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Multicultural Interdisciplinary Handbook: Tools for Learning

History and Geography in a Multicultural Prospective.

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Comparative Survey of Geography Textbooks

Elaborated by Lorena Rocca

A present-day geography book is a “feast for your eyes”, however this does undoubtedly raise some issues: as well as the variety of means of communication, we need to find a common thread, a way of putting words, images and tools together in such a way as to weave the topics together neatly and encourage an in-depth understanding of the topics dealt with.

A geography textbook should provide a grounding in the subject and encourage students to ask themselves new questions, by doing so it will also be achieving one of the European education goals: that of fostering life-long learning and learning to learn. Set alongside new information sources, a textbook should guide users towards and through a series of well-defined steps which are, at the same time, open to intercourse with other subjects and, just as important, with real life.

As well as the textbook, an essential tool for studying this subject, we mustn't forget the atlas – still under-used and unfamiliar to many school pupils. Given that there is not one single type of geography, the array of study-materials is not limited to maps, photos and videos but stretches to excerpts from literary works, newspaper articles, films, reproductions of works of art & architecture and even pieces of music.

When it comes to deciding on the content of a geography textbook, getting the balance right between the wide array of content matter, the intrinsic complexity of the field of study and ensuring that it is user-friendly and linguistically accessible is no easy task

Obviously, the illustrations play a key role: photos, graphs, maps, tables, etc. along with their own explanatory captions

Moreover, it is also important to shift from one topic to another and to present information clearly and gradually. With this purpose a book should include summaries and mind-maps to help pupils assimilate and organize the content covered more easily. In addition, a book

should also leave some space for hands-on tasks, where the student is given the chance to build his or her own knowledge through practical work.

All these features need to tally with the main body of *text*, clearly structured using chapters and paragraphs, followed up by comprehension and revision exercises. These tasks should not focus merely on memorizing content of the text but should bring a range of skills together and encourage pupils to apply knowledge from other fields in a transfer process.

Graphics, too, make a valuable contribution; using bold type for key words can help pupils prepare their own summaries or quickly skim the text for the most important elements.

Vocabulary and Layout

The issue of vocabulary needs to be treated on its own. Geography, like any other subject has its own terminology. The over-use of jargon can make a text difficult to understand, especially when we consider that much of this terminology cannot even be found in a dictionary. This terminology is best explained as it comes up in the text, and ideally grouped in a glossary included in the book. Similarly, acronyms need to be given in full and foreign-language words, translated.

The guidelines set by a language historian regarding comprehension and clarity for a geography text can be summarized as follows:

TIPS	EXAMPLES
Avoid acronyms that will be decidedly arcane for readers born shortly after the fall of the soviet union.	USSR, DDR
Translate foreign words when not English, give pronunciation tips.	Länder translated as “Federal States”; Sierra translated as “mountain range”
Explain any references to history.	World war
Be wary of commonly used words when they feature as part of a specific technical meaning.	Natural movement (in reference to demography)
Narrow down the figures given avoiding absolute, relative and diachronic figures side-by-side.	synchronic data is a reference to the fact that according to survey results 19% of Germans are over 65 years of age. Relative diachronic data tells us that the share of the population under the age of 15 has fallen by 40% in the last two decades.

The priority is making sure that each and every term is properly presented and understood, this should not mean, however, oversimplifying the subject. This consideration can, instead, be a guide for planning courses, taking into account the cognitive development of learners and gradually building up their knowledge and working towards actual skills.

With this in mind, we can set ourselves the task of analysing the language used in the main body of text with greater awareness. We can look out for:

- the appropriate use of jargon when it is called for;
- limited use of subordination in syntax;
- gainful use of bold-type.

The maps included in the textbook also need to match and highlight the information that the cartographer chose to single out through a sort of de-construction process of the cartographic code. First of all, the key must clearly show all of the symbols used; secondly, any abbreviations or acronyms should be given in their full form, especially when foreign-language.

When analysing or choosing a geography textbook “epistemological” or psychological criteria can be followed; while the former regard the relevance, thoroughness and the geographical effectiveness and congruence, the latter regard being task-focussed, cross-referencing and aims.

In relation to its structure, the content of a geography textbook must meet with the following criteria: relevance(it fits into the epistemological framework of the field of study), thoroughness (of concepts), effectiveness (understandable for the reader), suitability (consistent use of language), task-focus(use the essential tools for surveying an area).

In its outward appearance the textbook needs to be user-friendly, it should arouse the pupils' interest and both the language used and the illustrations given should be easily understood, the tasks given should be clear. The graphs and illustrations should be accurate and the ratio of text:pictures should be balanced.

Drawings, photos and maps.

Geography makes wide use of iconography, graphs and figures; drawings, maps and photographs play a key role in expanding on information given in a text through a variety of mechanisms. Firstly, they present a starting point for an analysis, secondly, they give the student the chance to re-work what has just been learnt or to make deductions.

