

Where Does Europe End? The Representation of Europe and Turkey in Italian Primary Textbooks*

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Abstract

Critical Geography and Critical Geopolitics demonstrated how popular and academic geographies are not “naive” forms of knowledge, arguing that, rather than describing the World, they “build” it. Geographical Education, in particular through School Geography, plays a relevant role in this process of geo-graphing, mainly because, in many cases, it is still considered as an ‘objective’ knowledge, based on factual and a-critical descriptions of spaces, places and processes. Moreover, reflecting on its educational dimension, we can understand how Geography suggests a body of narratives, biases, spaces and limits that contributes to the construction of children and young students’ image of the World. For this reason we can affirm that School Geography is a tremendous tool for the reproduction of the “Common Sense” stated by Antonio Gramsci, and for the consolidation of the “Cultural Hegemony” of dominant social classes, or - according to Alain Reynaud - of dominant “socio-spatial” classes. This paper, through a critical reading of a sample of 49 Italian Primary School Textbooks, investigates the linkage between the idea of “Otherness” and the construction of a “supposed” European identity. We focus in particular on the iconic and cartographic representation of Turkey in opposition to the European Union. First of all we show how maps and visual representations reproduce mighty geopolitical discourses, and then we point out the narratives through which this iconic body

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geo-writes the relation between Europe and Turkey in terms of a cultural, geographical and political opposition. We argue that maps and images reinforce the boundaries between EU and Turkey, by depicting them as discrete, and clearly separated geographical entities. The paper aims to demonstrate that this reinforcement is based, and leaned, on a variable and, in some cases, incoherent representation of some pivotal concepts of the Political Geography such as borders, State, nation and development.

Keywords: otherness, textbooks, primary school, common sense, Europe, boundaries, Turkey

School Geography and Discourses: Curricula, Textbooks, Maps and Narratives

The Italian philosopher Antonio Gramsci (1975) pointed out how public institutions play a crucial role in the production of what he defined “Common Sense”: a body of knowledge, images and values reinforcing the “cultural hegemony” of the political Power. Mass compulsory education is one of the mightiest strategies through which dominant groups reproduce this system of knowledge, images and values. In fact they “*achieve hegemony mostly through discursive practices rather than the use of force*” (Durrani, Dunne, 2009, p. 218). According to this perspective, National Curriculum can be considered as the main *dispositive* (Foucault, 1975) that organizes and institutionalizes discourses, narratives and values within School Systems. In fact these texts hold a:

Codified body of knowledge about a specific field of inquiry, which is presented to students as objective and bias-free, a “universal truth”. However [...] like other forms of knowledge, is not objective or neutral, but a social construction deeply rooted in a nexus of political relations (Nasser and Nasser, 2008, p. 629).

Furthermore, if we look at the contemporary European School Systems, we understand how these structures (the National Curricula) give a crucial contribution to promote taken-for-granted national and European identities, aiming at producing “*citizens with appropriate knowledge, skills and values [...] to maintain social order*” (Huckle, 1997, p. 242). Therefore, following this general perspective, we should focus on the discursive nature of each single subject included within National Curricula. In fact, developing what affirmed by Nasser and Nasser, we should analyse how themes and topics of compulsory subjects, such as History and Geography, are presented as objective and bias-free issues and how their methodological and theoretical structures support the reproduction of an universal and objective form of knowledge.

In this paper we will explore how School Geography consolidates, through maps and textbooks, the Common Sense about a space usually defined “Europe”,

but, also, how it produces images and narratives on some crucial disciplinary topics, such as borders and identity. We assumed that School Geography gives back to students a traditional dichotomised view that divides the World between us and them, North and South, outside and inside.

The linkage between geographical key-concepts, narratives and education is a well-established issue. Several scholars have investigated how School Geography, through textbooks, maps and curricula, reproduces the idea of “Otherness” (Zolyan and Zakaryan, 2008, Hong and Halvorsen 2009, Philippou 2009), acting, in particular, upon the construction of collective and national identities (Horváth and Probáld 2003, Szakács 2007), and reinforcing borders and differences among communities and States (Bar-Gal, 1993). Furthermore Schissler and Soysal (2005) edited an essential book that illustrates the influence of textbooks, maps and curricula upon the process of “citizen creation” in Western and Eastern Europe.

