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## Europe representations in textbooks

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## Work Package 4: Politics and Ideology Textbooks analysis

From deliverable 4.1

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### Europe representations in textbooks

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**Abstract:** This EuroBroadMap working paper presents an analysis of textbooks dealing with the representations of Europe and European Union. In most of these textbooks from secondary school, the teaching of the geography of Europe precedes the evocation of the EU. Europe is often depicted as a given object, reduced to a number of structural aspects (relief, climate, demography, traditional cultures, economic activities, etc.) whose only common point is their location within conventional boundaries. Such a vision may be easier for pupils to deal with and may reduce the risk of provoking political controversies. When studied, the European Union appears mostly as a incomplete political power, characterized by some strengths and weaknesses.

**Key-words:** School textbooks, Geography teaching, Representations of Europe, curriculum

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## **Introduction**

Social and political visions are both, generally, based on institutional discourses and on collective imagination that is to say, on representations unconsciously internalised by the people. These visions are structured by media discourses, discussions on forums on the internet, happenings and debates organised by institutional powers or by activist groups but also, more deeply, by the knowledge acquired at school.

In relation to the visions of Europe produced in this context, the teaching of geography is both influential and strategic. In many countries, the way in which Europe is portrayed in textbooks influences and structures the intellectual background of the people. This academic imagery is vectored along a number of parameters.

### **The Geographical situation of the country**

People are more sensitive to the things they know very well, to the people with whom they have frequent relationships and to the places where they live or they have often heard about. This sensitivity, built on the totality of a community's subjective experience, introduces inequalities in the importance attached to the different regions composing geographical space: contiguous or otherwise famous places are frequently viewed as being more important and more significant, positively or negatively, than places perceived as being distant. This observation refers to the 'hidden dimension' of proxemics (Hall 1978) and to the psycho-geographic dimension of our relationship to the real. Abraham Moles suggested that our imagination is structured by nested spheres that he called 'human shells' (Moles and Rohmer 1998): according to this theoretical perspective, our view of the world depends on where we live, while we pay more attention and interest to our immediate environment than to distant places. This encourages us to formulate the hypothesis that textbooks would give more importance to places in close proximity to the country where the pupils live. In other words, we propose to verify whether schooling culture tends to develop a self-centred scope on the world.

### **Institutional goals**

The contextualisation of the teaching of geography must also, however, take account of the social and the political framework of each situation. Geography can be regarded as an important issue for political power. In his famous and provocative book untitled *Geography serves, first and foremost, to wage war* (1976), the French geographer Yves Lacoste advanced the idea that the teaching of geography is an activity that get political implications. It is mostly used to stimulate the national sentiment of young pupils or, in certain situations, to avoid embarrassing issues (geopolitical rivalries, frozen

conflicts, imperialistic strategies) by deflecting attention onto trivial matters. The naturalisation of places like continents in classical geography can be attached to this kind of process. This radical interpretation highlights the political significance of geographical education.

During the last three decades, however, the teaching of geography has evolved in numerous countries and it would be simplistic to think that this subject can still be easily reduced to the deliberate shaping of the minds and consciousness of young people, and that it is exclusively used for geopolitical purposes. In many democracies, a contemporary goal of geography teaching relates to the civic dimension of creating the knowledge necessary to facilitate global openness and the understanding of global and regional issues. The critical teaching of geopolitical stakes and emerging places like the European Union can thus be interpreted as a way of encouraging pupils to develop a complex and multi-scalar vision of the world, which is not reduced to a simple juxtaposition of Nation-States frozen in time.

## **Epistemological Contexts & Hypotheses**

The content of textbooks is largely dependent on how geography is practised in each country. The status of geography within the scientific field is also an important parameter. The classical approach to geography, referring to the French school of regional geography, tends to focus on the observation and the description of specific places, described through a series of recurring themes: the physical and biotic characteristics, demographic aspects of the place studied, and its economic activities. This academic practice favours the accumulation of factual knowledge at the expense of understanding the social and political issues underlying the organisation of space. Note that it is not only in France that this approach was and is prevalent. In some cases, other forms of education are developed, related more to the evolution of scientific research: using deductive methods (e.g. spatial analysis, remote sensing, landscape analysis), graphical tools and mapping, or the evocation of geopolitical and social issues. Most often, the teaching of geography is a mixture of traditional teaching practices and innovations related to methodological and epistemological transformations.