A well-authored book should spread different media evenly through it. The distribution, the quality and the layout on each page of images and captions all work toward an overall effect.

Maps, the most important 'tool of the trade', must be both accurate and faithful. They should be, therefore accurate in their use of names, colours and scale. At the same time they need to be easily-read and be provided with keys that are equally comprehensible. Ideally, maps and illustrations should not appear on the same page *in order* to avoid a visual overload and possible interference.

While the role of maps is to provide an actual scientific interpretation, photos serve the purpose of influencing and persuading the viewer. With this in mind, a teacher should be properly trained in presenting images, as a misleading or distorted description of the image is counterproductive. Ideally, a textbook should provide more than one picture of the same area, otherwise a single, superficial idea, or worse, a performative idea may be given. Let us consider an example, photos of reclaimed marshland can present different aspects side-by-side: one point of view can highlight man's achievement in gaining useful land surface, another can show the fragile ecosystem that has been destroyed.

Essentially, photographs spur youngsters to open their eyes and become more observant, not only able to pick out details but also aware of the significance of these features.

Furthermore, photos, make an excellent starting point: they allow the viewer to proceed from superficial observation to something deeper, in looking a photo the pupils themselves will ask questions and recognise elements that had been studied previously.

Considering the variety of photographs used, it can be useful to classify them as follows:

TYPE OF PHOTOGRAPH	EXAMPLE	FEATURES
Photo with high geographic, environmental or human content	The rugged coast of Greece with both old and new human settlements	Attention-grabbing, but it is demanding as it contains a wide array of elements that can be analysed.
A documentary photo showing a single phenomenon in detail	A crater, a port.	Unappealing as it must be as clear as possible. It can more attractive if it includes an unusual feature or a person in the foreground
A human interest photo	A smiling Inuit child	Appealing and thought-provoking
Photos that trigger the imagination	An exotic landscape	Triggers creativity and a sense of exploration
Useless or mundane photos	Photos that lack content and impact	The most common type

Summing up, the three prerequisites for photos for effective classroom use are: clarity, meaningfulness and emblematic content. Given that the photos used do not always fit these criteria, it is all the more important that the teacher spends time on a media that is fundamental not only for geography but also in shaping a landscape and environment aesthetic.

Training pupils in basic map-reading skills is one of the primary goals of the subject. This cannot be left entirely to the students themselves, rather, it should be provided by a teacher adequately trained in geography. Map-reading skills are acquired in stages, each new step adding new ways of looking at the information shown.

Reading and studying topographic maps appears to occupy little space in courses. Topographic maps are actually easy to use and can be used over very short differences or within the immediate surroundings of the school. Furthermore, they let pupils see the close relation between the symbols used and what they encounter along a route (a stream, a footpath, etc.)

The Epistemological Sphere

In order to explain the seven distinguishing features which allow us to survey the epistemological approach of the textbook, we shall begin, following Kuhn's paradigmatic approach, with geographic possibilism. At that time, a geographer's main task was that of investigating how, in given places, mankind, given free rein, contributed to the development of landscapes through unique, distinctive characteristic processes by that population and therefore unrepeatable and not diffuse. This kind of geography could be defined as the “geography of eternal things”, its aim is to capture events; in this case history is used to analyse the past that it has engendered. The outcome is a “static present” in which the immutability projected doesn't tell us anything about its evolution and future changes.

Landscapes, settlements, lifestyles, the relationship between society and nature are described in simple terms. The descriptions of regions are worded simply in order to involve the reader actively.

On a ontologic level, this geography uses everyday language to move, evoke, involve and appeal to each individual's imagination rather than simply describing man-made features on the earth's surface in the hope of discovering the laws that govern or the phenomena that guide events.

On a methodological level, direct observation of a landscape, searching for visible signs that then become clues which can be put into relation with other data such as climate, demography or economy statistics. A snapshot of a landscape or an area considered in relation to cultural, social, economic and political elements can be treated as “things” that have interacted with other things (the physical environment) manifesting themselves explicitly in the visible landscape. The area that is thus presented is without agents, unchanging and in which the diachronic and synchronic are not recorded. With the advent of neopositivism and quantitative geography, which dominated the 1950's, objective and rational methods were gleefully embraced, in the hope of being able to reach deterministic or probabilistic models. Starting from a theory, hypotheses are put forward then strategies are activated in order to confute them. By doing so an area is stripped of its cultural connotations and becomes a clean slate on which to plan. The analysis of natural and historical difference is set aside. The progress of history is seen as the cause that modifies the regular occurrence of events.

As regards the search for a spatial order, geographical language becomes “objective”, and in the case of geography the highest degree of objectivity is reached with the representation of what is in front of us. Presently, the GIS (*Geographic Information System*) is being developed: a set of powerful observation and analysis tools which are able to provide humankind with practical solutions able to plan our spaces in the most efficient and effective ways possible. By using such tools geography is able to provide a simple yet effective frame of reference of the many factors that concur.