Critical Geopolitics (Dalby, 1991, Toal, 1996), which has been taken (along with Antonio Gramsci’s philosophy) as the main theoretical reference of our work, showed how our discipline rather than describing spaces, creates them, through an intentional act of “geo-writing” (dell’Agnese, 2008). This intentional act influences the geographical images of places and spaces by producing or reinforcing narratives, bias and stereotypes upon some pivotal key-concepts of the geographical knowledge such as borders, gender, states and nations. According to this approach, even School Geography shouldn’t be considered, as it is largely done in most of the European School Systems, as an objective description of human-space relationships or as a neutral and “scientific” teaching of some spatial topics. It is, above all, a writing process that produces geographical images on spaces and places. Therefore teaching Geography, as well as writing or publishing Geography textbooks or maps, means playing a political role, especially in Primary School, where pupils and students start working on their sense of citizenship and on their social engagement. In fact, during this crucial key-stage, they build their own images of the World and develop their own personal geographies. According to the so-called “critical School Geography” (Huckle, 1997, Squarcina, 2009) we assign this “political role” both to teachers and to scholars. In fact we are persuaded that, when teachers choose a methodological approach and a textbook or when they teach their geographical lessons, they should be aware that they are creating spaces and that they are acting on pupils’ and students’ geographical images. Whereas scholars should promote a 180° degree turn in order to disseminate:

the idea that geographical knowledge is not “objective”, indisputable and “given”, subject to organization according to universal laws, theories, models and systems in the positivist sense. Instead, it is chosen, organized

and presented on the basis of subjective decisions by people who hold particular value position. Indeed, the knowledge which is made available to pupils in the school geography curriculum is a social invention, having been selected and used with certain interests implicitly or explicitly in mind (Winter, 1997, p. 181).

One of the focal goals of Primary School is to develop pupils' critical approaches to reality, as well as to develop their image of the World and their private "sense of place", through the promotion of a better understanding and of a deeper respect of physical, cultural, social and geographical differences among places and peoples. For instance, inside the last Italian National Curriculum it is manifestly declared that:

Teaching Geography means educating autonomous, responsible and critical global citizens, able to live in their spatial contexts and to transform it into an innovative and sustainable direction (Ministero della pubblica istruzione, 2007, p. 86).

In this work, according to the 'critical School Geography' approach we argue that:

what counts as school geography (its content, teaching methods and assessment) is largely determined by dominant groups and interests in society [...] school geography is socially constructed and continues to play a role in the economic and cultural reproduction of our society (Huckle, 1997, p. 242).

Therefore we aim at understanding how the general objective held by Geography inside our National Curricula - to educate autonomous, responsible and critical citizens able to transform their contexts - can be achieved within our Schools Systems where teaching Geography often means describing spatial relations in an objective and a-critical way. We guess that this sort of "mismatch" between general objectives and teaching practices is particularly evident whether School Geography is made exclusively thought maps and textbooks, the most powerful tools through which geographical knowledge is produced and reproduced inside the Primary School.

Objectives and Method

According to Marienfeld (1976) our investigation has been based on the hermeneutic interpretation and on the qualitative analysis of images and texts. In particular we focused on images and maps as a part of the iconic body of the Primary School textbooks.

The interpretation of pictures, photos or maps, thought as products of specific political, social and cultural contexts, is a well-known methodological approach of both Critical and Postmodern Geographies (Cosgrove, 1999, Harley, 2001, Rose, 2003) and of the so-called “Visual Studies” (Prosser, 1998, Pink, 2006). According to this framework we have read maps, pictures and drawing as texts¹.

The qualitative analysis of visual and textual dimensions of Geography textbooks is a consolidate field of research within the international literature.² Several scholars have investigated the production of discourses, stereotypes and biases through maps, texts and images (Winter, 1997, Wright, 2003, Papadimitriou, 2004, Budke, 2009, Roberts, 2009, Halocha, 2011). Many of them have already discussed their nationalistic use or their ethnocentric approach to other geographical realities and to other cultural contexts, as Hicks’ pioneer perspective suggested more than thirty years ago:

Teaching materials that deal in any way with images of the World bring with them a set of attitudes and assumptions, explicit or implicit, conscious or unconscious, which are based on broader cultural perspectives. These perspectives tend to be ethnocentric, they generally measure other cultures and groups against the norms of one’s own, or racist in the one’s own culture is considered to be superiors and thus, by definition others are inferior (Hicks, 1980, p.3).

Starting from this theoretical tradition, we tried to integrate and, at the same time, to overcome these two predominant critical interpretations. We analyzed how maps reinforce the boundaries between two political subjects, EU and Turkey, by depicting them as discrete, and clearly separated geographical entities. We argue that this reinforcement is based, and leaned, on a variable and, in some cases, incoherent representation of some pivotal concepts of the Political Geography such as borders, State, nation and development. The iconic body (maps, pictures and drawing) works on the “flexible” meanings and on the multiple connotations these geographical key-concepts can assume while they are drawn on a map or on other kind of visual representations.