Our hypothesis then is that the representation of Europe available in textbooks depends on two main parameters: the educational and epistemological context in which geography is taught, and the relationship between the place where pupils live and what is usually called ‘Europe’.

## **1 Methodological details**

Different kinds of methodologies have been implemented for this survey. First, the decentralised methodology used in work package *Mental maps of students* has been replicated. We thought that it would be easier to

work on textbooks in each country involved in the EuroBroadMap project. For many countries, our means were however severely limited by several parameters: the knowledge of the educational and institutional context, the access to textbooks, the language spoken in each country and, sometimes, by typographic difficulties (China, Russia, Turkey). We prepared two questionnaires that were sent out in October 2009 to the project partners: one about educational contexts, and the other one about textbook analysis (see EuroBroadMap working paper, *Textbooks analysis guideline*). These questionnaires were tested in June 2009 by an international team composed of several members of the project (Belgium, France, and Sweden). Our purpose was to provide a comparison of the ways in which geography was taught in each of the twelve partner countries involved in the EuroBroadMap project and to analyse the consequences of the national educational framework on the visions of Europe available to pupils.

Initially, we planned to develop a database useful to all partners. In reality however, we quickly encountered significant difficulties. For example, our Indian partners provided us with a presentation of the educational system in India, evoking the ‘unsuitability’ of our questionnaire in the case of this country. Actually, the Indian curricula of geography do not focus on regions or countries and are based on general topics in physical or human geography. Therefore, Europe does not appear in lessons of geography but more frequently in history, political sciences or in economics. Belgium provided us a copy of the curricula (‘public Wallonie schools’) while also informing us that teachers do not use textbooks.

Undoubtedly, the questionnaire suffered from a pedagogic - and primarily French - bias in its basic assumption that the study of geography could relatively easily be compared across the partner countries. In reality, notwithstanding the global presumption of the work, even France’s next door neighbour Belgium was found to have had a radically different system.

We chose to supplement the available information by collecting our own additional data. We developed additional studies concerning countries for which, crucially, we were able to gather information. In the end, our work covered different various countries that are representative of the most important geographical contrasts: European/non-European countries, near to/far from Europe, old/new EU member states, etc.

We used the textbooks available in French documentation centres in our own country. In addition, we also gathered some textbooks published in African countries (Burkina Faso and Guinea) and we sourced some US textbooks available on the Internet. We also benefited from the recent update offered by an official Indian website run by The National Council of Educational Research and Training where we downloaded all the textbooks available on this website corresponding to social sciences heading at the secondary school level. In addition we also used European publications. School material such as the booklet entitled *Let’s explore Europe!* provided by ‘Eu-

ropa', the official website of the EU, was thus used.

As to the diachronic analysis of the textbooks, we were in fact able only to apply it to the four countries whose answers were thorough enough and ranged across several textbooks published on dates seen as generally significant for Europe (that is before the WWII, after the WWII, just before Rome Treaty, during the 1960s, during the early 1990s after the fall of communism, and during the current period). Although what we gathered constitutes a small sample (composed of Brazil, France, Russia and Sweden), we chose to continue with this aspect of the survey, feeling that a diachronic view would be able to show whether the construction of the EU has, or has not, influenced the vision of Europe. Does a firm body of representations remain and how does it change?

We also decided to deepen the vision of Europe provided by the French textbooks through a comparison of two current books, one devoted to Europe, the other to the continents. By comparing these visions - produced by the same authors - we wanted to test the influence of a regionally descriptive approach as provided by textbooks on the image of any territory and to gauge how a political vision of the others and of the self is implicated in geography teaching.

## 2 Teaching Europe

### 2.1 Evolving educational contexts

In all the countries surveyed, with the exception of Portugal where it is not mandatory, access to secondary school is open to all. Theoretically, equal opportunities exist for all children. In fact, data published by UNESCO indicates that the most developed countries are the only ones with the capacity to provide broad access to secondary education.

So it is important not to overestimate the weight of textbooks in the construction of collective imagination. For some people, they have only a limited and indirect influence. We also have to bear in mind that the educational context influences the way in which textbooks are used (institutional definition of curriculum, selection of subjects taught, freedom given to teachers, etc.).

