they use as their privileged promotional channels

brochures that market different aspects of touristic Switzerland. The brochures promote different cities, places or regions, a variety of cultural, sportive and recreational activities, and different types of infrastructure, such as museums or hotels. Excerpt 4 is taken from the brochure "Swiss Historic Hotels", which aims to promote typical Swiss old style hotels. The bilingual (English and German) brochure is opened by introductions of the CEO of the *Swiss National Tourism Board* and of the CEO of *Swiss Hotels*. This introductory section is visually completed with a map of Switzerland, on which the promoted historical hotels are indicated. Further, two chapters of the brochure generally treat Switzerland's historical attractions and its transport system, whereas eleven chapters are dedicated to specific touristic regions (Graubünden, Bernese Oberland, Valais, Lake Lucerne Region, Lake Geneva Region, Ticino, Zürich Region, Jura & Three-Lakes, Basel Region, Bern Region, Eastern Switzerland/ Liechtenstein). Every region is introduced by a short text on its history, followed by a presentation of its diverse historical hotels. In other words, as will be shown in Excerpt 4, Swiss history explicitly emerges as a product that needs to be sold. Excerpt 4, originally in English, is extracted from the chapter on historical attractions in Switzerland. In contrast to the rest of the brochure where particular regions are marketed, Switzerland as a whole is presented in this chapter.

Excerpt 4 (Swiss Historical Hotels)
Where the past comes to life.   Every land has its history. But rarely is heritage as rich as here in Switzerland. The concentration of historical attractions – from ancient castles to intact medieval town centers and sacred jewels of Baroque architecture – is as remarkable as the cultural diversity they encompass.

This excerpt constructs Switzerland as a unique place with a rich heritage, which is due not only to religious and secular buildings, but also to cultural diversity, in turn materializing in the very existence of these buildings. Finally, and as the title of this short

except reveals, Swiss history is presented as an experience that links the past to the present and can be lived in these historical hotels.

In line with the previous excerpts, cultural diversity is constructed as a key element of national history and is transformed into a promotional argument that distinguishes Switzerland from other tourist destinations. Hence, national history becomes a promotional resource onto which the marketing discourse can draw. However, this resources needs to be transformed to suit the marketed product. First, in contrast to the other excerpts, cultural diversity is not specified; it is not rendered clear what this diversity entails. Yet, this ambiguity is instrumental insofar as a definition of diversity in this brochure would exclude certain regions, since not every region is equally diverse or uniform. Moreover, the potential imagined conflictuality of this diversity needs to be erased, since Switzerland has to be marketed as a harmonious destination. Second, comparing this excerpt with the previous ones, the promotional exploitation of the historical capital of diversity here does not mention the cultural ties with neighboring countries as the promotional argument. This exclusion is necessary due to the fact that these countries are competitors in the tourism sector. Stressing any resemblance with these countries would lessen the uniqueness of Switzerland. Finally, the history of Switzerland is enlarged and reinvented in this excerpt: By mentioning the baroque architecture as well as the medieval town centers, Switzerland's history is extended to a period before the Napoleonic invasion of Switzerland (cf. Excerpt 2b). Yet, at that time, Switzerland did not exist as a state.

To sum up, the historical capital of Swiss diversity is partly entextualized in this brochure and, at the same time partly erased. Both these discursive processes are not neutral but strategic in that they are tied to a promotional logic.

The Limits of the Promotion of National Diversity

The aim of this paper was to discuss the promotional potentiality of linguistic and cultural diversity as a historic capital and to critically analyze the integration of this capital in a branding practice, which involves a reinvention of the nation and of its past. To do so, I described the strategic instrumentalization of national diversity as a key element of Switzerland's past, its instrumentalization for an economic and marketing logic and, consequently, the ideological implications of such practices. Furthermore, I demonstrated how the adaptation of the promotional argument to the marketed product results in a destabilization of the promotional argument itself and of its contribution to a "reinvention" of national history. Finally, I illustrated how the investment in Switzerland's linguistic and cultural diversity of course implies a discursive erasure of social tensions that have historically materialized (and still do).