Our hypothesis was that maps and images within Italian textbooks tend to represent Europe as an objective, factual and homogenous geographical entity, through this “flexible” use of the geographical categories. Therefore, we tried to investigate the narratives through which this objective and homogenous

¹ We considered captions as parts of the iconographic body we analyzed.

² In Europe the Georg-Eckert-Institut für internationale Schulbuchforschung (<http://www.gei.de>) plays a leading role in textbooks researches, referring in particular to Geography, Social Studies and History.

representation is reinforced. According to this hypothesis we have carried out an interpretation of the iconic body included in a sample composed by 49 textbooks used in Primary School classes.

Within the Italian School System at the beginning of the key stage one (first year of the Primary School) teachers must select the textbooks they would like to adopt throughout the five years³. Before the end of each school year, the publishing houses usually organize meetings with teachers in order to promote their products; they tend to edit (and so to present to teachers) the textbooks in packages of five that means one book per year. Textbooks used in Primary School are called *sussidiari*, that means didactic supports, and they could be considered as the basic tools for the teaching of the compulsory subjects such as Geography, History, Math or Natural Sciences, but even a fundamental support for other cross-disciplinary knowledge and educations such as Citizenship. Each *sussidiario* is usually structured in different disciplinary sessions, units or chapters, according to the numbers of subjects included within the National Curriculum or, in the past, within the Primary School Syllabus.

We split the research into two phases. In 2007 we carried out a pilot analysis of a sample of 38 textbooks edited from 1985 to 2002. Our objective was to stress out the predominant narratives produced and reproduced through School Geography in Primary School, before the introduction, in 2003, of the first Italian National Curriculum (Squarcina, 2007).⁴ In order to discuss these narratives we chose four geopolitical categories (State, nation, borders and gender) and we investigated how they were presented in these books, both through maps and through images. In 2010 we extended this research to a broader sample of textbooks, including the ones edited along the last eight years (from 2002 to 2010), so during and after the introduction of the National Curriculum. Therefore this second research has been carried out upon a sample of 49 textbooks, including 11 recent textbooks for the fifth class. We focused exclusively on the last year of the Primary School, since the 2004 Italian National Curriculum listed the description of the relationship among Italy and EU as one of the geographical topic of this year.⁵ Indeed, while during the first pilot phase we worked on a general and extensive level, that was the discursive

³ In Italy Primary School lasts five years. Considering the theme and the aims of the whole compulsory subjects, it is "informally" divided in two key stages. According to the last version of the National Curriculum (Ministero della Pubblica Istruzione, 2007) at the first key stage pupils should work on pre-disciplinary competences and aims, while, during the second one, they start dealing with disciplinary methods and themes. For instance, concerning geographical education, they start working on perception and mental maps, while cartographic representation is introduced at key stage 2.

⁴ The last Italian Syllabus became effective in 1985 and in 2003 it was repealed by the first Italian National Curriculum.

⁵ Please refer to note n.11

nature of School Geography, this second phase was directed to discuss a specific issue: how maps and images represent a heterogeneous, multicultural and multinational space (Europe), using geopolitical categories such as borders, State and nation.

We shortly describe the methodological sequence followed during these two phases:

- First we made a randomized selection of the most widespread textbooks available in the market. As previously mentioned, during the first phase we have worked on 38 textbooks, and, before starting the second phase, we included a selection of 11 new textbooks published after 2002.
- Secondly we isolated all the units and chapters dedicated to Geography, in order to focus our analysis exclusively on geographical issues and themes.
- Thirdly we collected the whole iconic body (images and maps included within these chapters and units) representing the geographical categories and issue we aimed to analyze: in the first phase we chose State, nation, borders and gender, while in the second one we added Europe and Turkey.
- Fourthly we carried out an interpretation of this iconic body, according to the visual method (Rose, 2001), a well-established framework within the qualitative methodologies used by human geographers (Flowerdew and Martin, 2005).
- Lastly we picked out the most relevant narratives emerging from this critical interpretation.

In the present paper, referring mainly to maps and images taken from the 16 geographical chapters - included within the 11 Italian Primary Textbooks published after 2002 - (see Table 1), we try to show how these narratives come out from the cartographic representation of the boundaries between Europe and one of the most controversial and discussed candidate to the EU enlargement: Turkey. Therefore, focusing on the opposition between a State (Turkey) and a multinational geographical entity (EU), we illustrate how this “Othering” process goes beyond the well-known ethnocentric and nationalist use of maps and textbooks.