With regards the issue of why geography is taught, we can state that this subject has the merit of teaching simple, tangible things that can easily be observed as they are all around us. The images of these – above all cartography – are a tally of reality, and as such are implicitly a vehicle of ideologies and perspectives with a highly performative slant. From a methodological point of view, this hypothetical deductive model is searching for laws that govern areas. The area is thus deprived of processes and is reduced to a space in which agents are seen as simply a cog in an engine. External reality, considered immutable, should be discovered in an “objective” way by a rational, independent, unbiased and objective mind. If

we consider learning styles, we can see a leaning towards logic and language, those who possess these skills tend to excel in this area (as opposed to those with spatial, kinesthetic or musical skills).

In classroom practice, curricula set guidelines, teachers put them into practice and carry them out. The teacher then takes on the role of assessing what the pupils produce without really considering the steps they followed to reach that result. Revision activities involve going over the content and skills that are “weak” or that have been “missed” in the pupils' cognitive development, with the risk of heightening the pupils' own sense of failure.

There is a third and final way of looking at geography; as the science of places and their meaning.

In this case, human experience is set at the core, then the meaning of ideas, symbols and ambitions are studied in relation to the time and place in which they belong.

When analysing a given area, certain perspectives are favoured: social (Marxist and radical geography); psychological (geography of perception); creative (humanist geography).

The breakdown of the Ford paradigm in the 70's and 80's has caused us to reconsider cultural diversity and local features as important factors in development. In recent years, geographers have abandoned the idea of describing “eternal things” and have turned to dealing with the way the landscape expresses itself. Scientific knowledge and historical knowledge are no longer two different ways of explaining the world, progress in history does not only affect human beings, but works in a similar way.

If we broaden our historical horizons we will be able to close the gap between man and nature and geography will no longer be called upon to explain the unexplainable, that is to say laws that govern the order of things or to show stratifications of solidified things. It will instead aid us in discovering the innate features of a given area in order to show what today's conditions can bring us in the future. Geography can therefore be seen as landscape survey for social action, where the role of the agents and awareness of social, economic and political issues are set at the heart of the issue.

Even cartographic representations become not only expression of the reality reproduced but also of the principles that these maps convey. Subjectivity (meant here as perception, value-giving, the diversity of outlooks and *Weltanschauung*) makes studying cognitive processes for representation a central issue. At this point a “true” image is meaningless: even the most “objective” representation needs to be de-constructed in order to be understood and to highlight the marks, the meanings and the symbols that are found in a particular place.

The prevailing methodology is still that which privileges fieldwork, replacing observation of the landscape (first phase) and recording the objective features (second phase) with investigation into the agents of transformation with the aim of pinpointing the exchanges between man and environment. This work takes into account the subjectivity of social bonds, values, historical and natural factors at play and the agents that interact with them at different levels. A survey is faithful if among all the geographical factors present in a given place, those relevant to our purpose are chosen; moreover, the survey is “right” not because it has been backed-up by theory, nor if it has garnered support but if it is geared towards sustainable development in all areas: environment, economy, society and culture.

Within this paradigm, knowledge is seen as product built around a historical, temporal and cultural framework and thus under constant evolution, negotiated and shared by a “community of practice”.

The teacher takes on the role of “cultural go-between”, working with the conceptual products engendered in a temporary fashion within the community. The teacher's role is that of providing cognitive, meta-cognitive and emotional *scaffolding* and moulding ideas that question naïve ones.

A teacher can encourage connections between things using communicational tools based on the thrill of learning about others respectfully, appreciating their every facet.

Survey of Geography Textbooks.

As in the case of history, we will begin by singling out the most widely-used books in each country. In order to do so the data regarding textbook selections will be consulted for the current school year both for lower and upper secondary school.

Having created a chart, the texts will be analysed using a purpose-made fact-sheet on the basis of where they come from and the level in the school system they are targeted at.

Fact-sheet

A standard fact-sheet is used. The use of colour provides an at-a-glance assessment which can then be further developed through personal and reasoned comments.

The factsheet cover five areas:

- graphics;
- language;
- content;
- epistemology;
- supplementary material

For an at-a-glance comparison between the texts under analysis, colour coding has been used: RED, the brightest colour, denotes VERY good, DEEP BLUE, again a bright colour, denotes NOTHING, a lighter shade of red, PINK denotes QUITE, while LIGHT BLUE denotes little.