In France, Russia and in the USA, parents have the choice between state schools or fee-paying schools. In Portugal and in the USA, children have to choose between different courses. There is an official and imperative curriculum for each country except in the USA and in Russia.

Details given in curricula often emphasise the national scale. In Sweden, there is a national indicative plan (*läroplan*), and local imperative plans (*kursplaner*). In the USA, federal standards are provided by the authorities, but local authorities and states decide how they are implemented. Each school often picks elements within the curricula prepared by educational associ-



ations and private publishers to establish its own educational progression. One of the most widely used standard is ‘Geography for life’, adopted by most schools since its creation in 1994. It has been integrated by two of the main schooling publishers (Holt-McDougall and Litell, Glencoe, McGraw and Hill).

The information contained in curricula often relates to different aspects: topics, methods, teaching tools or places studied in class. In Malta, the *Overall National Curriculum* provides principles and general aims, basic concepts and the main topics. Each teacher can interpret this syllabus to organise their work. It is the same in Sweden: broad goals are decided at the national level, but each school can decide which topics should be included. In France, all teachers have the freedom to define the progression of the sessions and the examples chosen.

Geography becomes an optional subject in Portugal, Malta and in the USA by the beginning of secondary school. In France, Russia and in Sweden, the teaching of geography is compulsory. It is evaluated at the end of the secondary school (twice in France, in the 3<sup>rd</sup> year and for a second time in the 7<sup>th</sup> year). These exams concern the whole syllabus in Portugal and in Russia. In France and in Malta, they focus on the syllabus of the year evaluated as indicated in table 1

Table 1: Items evaluated in the first geography exams

France	Malta
Globalisation	Map Reading and Interpretation
Great Powers (including the EU)	Weather and Climate
Geopolitics	Landforms and Processes
Geography of France	Socio-economic Human Systems
	Environmental Concerns
	Location and Places

In Sweden, according to the national curriculum, there are specific goals that pupils need to have attained in grade 5 (11 years old). Pupils should:

1. have basic geographic knowledge to reflect on how human activities affect the physical environment,
2. be able to read a map and relate physical places to one another,
3. understand the physical powers that have formed the earth and are changing the landscape,
4. have a basic knowledge about the different Swedish geographies and describe how people lived and worked both now and in the past,

5. basic knowledge of weather, climate and seasons.

In grade 9 (examinations on official transcript) pupils should have:

1. Knowledge of the world map and important places, size and geographic position relationships,
2. understand various types of natural resources and the connections between natural resource use and human activities,
3. understand how humans live in different parts of the world and the factors that affect these circumstances,
4. understand the most important geological processes,
5. understand how the processes of industrialisation, urbanisation and globalisation affect geographies,
6. Tools to describe, compare and analyse current circumstances via geographical data, measurements, pictures and diagrams.

How textbooks are used is very different from one country to another. In Malta, official textbooks are mandatory at certain grades. In France, Portugal, Sweden and in the USA, each school chooses the textbook the teachers want, and several publishers are in competition. In India, the Centre and State Governments can suggest the use of particular textbooks. However, the final prescription of the textbook is the prerogative of the school. Further, the State funded schools prescribe the State Board textbooks that are often based on the ideology followed by the State and are in the regional language of that particular State. There are also many minority schools like the Muslim schools, the Parsi schools, Kerala schools, Andhra schools and so on that also prescribe their own textbooks usually in their native language. Therefore, a child's school experience, even with regard to the reading of textbooks, is by no means uniform in the country.

In each country (except Belgium where no textbooks are used), all pupils have a book purchased by their families (e.g. Portugal) or one is loaned to them (e.g. France). Teachers are increasingly encouraged to use different texts, websites, maps, etc. For example, in the new French curriculum, pupils are supposed to be able to use GIS or virtual globes such as 'Google Earth'. In Sweden, computers are used in schools in geography lessons and pupils are encouraged to use geography computer games as tools to practice their 'place geography' (recognising countries, cities and natural geographical features on maps). So the teaching of geography seems to be at a digital turn in several countries. However, it is difficult to predict the place of classical textbooks in the future. Anticipating this mutation, several publishers now offer packages with the textbooks, including CD-ROMs or free subscriptions to dedicated platforms on the Internet. All these transformations in the

teaching of geography are underlined by the recent updating of the secondary school curricula: 2004 in Portugal, 2009 in France and in Malta. In Sweden, a new curriculum is currently being adopted and will come into effect in 2011. In Russia, 'The Standard of Geographical Education' and 'The Exemplary Curriculum' was introduced in 2004.