Table 1.

Italian Primary School Textbooks published after 2002 collected and analysed by the authors

Textbook	Year	Units	Chapters' Titles
<i>BigBang, l'esplosione delle discipline</i>	2009	Geography	1. North and South 2. Italy and the International Agencies
<i>Poster, in giro tra i saperi</i>	2009	Geography	North and South
<i>Urrà! Sussidiario delle discipline</i>	2008	Geography	Italy within Europe
<i>Shangai, l'intreccio delle discipline</i>	2008	Geography	Europe
<i>Il sapere di base, sussidiario delle discipline</i>	2006	Geography	Italy and Europe
<i>Ioio, il sussidiario delle discipline</i>	2006	Geography	Italy within EU
<i>Iper Libro, il sussidiario delle discipline</i>	2005	Geography	Italy, Europe, the World
<i>Misteri al castello, il libro delle discipline</i>	2005	Geography	1. European Citizens 2. Development and Underdevelopment
<i>La rete dei saperi</i>	2004	Geography	Europe
<i>Progetto domino</i>	2002	Geography	1. North and South 2. Europe 3. Asia
<i>Come Robinson</i>	2002	Geography	1. The European States 2. Languages and Religions across Europe

The 'Geographical Criterion'

In order to discuss how such geopolitical categories represent Europe, we firstly needed to point out what (official or shared) idea of Europe Geography textbooks related to. First we looked at the institutional level, reading one of the most influent statements about what Europe should be: "*Any European State may apply to become a Member of the Union*" (European Union, 1992). This is the popular and, at the same time, contradictory, so-called "geographical criterion" mentioned in the *Treaty on European Union* (1992) as one of its pivotal *criteria*. Obviously it isn't an exhaustive *criterion* because it gives just a general idea, never specifying what being a European Country should mean. This was an interesting starting-point for our analysis.

Reading Political Geography, History and Political Sciences comparatively⁶ (Morin, 1987, Smith, 1992, Wintle, 1996, Steiner, 2004) we can go beyond the *oxymoron* “all the EU members are European Countries”,⁷ and we can work out four different statements that may define a Country as “European”, and therefore that point out what the “European space” could be. 1. A *cultural one*: where the majority of people speaks a European language or shares the cultural and religious traditions of Christianity that is Europe. 2. A *spatial one*: Europe is the whole territory included within the natural boundaries of the European continent (the Ural Chain and the Bosphorus Strait). 3. An *economical one*: a State that uses Euro as national currency can be defined a European Country. 4. An *historical one*: Europe as the whole territory directly influenced by some crucial historical events and process occurred since, at least, the Modern Age (the Peace of Westphalia, the French Revolution, the Congress of Wien, the Crimean War, and the First World War). None of these categories is clearly and exclusively adopted by the “geographical criterion”. In fact, through its official declarations, the EU tends to privilege inclusive and general definitions that reinforce the idea of Europe as a cultural and social community (with common values and with shared history but without static boundaries) and, at the same time, that define this geographical entity basically as a work-in-progress project.⁸

As previously discussed, maps and geographical textbooks write spaces describing them as objective and factual entities and reinforcing the “Othering” process produced by geopolitical discourses (Squarcina, 2007). Therefore, working on the geographical image of Europe taught in Primary School, the key-point is to understand why the general and non-exclusive “geographical criterion” has been translated into a visual and textual representation of Europe, as a factual geographical object. In order to investigate this crucial point we focused on a specific issue: the opposition between Europe as a geographical and objective concept and Turkey as a space that breaks the “rules of representation” based on the opposition between us and them and between Inside and Outside. Basically we tried to discuss two pivotal questions: how textbooks do represent political entities which stand in-between of this “inclusive” geographical criterion? And how geographical categories are used to reinforce differences or communalities among Europe and these in-between spaces?

⁶ Even if we worked on the representation of the European boundaries, we didn't discuss the idea of “Eurasia” as geographical and historical category (Bassin, 2003).

⁷ This paper aims to discuss how Europe is represented through maps and images within Geography textbooks, so we didn't carry out a review of the political theories and frameworks on the geographical and cultural borders of Europe. For a geopolitical reading on these issues please see dell'Agnese, Squarcina, 2005.

⁸ For instance if we look at the recent evolution of the European enlargement process.