The fact-sheet has the following features:

- Ratings boxes, ranging from 1 to 4, make it user-friendly;
- As it is clearly split into the four areas of interest, it is possible to make comparisons between different texts focussing on a single area or comparing different aspects of a single text;
- Its versatility allows us to make comparisons between textbooks for the same or for different years;
- The colour-coding makes interpretation quick and easy;
- It summarizes some features singled out as significant by national studies.

	table of analysis						
	TITLE	EDITOR	PUBLISHING LOCATION	YEAR OF PUBLICATION	PAGES	NOTES	
G R A P H I C S	PICTURES	presence of historical documents	presence of illustrations	dimensions of pictures	quality of pictures	presence of reproduction of works of art	presence of epoch photograph
	TYPE OF PHOTO	geographic, environmental and humanistic photo	photo documentation of details about a single phenomenon	photos of emotion effects	photos which inspire imagination	photos useless and banal	
	PICTURES AND THE TEXT	captions explaining pictures	captions which reproduce text	new information about the text			
	MAPS	physical maps	political maps	thematic maps	topographic maps	graphic	dimensional maps
	MAPS AND TEXT	captions explaining maps	legend of symbols	captions which reproduce the text	new information about the text	legend covering all the symbols present in a map	
	MAPS, GRAPHS, TABLES	presence of mental maps	presence of graphs	presence of diorama	presence of tables	presence of patterns	
S T R U C T U R E	THE LANGUAGE	suitability for age and level of preparation	use of specialised language	glossary	the geographic language is objective as the representations. Research for order in observed space.	common language; it invites the reader to participate actively	geographic language without common places
	THE LEXIC AND THE FORM	use of necessary technicalities	use of coordination	functional use of bold text	the logos are understandable especially in a foreign language		
	GEOGRAPHIC LANGUAGE	the iconic language offers knowledge tools and technical decodification by the observer	the graphic language connected to iconic language regarding graphic representation of observation	visiv language offering directions for investigations and interviews based on observer's abilities	"literary" language: proposes of literary and scientific texts, travel reports; descriptive and narrative articles referring to territory places and country side	numeric and mathematical "language" used for the comprehension of evolutive processes and for territorial uses	
	THE INDICATIONS	respondence to indications		propose interdisciplinary links			
	TEXT EVALUATION IN ITS ENTIRITY	references to preceding and following chapters	connections to history	links to other disciplinaries	interdisciplinary links	it has a network structure	summery tables
	RESEARCH AND EXERCISES	the tests and exercises demonstrate the student's ability	the tests and exercises propose problems and transfer informations	the exercises regarding only the content as far as mnemonic knowledge			
C O N T E N T S	PHYSICAL GEOGRAPHY		offers tools to individualise the physical features of an area			propose analysis of the life and cosmos's origins	
	ELEMENTS OF CIVIC TRAINING	knowledge of italian, european and world territories	offers tools for understanding living and beeing in the world	contributes to the conservation of the national and local traditions	contributes to national and european citizenship education with the conservation of memory	contribute a powerful integration vehicle favoring multiethnic dialogue	
	APPEL	stimulate curiosity	stimulate creativity	offer hands-on approach	form mental maps	propose problems and research topics	
	THE PROCESSES	geography of absolute which fixes the stable events	planification and analysis geography	geography of territorial processes and of social subjects	themes link to sustainable development		
	THE TIME	elimination of natural and historical differences of the area	history: analysis of past	a historical evolutive point of view			
	THE CHANGE	an area devoid of cultural influence	geography offers a syntetic picture. Immutability	analysis, discovery and valuation of culture diversity			
	THE SUBJECTS	riduced to a simple machines	geography without subjects analysed as "cultural component"	multicultural logic			
	THE MAP REPPRESENTATION	real rappresentation and functionality of planning	rappresentation functionality of the understanding of a single section of area	discovery of the potential of an area	enviromental, economic, social and cultural geography		
	THE COUNTRYSIDE	offer a regional poin of view	countryside as a result of a unio process characteristic of that population	countryside as commonestate needing protection			
	THE FIELD ANALYSIS	propose field analysis in reaserch for general laws	methodology of observation: visible indicators which are interpreted and related to other data	operative field research			
ADDITIONAL PROPOSALS	A SMALL ATLAS	A TEACHER'S HAND BOOK	EXERCISES AND PRATICAL WORK	INTERNET RESEARCH	CD OR MULTIMEDIAL SUPPORTS		
LEGENDA		A LOT					
		ENOUGH					
		LITTLE					
		NONE					

The features of textbooks for each partner nation

Elaborated by Silvana Bianchi

AUSTRIA

Textbooks surveyed

- Klaus Zeugner, *Hölzel GW 3 Faszination Erde*, Hölzel, Wien 2009, pp. 127

Age target: 13

The book, aimed at pupils attending the second stage of compulsory schooling (where Geography is paired with Economics) is endowed with a good range of illustrations and a textual structure that uses straightforward language, thus enabling the pupil to engage in activities. It is therefore suitable for the age-range and the level of knowledge for 13-year-olds. The book is in keeping with current national curriculum guidelines (the most recent reform was in 2007), in part thanks to its reticular structure: it has a range of summaries and graphs, practical use of bold type and references to other chapters within the textbook – all factors aiding the pupils' study. The pictures are a wealth of geographic content (meaning that both environmental and human elements appear); they are never either banal or nonessential with regard to the content covered. Quite the opposite in fact, the explanatory captions sometimes expand on the information given in the main body of text – giving a positive emotional impact and arousing interest and imagination. The visuals are a fact-finding tool and, together with the graphics, play a role in prompting the pupils to observe and interpret reality surrounding them.