All national curricula naturally insist on the teaching of the geography of their own country. In both Russia and France, two years are dedicated to the study of the home country. In India, during classes XI and XII, India is studied in Geography (India Physical Environment and India People and Economy). The epistemological framework of the teaching of geography remains strongly marked by the national perspective. This also reveals the residual weight of the regional approach in the teaching of geography, inherited from the French regional school of geography which established a series of teaching norms at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century: the highlighting of local specificities, the development of systematic outlines (physical aspects, peopling and socio-demographic issues and economic activities) and an emphasis on traditional ways of life.

Thus, the geographical situation of each country influences the emphasis on the teaching of foreign countries or other regions of the world. In general, greater importance is given to countries and geographical areas in close proximity to the country where the pupils live. In Portugal and in Malta, emphasis is given to the Mediterranean region or countries included in this area. In France, in the former curriculum, an entire year was dedicated to Europe, including France but also the United Kingdom, Germany, Spain and Italy. A specific chapter concerned Russia. In Sweden, the pupils' country is generally studied as a Nordic country and as a member of the EU. All EU countries are emphasised. In India, the textbook devoted to the studying of 'Contemporary World Politics' (class XII) focuses on the US, the EU but also on the ASEAN, China and India (and on the increasingly important relationship between China and India). On the contrary, Pakistan is omitted and almost nothing is said about this country in the other textbooks. In textbooks from Burkina Faso and Guinea, a whole year is devoted to Africa with two years given to the rest of the world. In these two countries, in Brazil and in the USA, the regional perspective still prevails: after a global presentation of the world, most textbooks offer an overview of each continent or subcontinent. In Russia, the foreign countries studied cover a larger sample: Algeria, Nigeria, Ethiopia, South Africa, Australia, Brazil, Peru, Canada, USA, Great Britain, France, Germany, Italy, China, India or Indonesia.

Thus, in many countries the regional approach has tended to decline in importance in relation to a more general approach to geography. In Sweden, the national curriculum does not mention specific countries but insists on the differences between the industrialised *versus* the developing world while focusing on processes such as industrialisation, urbanisation and globalisation. In Malta, global issues such as urbanisation, development and economic activi-

ties are also examined, using case-studies from various countries around the world. In France, the new curriculum introduces the same approach, laying aside the regional perspective. The only territory specifically studied is that of India. The textbooks do not supply any regional overview of the world that consists in the study of the continents one after another. The focus is placed on more general issues such as development, the environment, political organisations and the transformation to democracy around the world, globalisation, social change and so on.

In many countries (France, Sweden, Malta), a shift seems to have occurred from the traditional approach of regional geography to a geography more openly oriented to general issues. This renewal of the teaching of geography is also visible through topics related to geopolitics or environmental studies. In Portugal, pupils have to study global environmental changes, the major environmental problems and strategies for heritage conservation. In France, environmental issues are a permanent concern in the new curriculum. Sustainable development is becoming a cross-subject goal frequently underlined in the national agenda for education. In Malta, environmental issues are disseminated in the curriculum (pollution in the Mediterranean sea, deserts and rivers in relation to water availability and flooding, urbanisation and land use, etc.). It seems to be the same in Sweden with a special emphasis here placed on the interplay between natural geophysical processes and human activities. In Russia, classical physical geography retains a significant place but teachers can devote one or two lessons to environmental problems. Geopolitical issues are implicitly present in the Russian and French curricula: the 'World Political Map', the formation of Nation-States, borders and migration issues, geopolitical competition between the great powers, past and present politico-military alliances, countries involved in serious domestic conflicts, etc. In Sweden, no specific approach to geopolitical issues exists in the geography curriculum though such issues are addressed to a certain extent in history lessons (in grades 7-9). In Geography, grades 7, 8 and 9 focus extensively on democracy but this is not specifically directed at the situation in Europe, rather, to Sweden's place in the larger world.