From the research we carried out (so analysing how maps and visual representations of Europe and Turkey reproduce geopolitical discourses) five different narratives were emerging, through which School Geography geo-writes the relation between Europe and Turkey in terms of a cultural, geographical and political opposition. We called the first narrative “no-name land” meaning the absence of Turkey inside the European space drawn on maps. The second one refers to the opposition between “North and South” and to the description of Turkey as a Third-World’s Country or as an underdeveloped Country. While the third narrative refers to the controversial position of Turkey inside the political debate on the “European enlargement”. A fourth narrative was found, based on the crucial opposition between “Asia and Europe” both defined as discrete and objective geographical entities. And, finally, we discussed the use of some cultural issues, such as languages and religions, as bases for the construction of a supposed “European identity” which excludes in-between socio-cultural entities, such as Turkey and Russia. The iconic body we analysed first describes Turkey not as an in-between space, but as an external entity, secondly it reinforces the “Othering” process we already mentioned.

In a certain way we would state that these narratives are supporting the description of Europe as an objective and factual geographical space, and those they erase or hide the multi-level and procedural idea of Europe emerging both from EU declarations and from the up-to-date literature. In fact, if we come back to the four categories listed above (the cultural, geographical, economical and historical one) and if we read them not as separate *criteria*, but adopting a holistic view, we can notice how they give us an open and polysemic idea of Europe. Depending on the approach we choose (the cultural, spatial, economical and historical one), we get different European spaces and we can draw mobile boundaries which, rather than excluding others, can be used to enlarge the European space, or to define it in a more flexible way. *Per contra* we will show how maps and textbooks usually adopt just one of these categories (according to the main theme of the cartographic representation they aim to) and how they reinforce a static and factual idea of Europe, neglecting the polysemic and holistic approach already mentioned.

No-Name Land

According to Farinelli (2009) the layout is a fundamental rule of the cartographic language. Maps don’t live with empty spaces and every unnamed thing is, automatically and implicitly, pushed out of the space represented in. That’s because this language is based on a bi-univocal correspondence among names and places and because maps’ main function is to give places a name. However it doesn’t work just

as a “subtraction”, it also produces spaces and places, in fact being on a map, so having a name, means existing inside the geographical process that map represents.

Several maps among those analysed, use this correspondence in order to define unequivocally the European space and, therefore, to show the regions that can be included within its borders. In some cases Turkey is represented as an empty and unnamed space located just beyond the geographical limits of Europe. On another maps (Fig. 1) the Turkish space is broken up in two parts and only the so-called European Turkey (the Tracia) is named or drawn as a part of Europe. This is a significant example of what we previously defined the “flexible” use of the geopolitical categories: in fact few maps represent Turkey as a political entity, excluding its whole territory from the European space, while the main part overcomes the unifying function usually wielded by states, separating the European Turkey from the Anatolian and Asiatic regions. In Figure 1 the cartographer⁹ chose to break up the political unity of the two most illustrative examples of in-between spaces located on the European boundaries: Turkey and Russia. He (or she) put on the map the geographical idea of Europe (considered as the whole space included within objective physical limits), but, at the same time, he (or she) erased some regions or states, by representing them as unnamed spaces.

⁹ Actually the image should be considering just a drawing of Europe and not its cartographic representation.



Figure 1. *Italy, Europe and the World* (Source: Shangai, l'intreccio delle discipline, 2008, Brescia: La Scuola. Unit: Geography. Chapter: Europe)

In some cases (Fig. 2) while the Asian region is named as Turkey, just the European side of the Marmara Sea is depicted (by colouring it) as a part of the political map of Europe. This image is another example of how geopolitical categories can be used in a “flexible” way. In fact we can notice an evident overlap among the so-called European “natural” boundaries and the political borders of Europe. The cartographer meant to represent Europe as a political entity and, although he (or she) drew a political map, depicted, and emphasized, the physical limits of our continent in order to reinforce its “natural” unity. In doing so the cartographer made use of the physical boundaries as an objective and factual legitimatization of the political existence of Europe.



Figure 2. *The Political Europe* (Source: Flaccavento Romano, G., Köhler, R., & Bianchi, S. (2002). Progetto domino. Milano: Fabbri. Unit: Geography. Chapter: Political Europe)

North versus South

Another forceful strategy used to describe Turkey as the “Other” is to include socio-economical indexes on maps or inside graphs and texts. All the geographical sections and chapters we examined define or represent Turkey as a part of the Less Developed Countries, outside the developed (dynamic and democratic) European space. Frequently these sections and chapters include maps or graphs that show the Countries’ GDP Ranking, while in some cases (Fig. 3) texts, captions and notes still mention the outdated separation between First, Second and Third World. Furthermore Turkey is not merely a Third World Country far from Europe, it is drawn as a underdeveloped and poor State located just on the other side or “our”

boundaries, reinforcing that “Othering” process we previously discussed. This map (Fig. 3) goes with an extremely illustrative caption¹⁰ :

The underdeveloped and poor Countries are located in Africa and Asia. They have no natural resources and they are distressed by wars. Several of these Countries are governed by dictators [...] a large part of their population lives in extremely poor conditions, with no food, no schools” (Berardi, Corsini, and Detti, 2005, p. 328).