The set of quality maps provided includes a number of thematic and topographic maps while the quality and quantity of 'old-fashioned' physical and political maps is wanting. Similarly, historical documents appear rarely, as do vintage photos and works of art: these graphic features point to shortcomings from a cross-curricular point of view. Indeed, this textbook provides only scarce links with history topics and appears to be only superficially interested in a historical perspective on an area; more widely, the text provides few links with other areas of study. Due to this, literary prose and mathematical-numerical codes do not feature widely and provide the pupils with modest means for learning how to 'talk about' areas and landscapes with narrative means (such as travel diaries or newspaper articles); moreover, this does not help them fully grasp processes of change in their quantitative dynamics.

The content – in line with ministry guidelines – is focused primarily on the national and European sphere, with an effort to preserve local heritage. The content appears less effective with regard to the global sphere and multicultural dialogue, likewise the input related to sustainable development. The overall impression is that of a landscape shaped by processes peculiar to that place, those peoples and thus cannot be applied to other scenarios.

The exercises, both in the students' book and the workbook, tend to revolve around getting the students to put their skills work and do not focus merely on their knowledge of single facts.

FRANCE

Textbooks surveyed:

- Martin Ivernel, *Geographie*, ed. Hatier, 2009, pp. 335
- *Histoire Géographie 6ème*, ed. Magnard, Paris, 2005, pp.
- Azzouz Rachid (dir.), Martin Gérard and Teston Monique (coord.), Dullin Agnès, Izembart-Sdika Marianne, Jouan Anne, Pierre Emmanuel, Serrat Mélanie, Torres Frédéric, *Histoire Géographie 5ème*, ed. Magnard, Paris, 2005, pp. 351 (di cui 152 di storia)

Age target: 11-13

Of the 3 textbooks surveyed, one only covers geography topics while the other two are multidisciplinary geo-history textbooks.

French schools have a long-standing tradition of overlapping history with geography, an approach upheld by the *Guidelines* contained in the 2006 reform where the two subjects are widely integrated, especially in the latter part of the curriculum. The ministry guidelines highlight the need to foster a humanistic culture with a European focus. History and geography play a key role in this as subjects able to broaden geo-historical horizons and set events and issues in an proper spatial and temporal framework.

Martin Ivernel's geography textbook does not provide cross-curricular links and does not make wide use of numerical and mathematical codes for a quantitative analysis of territorial processes. It gives more space to visuals than to prose. Well-suited to the age-group and their level of language skills, it does not offer as wide an array of images as the other two texts surveyed; however, true to its strictly geographical aims, it includes a good set of maps, especially with regard to the thematic and topographic maps (the body of political maps, instead, is very weak) the maps are all provided with their own keys which explain all the symbols used.

The textbook aids study by highlighting key words and terminology in bold, by providing a glossary and summary boxes; along with these study tools, the textbook motivates pupils by setting problem-solving and research tasks. The exercises require the pupils to engage actively rather than just learning data by rote, this is done by calling on different kinds of skills and steering them towards transference, even on issues that go beyond the textbook account. In line with the 2006 *Common Base of Knowledge and Skills* the book aims at acquiring useful skills, that can be put into practice outside the school environment, rather than the theory of geography.

Although the book does not appear to consider history as a fundamental tool for understanding the processes that take place in a given area, it endeavors to promote cultural diversity and steers away from trying to come up with golden rules; in fact, each element in a process is given equal standing and not presented as a mere cog in the clockwork.

The other two textbooks are for history and geography, especially *Histoire Géographie 6ème* for the 6th year of compulsory schooling, which has the tricky task of guiding pupils through the transitional year from primary into lower secondary. In this year the curriculum sets aside 5% of geography lesson-time to a topic chosen by the teacher. Both texts share an optimal level of language, suitable for the age-group, which manages to combine specialized terminology (explained in the glossary) with a straightforward style. This format encourages the pupils to get involved yet avoids clichés and moves aptly from describing an area to introducing the problems encountered there. The books are provided with a noteworthy set of illustrations of different types, all well-reproduced. In particular, the photos are packed with geographical content with explanatory captions given alongside which often further the information given in the main body of text (vintage photos, however, are absent). Although these books use both visuals and literary language (providing excerpts from literature, scientific or magazine articles), the books have very few connections with other subjects and no cross-curricular references whatsoever. This can be seen in the complete absence of works of art in both books, historical documents too are missing and the weak connections with history are dealt with separately. As far as global issues are concerned, the topic of sustainable development is dealt with in all its complexity covering the environment, economy, society and culture.

The set of maps given is made up primarily of thematic maps with clear and thorough keys and explanatory captions that relate to the content of the main body of text.

The exercises given in both the main textbook and in the workbook are aimed at assessing pupils' skills rather than testing their knowledge of the notions they have taken in.