Yet, while the different excerpts stressed the value of this promotional argument, our research has revealed that the argument of diversity as historical capital has its limits. As an employee of *SwissEco* explained, under specific conditions this historical argument could even become a threat for the location of Switzerland. Since the "original" emergence of diversity as an element of national identity emerged, among other things, as a political strategy to counter the fascist regimes in Europe, these very branding practices are reminiscent of the uncritical approach of Switzerland to their role in World War II. In such cases, the insistence on national history has been perceived as an index of profound conservatism. In line with this, the vice president of *Switzerland Marketing* also insisted on the fact that national diversity can pose a threat on another level. Switzerland has found itself, in the past and still today, in the center of (inter)national criticism because of its repressive policies on minority rights in general. As a consequence, the commodification of national diversity for the promotion of the nation as unique and special has been judged contradictory to actual political practices and has thus been deemed as arrogant or cynical even. Finally, as he professed, Switzerland's nation branding discourses increasingly address emerging

markets, where linguistic and cultural diversity tends to be regarded as a sign of instability or source of conflict. Reaching these markets with the traditional discourses of Swiss diversity has proven to be counterproductive. Additionally, consumers have become sensitive to the history of national diversity in their own home countries over the last years, which results in the loss of the uniqueness of Switzerland's historical diversity.

In short, if under certain conditions multilingualism and cultural diversity as a historical capital seem effectively to be capitalizable for promotional purposesd, under other conditions they are not and needs to be relativized or even erased in promotional discourse. Thus, the promotional value of diversity is highly depended on the markets these practices are addressed to and on the fluctuating demands and expectations of those actors comprising the global markets.

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Acknowledgments

Notes

[i] All personal names and institutions are pseudonyms.

[ii] All translations are from the author.

[iii] The findings presented here are based on the research project funded by the SNSF entitled "Performing Swissness: Discourse, Institutions and Social Transformations", jointly held by Prof. Alexandre Duchêne (University of Fribourg) and Prof. Vincent Kaufmann (University of St. Gallen) and in collaboration with research assistants Alfonso Del Percio and Arthur Poget.

[iv] This work was partly supported by the Research Council of Norway through its Centres of Excellence funding scheme, project number 223265.

[v] I borrow the English translation of the dispatch's title from historians having worked on this document (see e.g. Mooser 2000). However the English word "spiritual" that is used to translate "spirituel" is ambiguous, since in English "spiritual" makes reference to a divine influence. However, in the original French version of the document "spirituel" is used as a synonym of intellectual and cultural and is not related (at least no historians have ever made the link) to the divine.

[vi] *Message du Conseil fédéral à l'Assemblée fédérale concernant les moyens de maintenir et de faire connaître le patrimoine spirituel de la Confédération. (1938.)*

Quelles sont les constantes qui modèlent le visage de notre pays et déterminent la nature particulière de la Confédération ? […] Ce sont l'appartenance de la Suisse à trois grandes civilisations de l'Occident, et la réunion de ces trois civilisations sur notre territoire; […] Précisément parce que nous refusons d'admettre la théorie selon laquelle la race déterminerait l'Etat et les frontières de celui-ci, nous gardons la liberté et la force de rester conscients de nos affinités avec les trois cultures allemande, française et italienne. L'idée suisse n'est pas un produit de la race, c'est-à-dire de la chair, mais une œuvre de l'esprit. C'est un fait admirable qu'autour du Gothard, montagne qui sépare et col qui unit, une grande idée, une idée européenne, universelle, ait pu prendre naissance et devenir une réalité politique: l'idée d'une communauté spirituelle des peuples et des cultures occidentales. […] Une des grandes tâches de la défense spirituelle consiste à *renforcer le contact des différentes cultures de la, Suisse,* afin que la richesse et la variété de notre vie spirituelle se manifeste plus fortement encore et que nous constations toujours davantage notre homogénéité.