Figure 3. *Development and Underdevelopment (Source: Berardi, M., Corsini, D., & Detti, C. (2005). Misteri al castello, il libro delle discipline. Torino: Eureka Edizioni, Il Capitello. Unit: Geography. Chapter: Development and Underdevelopment)*

As we can read Turkey is explicitly described as a poor, underdeveloped and undemocratic State and, obviously, as an Asian country.

Enlargement

Many of the textbooks published since 2004, so after the last Education Reform Act (2003), include the EU foundation and the EU enlargement within their sections or chapters.¹¹ First of all we have to point out that, while several chapters give

¹⁰ Although we carried out an analysis on maps and visual representation, in some cases we quoted texts, because of their communicative function.

¹¹ Both the 2004 and the 2007 National Curricula for Primary School indicate the Italian territory as the largest scale of the geographical analysis; however they also set the teaching of the relationships among Italy and EU as the final mandatory target of our subject. Therefore textbooks describe some issues of the political and physical geography of Europe only within the sections or chapters dedicated to this relationship. Through maps, graphs or tabs they often list the crucial phases and steps of the EU enlargement process and they explain the basic political and economic

complete and updated information about these political process, some maps or caption don't represent and don't mention Turkey as a part of these historical evolutions (Fig. 4).

Figure 4 is a very recent map (printed in 2008) and its legend is entitled "the path to the European Union", but there is no mention to the candidate countries such as Croatia or Turkey. Furthermore in the caption it is stated that Italy is a part of a geographical, economic, cultural and political entity called Europe, from which such candidate countries are explicitly excluded. Although this map represents an historical process, it suggests a factual and static description of what Europe is nowadays. Doing so it neglects the fact that the "path to the European Union" rather than being taught just as a summing up of the past decades, should be represented as a work-in-progress project, especially if we remember that Turkey formally applied for the EU membership in 1987 (Utkan, 2006, Buoncompagni, 2008).

A supposed cultural homogeneity of the European citizens is reminded even on the maps below (Fig. 5), printed in 2005, whose caption quotes "*we are Italians, but together with French, Germans, Dutch and Greeks we are a part of the European people*". As we stress in the final paragraph, this cultural homogeneity is often mentioned, or represented through images and maps, as one of the most problematic issues regarding the Turkish candidature. Turkey is described as a symbol of the complexity of this cultural and political process. When maps and chapters approach this topic, the "Turkish case" is often held up as an extremely complicate and controversial example of the cultural and political integration among Europe (a geographical area always presented as a political and cultural *monad*), and non-EU countries.

functions of this international organization. We can affirm that these are the only references to the political evolution of Europe we can find within the textual and within the iconic body currently used in Primary School.

L'Unione Europea

Il nostro paese fa parte dell'Europa sia dal punto di vista geografico, in quanto si trova nel continente europeo, sia dal punto di vista politico, economico e culturale, perché appartiene all'**Unione Europea** (UE), un'organizzazione che riunisce oggi **27 stati europei**.



Figure 4. *The European Union.* (Source: Fanelli, S., Magnetti, I., & Rubaudo, I. (2008). Urrà! Sussidiario delle discipline. Torino: Il Capitello. Unit: Geography. Chapter: Italy within Europe)

This complex political process is often described recurring to mighty narratives or persuasive geographical images such as the “clash of civilization”¹², the symbolic relationships between religion and identity or the violation of universal values. These narratives and images are supported by factual historical or geographical statements that put Turkey “in-between”, or outside of, the European space, reinforcing its *status* of “difficult Country”, so reproducing a powerful, and very popular, Common Sense construction. As an example, in a textbook edited in

¹² We chose this expression according to the Common Sense use, with no specific reference to the theory of Samuel P. Huntington.

2006, after having affirmed that: “History and Geography put Turkey in-between”, it is specified that: “Turkey applied as candidate, but the EU did not accept this application because, at the time, the Country did not respect Human Rights” (Corno, 2006, p. 231).



Noi siamo Italiani, ma insieme a Francesi, Tedeschi, Olandesi, Greci ... formiamo un unico popolo: il **popolo europeo**.