GERMANIA

Textbooks surveyed:

- Egberd Brodengeier, *Terra 3*, ed. Klett-Perthes, Stuttgart, 2009, pp. 235
- *Geographie 2*, ed. Westermann, Braunschweig, 2009, pp. 280
- Martina Gelhar, *Praxis Geographie 2*, ed. Westermann, Braunschweig, 2008, pp. 168
- *Praxis Geographie 3*, ed. Westermann, Braunschweig, 2009, pp. 144

Age target: 12-13

Education and culture are two fundamental responsibilities of the 16 Länder and despite the efforts made by the cabinet of the Länder Minister-Presidents to keep curricula as similar as possible, each curriculum, and therefore the textbooks tailored for them, *are clearly* shaped by the geographic, social and political character of the Land.

The three textbooks surveyed all meet regulatory standards and are suitable for the language skills of the age-group and the pupils' level of cultural knowledge.

All the books share scrupulously edited graphics, in which drawings, graphs, photos and high-quality, appropriately-scaled maps all feature. This material is neither banal nor decorative (it would be of no educational worth) and is accompanied by explanatory captions which expand

on the main body of the text thus building knowledge rather than merely labeling the picture. In particular, the set of maps provided includes physical, political, thematic and topographic ones, all with their own key and often complete with graphs, tables and pie-charts.

Visuals, therefore, are widely used and are set alongside narrative tools (in some cases with high impact, as with the *Praxis Geographie*); this is done by weaving into the structure of the book texts of a literary nature (excerpts from short stories and novels, scientific articles, travel diaries or newspaper reports) all of which capture an area or a landscape.

If we consider their content all of the texts provide the tools for spotting the physical features of a given place (often branching out and going into the origins and the life of the cosmos) and provide the pupils with excellent material for finding out about Germany, Europe and the World. Through the analysis of local phenomena a sense of citizenship is fostered and a sense of national and European belonging is preserved. These textbooks therefore back-up the broad-minded, Europe-focused outlook that has been a distinctive feature of the German school system for some time.

Contrarily, this broad spatial outlook is not so open to other subjects: although the four books do actually have cross-curricular references, those regarding historical topics and issues appear rather weak.

On a more strictly epistemological level the textbooks do differ, however all share a multicultural outlook and present an image of landscape as the outcome of experiences, stratified through time and the succession of societies and therefore asks us to consider it as heritage to be cherished and safeguarded.

As far as assessment of skills and knowledge is concerned all of the textbooks come with a workbook and all set tasks aimed at displaying skills more than mere notions. Similarly, research tasks and projects make use of multimedia sources and on-line research guides. Overall, all of the textbooks are engaging, triggering pupils' imagination and spurring them to perform practical and research tasks and training them to build mind-maps of their own that can constantly be expanded on.

ITALIA

Textbooks surveyed:

- Manlio e Federico Dinucci, **Geograficamente 3**, ed. Zanichelli, Bologna 2008, pp. 346
- Cristina Tincati – Moreno Dell’Acqua, **Geografia del presente**, Edizioni scolastiche Bruno Mondadori, Milano-Torino, 2010, pp. 333
- Enzo Fedrizzi – Andrea Della Valentina, **Dossier terra – volume unico**, ed. Minerva Scuola, Milano, 2011, pp. 350
- Luciano Marisaldi – Manlio Dinucci – Carla Pellegrini, **Storia e Geografia 1. Dalla preistoria a Roma repubblicana – I problemi globali, l’Europa e il Mediterraneo**, ed. Zanichelli, Bologna, 2011, pp. 400+80

Age target: 12-13, 14-16

The textbooks surveyed cover both lower and upper secondary school where recent far-reaching reforms in history and geography have been implemented in both stages.

The textbooks for lower secondary – where the ministry Guidelines of 2007 yoked the two subjects together under the title “Geo-historical area” and thus carries on directly from primary school – have appealing graphics. The wide array of images, both numerous and high quality, includes works of art, the strong point are the photographs which never lack a twist. They are often moving and engaging as well as reliably documenting phenomena, which are further outlined by the captions and back up what is described in the main body of text. The maps (largely political and thematic, while physical ones are less frequent and topographic ones barely appear at all, in line with a feature typical of most Italian textbooks) always have their own key.

The visuals fit in with the graphics and the numerical & mathematical codes; the use of other forms of prose is more limited, although the text does make cross-curricular links with literature, current affairs and history through newspaper articles. From a lexical point of view, the terminology is appropriately used (even where very specialist words appear); that said, an essential tool especially for lower secondary pupils, a glossary, is missing.

Built around a linear progression from one chapter to another, the book appears to be suitable both for the age-group and the pupils' level.

Topics are not always presented with sufficient attention paid to multiculturalism, however many of the issues regarding citizenship education are dealt with in a Europe-wide perspective and encourage international dialogue, thus cultivating a wider heritage of local processes.

A small atlas comes with the book and a teachers' book is also provided, the book itself contains plenty of exercises, focused more on testing knowledge of theories and facts rather than assessing the skills acquired by the pupil in the last year of lower secondary.

The three upper secondary textbooks all cover the first two-year stage (the last two years of compulsory schooling) which has recently been affected by a reform. The 2010 *National Guidelines* for mainstream upper secondary schools and technical and vocational schools yoked History and Geography together in a total of 3 periods per week and a single mark. In actual fact, the lack of clear guidelines and the hurried introduction of these changes has meant that most textbooks available are 'recycled' history or geography books, there is a handful of *ad hoc* geo-history books, however, these are not always up to scratch. Most teachers opt for a geography textbook (which covers the main issues related to globalization) along with a history book that covers ancient times through to the High Middle Ages.

The first two books chosen are of this kind: a handy geography booklet that comes with two longer volumes of history. Both of the sets of books begin with a preparatory section which equips the pupils with a general grounding and the fundamental tools of study, above all in geography.

Where visuals are concerned, the books have a variety of images, on the whole these are good quality and the photos are appealing and have plenty of geographic content. There are barely any reproductions of works of art, or even none at all. On the contrary there are plenty of maps of all kinds (however, thematic maps dominate), these always have their own key and are well-drawn if sometimes too small. This variety of images is rounded off with graphs and tables for a quantitative analysis of phenomena.

The vocabulary and syntax are well-suited to the age target and the geographical jargon is appropriately used. The other codes used in geography (visuals, mathematical & numerical codes and graphs) all feature, but the absence of literary language in both textbooks is conspicuous.

Although they come with a history textbook, both books make few connections with history topics and issues (there are few links with other subjects too). If we look specifically at geography teaching the books don't give enough space to tools for acquiring knowledge of physical geography; national and European citizenship education, instead, are well-covered. The books often put forward research and project topics, through these pupils' curiosity is aroused and their motivation is kept up.

The assessment section is averagely varied and aims at displaying the pupils' skills.

Unlike the others, the textbook published by Zanichelli is meant to be a single text in which geography and history have been harmonized, or better combined. In actual fact, following an introductory chapter which aims to help pupils get their bearings with time, space and sources, the book is split into two separately numbered sections; the first covers history, the second geography. Some of the sub-chapters in the history section are earmarked with special symbols – these cover environmental history. There are also two types of boxes, which appear in both sections, for cross-curricular links. In the history section, these are “Geo-history” boxes which look into macro-topics associated with an area and consider their development over time. In the geography section there are “History & Geography” boxes which take us back in time to the origins of certain phenomena.

If we take a closer look at the the geography section, in particular at the visuals, we find a reasonable number of geographical photos (more descriptive and documentary than emotionally engaging), the captions are brief and to the point, picking out a point from the main body of text. Although there are barely any reproductions of historical documents and works of art (these, however, feature widely in the first section of the textbook) there are plenty of maps, above all thematic ones. The set of maps, like the graphs and tables, is wide and varied. They always appear alongside the section of text which explains that particular topic and therefore provide an overview of the topics and issues rather than working as a starting point from which to approach them. There are no drawings (which instead feature in the history section, and would be out of place here) nor summary boxes which could help focus on certain ideas and establish links between concepts. Such aids would certainly be useful for first year upper secondary pupils, helping them to develop their own personal study strategies.

The content is in line with regulatory standards, most of the chapters centre on global issues while Italy, Europe and the Mediterranean occupy a minor role. The part that deals with Italy and Europe is rather restricted, although the content is well-segmented, it is somewhat condensed and conducive to by-rote learning. That said, it is worth mentioning that on-line 56 pages of factsheets about Italian regions and 20 pages of data on European states are available, these do make up for a lack of quantity if not quality as they don't really deal with issues. Most significantly, this part of the book neither arouses the pupils' curiosity nor stirs their imagination. Differently, the section that centres on global issues provides guidelines and tools for dealing with current affairs and helps them develop a sense of citizenship.

The vocabulary and syntax used are suitable for the age-group and for the intermediate level of knowledge congruous for 1st year upper secondary. Any technical language or terminology

is highlighted in bold and correlated with definitions and explanations. Not all of the geographic codes are covered or fully explained, there is a conspicuous lack of literary and narrative texts (travel diaries, excerpts from novels, etc) while mathematical & numerical codes come up throughout but no kind of explanation is given regarding their compilation or how they should be read in order to understand the dynamics they describe. The set of knowledge and skills assessment tasks is varied and covers both areas.

All of the textbooks, as well as the bound version are available as e-textbooks. Recent legislation requires all textbooks to have an 'digital' or 'hybrid' format from school year 2011/12 onwards (after an optional period). The aim is to ensure that all the material can be used on an IWB, which should soon be available in all schools.

The digital part of the texts (which can be accessed with a password) do make up for some of the shortcomings of the bound versions, most notably in that it will be possible to constantly update the content.