Figure 5. *European Citizens*(Source: Berardi, M., Corsini, D., & Detti, C. (2005). *Misteri al castello, il libro delle discipline*. Torino: Eureka Edizioni, Il Capitello. Unit: Geography. Chapter: European Citizens)

Europe versus Asia

We reminded how School Geography reproduces geographical dichotomies describing spatial relationships in terms of factual and objective oppositions. Nevertheless there is another mechanism frequently started up by School Geography: the description (and therefore the production of a geographical image) of regions, states and continents as discrete objects defined by natural and indisputable limits. Through the cartographic language, these objects are represented as if they were a part of a huge “Chinese box”. Each geographical entity is described

as a graduated box which is including a smaller one, while is being included in a bigger one.

This is not merely a direct consequence of the prominent use of regional approaches in the teaching of Geography, it is also a strategy that helps pupils and students (but of course every citizen), to think to places, regions or States as a part of a taken-for-granted hierarchical order: Milano is a city located inside a region called Lombardia, which is a part of Italy, one of the European Countries. On a map we are comfortably located within an objective geographical reality (a city, a region, a State or a continent) because this reality occupies an evident spatial location and an explicit placing, compared to the other ones. A quick glance on a map allows us to locate ourselves inside this geographical order: since we live in Milan, we are Italians and Europeans. Automatically it can also generate privative clauses: where is Ankara on the map? It is located inside a *no-name* land and inside the extra-EU space, so it is not in Europe, so “they” (the others) don’t live in Europe.

However, if we intend to investigate mainly the educative function of School Geography, we have to discuss also another significant process set up by this mechanism. If we represent, and so if we think, the geographical space as a *Chinese box*, we automatically rule out hybrid spaces as well as places located in-between of these discrete and objective geographical entities. According to the idea (and consequently to the critics) of Geography as an “oculocentric” and essentially representative form of knowledge (Rose, 2003), the key point of the analysis should be how maps and textbooks describe spaces, regions and places which break this “representational” rule. Turkey is an interesting example of the representational *dilemma* cartographers and authors have to deal with: in fact regardless of the topic they focus on and of the category they use (for instance physical or political Europe), Turkey is always a hybrid space standing in-between two “top-range” boxes (Europe and Asia) which are always depicted as *monads*, therefore as separate and discrete entities.

Gli stati europei



Figure 6. *The European States.* (Source: Carlini, S., Detti, G., & Gecchele, E. (2002). Come Robinson. Torino: Il Capitello. Unit: Geography. Chapter: The European States.

Both on the political (Fig. 6) and on the physical maps (Fig. 7) we interpreted, cartographers generally tend to emphasize the so-called “natural” boundaries of Europe and Asia (Marmora Sea and Ural Chain), as conventional limits between

these two boxes. Once again (Fig. 7) the State, considered as a pivotal geographical and geopolitical unit, is used in a “flexible” way: it holds a categorical function in order to represent Europe as a political entity, while it loses this function when the cartographers have to face the representational *dilemma* we have discussed before.



Figure 7. *Physical Europe.* (Source: Flaccavento Romano, G., Köhler, R., & Bianchi, S. (2002). Progetto domino. Milano: Fabbri. Unit: Geography. Chapter: Europe.

The European Identity

The European identity is at the same time a well-established issue of the international literature (Morin, 1987, Smith, 1992, Wintle, 1996) and a crucial theme of the Geographical Education (Bergonioux, Cauchy, and Sirinelli, 2006, Keane and Villanueva, 2009). Along the last decade in Europe, according to the statement of a common educational model (the curricular one) and to several national and international declarations and recommendations, Geographical Education has been involved in the promotion of a plural European identity, overcoming its traditional “nation-oriented” approaches and aims. This statement directly refers to the idea of European Citizenship as a ‘plural identity’, discussed by Morin (2001), adopted in a large part of the European Curricula and mentioned in most of the National and regional Geographical syllabuses and issues. For instance, in Italy both the 2004 and the 2007 National Curricula refer many times to the promotion and to the development of a multi-level identity (local, national and European) as fundamental educational targets of School Geography (Malatesta, 2010). Nevertheless, though

being so important, the European identity continues to be a controversial, and above all, a ‘plural’ concept, not only for the geopolitical *agenda* (dell’Agnese and Squarcina, 2005a), but also in the teaching of Geography (Öztürk, Tani and Villanueva, 2009).

However within the 49 textbooks we reviewed this plurality seems to be forgotten, most of the editors and cartographers tends to set up the description and the representation of the European identity just on few cultural traits: for instance a large part of them treats exclusively the language and the religion (or both of them). This cultural approach leaves out other geographical categories having the same importance to teach and, consequently, to socially re-discuss the European identity as a plural and multilevel process. On these maps the European identity is represented merely using a bi-univocal correspondence among a taken-for-granted cultural trait (for instance the mother tongue spoken by the most part of the national population) and a geographical entity (the State), using the political limits of the “national” communities as a synonymous of “Our” cultural boundaries.