POLAND

Textbooks surveyed:

- Doroty Makowskiej, *Geografia - część 1*, ed. Podręcznik, Bydgoszcz, 2004, pp. 176
- Doroty Makowskiej, *Geografia - część 2* ed. Podręcznik, Bydgoszcz, 2004, pp. 212
- Jan Mordawski, Wojciech Wiecki, *Geografia Polski*, ed. Operon, Gdynia, 2011, pp. 184

The Polish textbooks only deal with geography, due to the fact that history and geography are two distinct subjects in the curriculum. Under the current system (last modified in 1999) the two subjects have the same number of periods in lower secondary, while history has more time in upper secondary.

The three books singled out have a less remarkable set of images when compared with other nationality texts; that said, the images have captions that explain and sometimes make links with the main body of text, graphs also feature widely. There is a fair number of adequately sized maps, primarily thematic maps, whereas there are fewer physical and political maps. All maps have their own captions and are correlated with keys that explain the symbols used.

In keeping with guidelines, all these texts are appropriately written for the pupils' age and level of knowledge; by choosing a straightforward, chatty style the reader is encouraged to get involved, at the same time the text makes use of specialized terminology when necessary (fully explained in their own glossary).

All the books have a reticular structure as opposed to a linear one allowing the teacher to recall other topics and make their way through the text in a variety of ways, rather than the sequential path typical of textbooks. Similarly the books provide numerous links with other subjects (however history is not the most recurrent) facilitating cross-curricular projects.

The content is varied and can work as a springboard for covering both physical and anthropic issues; moreover, the outlook on phenomena and issues is not Eurocentric but reads an area as of multiplicity of meanings, even going into the concept of border-boundary (when used for

delimiting a geographical region) and dealing with sustainable development. The outcome is an idea of geography teaching that values the relationship between mankind and nature, while the content chosen is able to highlight the features of a single area and the way it has changed over time due to social, economic and cultural factors. All in all, the books provide pupils with items of knowledge that will help them find a perspective from which to analyze an area on different scales and will equip them the tools to understand, experience and take action in the world. These are the targets set in national guidelines which give great importance to cognitive tasks such as periodization and localization and set as a fundamental goal for pupils the ability to transfer knowledge from theoretical study to practical application and turn that into a fully-fledged geo-historical outlook. It is the very fact that these books contain many pointers to practical applications that makes them lively and captivating and get pupils working in a creative way. The same can be said for the exercises, which regularly assess knowledge and skills through tests and short answer questions as well as increasingly common cloze tests.

All the text books come with a teachers' book.

SPAIN

Textbooks surveyed:

- *Ciencias Sociales. Geografía e Historia. 2º ESO*, ed. Oxford, San Fernando de Henares, 2008 , pp. 239
- *Geografía e Historia 1 ESO*, ed. Santillana, Madrid 2007, pp. 263
- *Geografía 2*, ed. SM, Madrid, 2009, pp. 367

Age target: 12-14 ; 17-18

Of the three textbooks chosen, which cater for different age-groups and stages in Spanish secondary schooling system, two are history and geography books. For this reason the Spanish teachers have chosen to use the history textbook checklists.

The textbooks for 1st and 2nd year of ESO cater for the subject “social sciences, history and geography” which in the general education stage aims at cross-curricular goals and sets itself the task of providing pupils with a key for understanding the present day. By merging history and geography Spanish curricula (following a reform in 2006) keep pupils constantly aware of the necessity of thinking in terms of a space-time framework for learning about and understanding phenomena.

The use of images, as often happens elsewhere for all age targets, can be found in Spanish books too. While the quality of these is a little lower, there are visual sources, drawings and photos (reproductions of works of art appear less frequently) with their own explanatory captions which usually refer back to the content in the text.

The sets of maps are good quality, include the different types of map and are conveniently sized. The maps are often related to graphs, tables and summaries, as instructed in the

methodological guidelines and provide students with the necessary tools for developing skills and their ability to make use of these sources.

The syntax and vocabulary used are well-suited to the age-group and their level of knowledge. Straightforward explanations, focus on key concepts and a restricted use of terminology help students get their bearings and make connections with other subjects. Naturally, the links with history are preeminent and prevail in the choice of topics and in the methodological approach in both geo-history textbooks. Differently, the book that only covers geography gives great importance to not only to the methods and tools used by geographers but also to how geographical research is carried out and fieldwork.

None of the textbooks come with extra materials, such as workbooks, atlases or online or multimedia resources, they do however fulfill the regulatory standards and include elements of citizenship education (to varying degrees). The only-geography textbook, in particular, which caters for older pupils (age 17-18, attending 2nd year of Bachillerato) provides a variety of openings and data useful for social and civil education, these are given alongside equally detailed information and considerations on a national, European and worldwide level (the local sphere is less developed) thus teaching these youngsters to shift between different scales.

The assessment tests are varied and occur throughout the books, they rarely revolve around memorized facts and figures but frequently introduce an issue and require the students to transfer their knowledge from one field to another and make full use of the skills acquired through study.