Other geographical processes (such as the historical evolution of border regions, the contemporary economical or geopolitical context or the migration flows) are hardly mentioned on paragraphs or captions, although they can be considered as essential issues to discuss the evolution of our identity as European citizens and to present this transition as a process and not as a taken-for-granted fact. In our research we did not found any maps or images which describe or introduce the European identity using these “alternative” categories.

Within School Geography the discourse on the European identity can be considered as a powerful linkage among culture, space and representation. Languages and religions are presented, through maps and images, as the pivotal cultural traits able to unify our continent. Consequently, all the exceptions are relegated to the *status* of minorities. Rather than being just a well-known “Othering” process, this is a strategy to move political issues (such as the debate on the Turkish candidature) into the identity and cultural field, reinforcing the Common Sense building we already discussed. For instance inside a chapter dedicated to the European languages and religions it is stated that: “*in Europe there are minorities of Muslims, Buddhists, Indus...*” (Carlini, Detti and Gecchele; 2002, p. 130). Doing so the author defined “minority” the most widespread religion professed within Turkey: that is, compared to the European context, a “demographic giant” candidate to the EU enlargement.

Concluding Remarks

According to the 2004 National Curriculum, the didactic aim of chapters and sections in the reviewed textbooks was to describe geographical relationships between Italy and Europe. Following this target they implicitly give to students and pupils an objective representation of the European space using a large body of iconic supports, in particular through maps and captions. These representations are based on some narratives that reinforce the natural boundaries of our continent and, at the same time, that create a factual and evident opposition between We and Them. Extra-EU spaces are often drawn as no-name lands, poor countries, divided or foreign (so dangerous) places, mainly by emphasizing language and religion as “our” pivotal cultural traits.

On the other hand Europe is presented as a well-defined space, included inside “natural” geographical limits (Ural Chain and Marmara Sea): therefore it is represented, through this iconic body, not just as a political entity sharing the same political institutions (Fig. 5), such as the EU or the European Commission, or as an economic organization (Fig. 4), but mainly as a multinational group of citizens linked by a system of values, traditions and cultural traits, which is embodied within a physical space: the European continent. The representation of Europe as a discrete *monad* reinforces at first the taken-for-granted linkage among physical geography, culture and history and secondly plays a fundamental function to develop students’ awareness of what being an European citizen means.

We defined *representational dilemma* the challenge cartographers and authors have to deal with when they are told to include in-between spaces on maps or inside chapters or captions. The representation of Turkey is a clear example of this *dilemma*. In fact, although the five narratives we discussed help to reproduce the “Othering” process already mentioned, Turkey, as a political entity, remains, inevitably, a hybrid space located exactly on one of the pivotal symbol of “Our” natural boundaries: the Bosphorus Strait. How can such a hybrid space be drawn in objective and indisputable terms that are the main target of the cartographic representation in textbooks?

A large part of the maps we examined broke Turkey up into two separate entities, generating an overlap between the political unity of states (Turkey and Russia) and the physical limits of the continent (Europe). Rather than being just a representational solution it can be considered as another strategy through which in-between spaces are described as “the other”. We argue that the iconic body printed within Italian *sussidiari* represents Turkey as an extra-European space not merely because this Country is excluded from the pivotal economic, cultural and historical traits of our continent, but also because such iconic body often delegitimizes one of

the strongest and most powerful element of the Turkish *raison d'être*: the State, that is, *vice versa*, the basic unit through which they describe and teach the plurality of Europe as a political and cultural entity.

Currently the Enlargement of the European Union is a crucial political issue throughout the whole continent. Policymakers and socio-political actors should constantly regard the Europeanization process as a “work-in-progress” which involves not only old and recent members, but also candidates. Schools and Teachers are, surely, among these sociopolitical actors and they need a theoretical framework, guidelines and didactics supports which can help them to avoid describing the Geography of the European Union as a taken-for-granted, ‘natural’ and immobile issue, but to interpret it as historical, political and cultural process.

The findings we discuss in this paper refer exclusively to the Italian Primary School, but in the future we intend to apply this critical reading both to the following key-stages of our School System and to different European cases. To this end we are planning a comparative research of different national and regional contexts representing both the complexity of EU political structure (e.g. the coexistence of different forms of political Institutions) and the contemporary Enlargement process.

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