## **2.2 Europe in current educational contexts**

Specific places are increasingly less often emphasised at the expense of general items (globalisation, environment issues, etc.). For example, in Sweden, the national curriculum does not state which countries are to be studied. However, in praxis, Europe is usually introduced in the 5<sup>th</sup> grade (pupils aged 11). The examination of textbooks reveals that Europe is generally studied in all of the countries of the sample, especially in those that are EU members. This teaching mostly concerns pupils between the ages of 12 and 14, even if most students in high school also study Europe for a second time. The focus on Europe within school curricula, and therefore in textbooks,

depends mostly on the country concerned.

In France, Europe is taught in the 3<sup>rd</sup> year of secondary school while the EU is explicitly studied as one of the three ‘great powers’ in the 4<sup>th</sup> year, with the USA and Japan (now horribly out of date: this curriculum was written in 1995 and the new one will be applied in 2012, with a complete updating of the presentation of the globalisation). Pupils study this part of the curriculum between the ages of 13 and 15. The difference between Europe as a continent and the EU as a political association is clearly noted. A deepening of the teaching of Europe and the EU is undertaken in high school (in 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> grades) with a similar approach adopted during each period.

In Portugal and in Malta, the chapters dedicated to Europe mention borders to evoke the evolution of the political map: German reunification, the break up of Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia’s fragmentation, the fragmentation of the USSR and the building of the EU.

In India, Europe is not taught as a specific entity. According to the British scholarly tradition, topics and chapters in geography are based on general problems of physical and human geography. For this reason ‘Europe’ primarily appears in the other ‘social sciences’, especially in the teaching of history and in political science.

Among the 36 textbooks downloaded, only one was based on a regional approach to the organisation of the world. It is entitled *Contemporary politics, Textbook in Political Science for class XII*. In the present case, the EU occupies only three and a half pages in the fourth chapter (5.5% of the total volume) within the chapters devoted to the study of some regional entities (64 pages). Europe appears as one region among others (the USA, ASEAN, the CIS, etc.).

In Russia, Europe is included in the teaching of the economic and social geography of foreign countries in the 7<sup>th</sup> year, when pupils are between 12 and 13 years old. Russia is studied in the 6<sup>th</sup> year. In that case, the separation between European Russia and what is called ‘foreign Europe’ is emphasised. The chapter dedicated to Europe in the textbook about *Economic and Social Geography of the World* is 44 pages in length, that is to say 22% of the textbook devoted to the regional presentation of the world. The perspective chosen focuses on economic issues, laying aside cultural and geopolitical issues.

In Brazil, Europe is studied as a continent in the 8<sup>th</sup> year, when pupils are about 14 years old. In the Brazilian textbook we studied, 296 pages are dedicated to Africa, Asia, Oceania and the Polar Regions, corresponding to the 8<sup>th</sup> year. Brazil is studied in the 6<sup>th</sup> year (288 p.) and the rest of America is studied during the 7<sup>th</sup> year (256 p.).

In the USA, the situation is rather special because each school chooses the amount of time spent on each topic and on each region of the world. The general textbooks edited and published to teach geography according to

the most common standards (e.g. the curriculum ‘geography for life’) allow us to measure the importance of Europe within the teaching of the overall world. In the textbook *Exploring Our World* published by Glencoe McGraw and Hill (2008), 104 pages are dedicated to Europe within the presentation of the different regions composing the world (733 p). In the textbook *World Geography* published by Holt-McDougall and Litell, 74 pages are devoted to Europe of the 734 contained in the book as a whole. The part related to Europe is divided as follows: the first part is devoted to the physical geography of Europe which is billed as ‘the peninsula of peninsulas’; the second part refers to the ‘Human Geography’ of Europe and is based on a spatial division of European regions (Mediterranean Europe, Western Europe, Northern Europe, Eastern Europe); the third and final part is dedicated to the study of specific political issues (e.g. wars in the Balkans and pollution within Europe). Except for this third part, the presentation remains quite traditional in approach. Note that in all the US textbooks, Russia is studied separately from the rest of Europe, and the Ural Mountains are presented as the natural eastern border of the European continent.

In African textbooks, the structure is the same: after a general overview dealing with the physical and social aspects of the geography of Europe, a further section is devoted to its regions and its states. In the two cases, specific reference is made to France. This may be linked to the fact that these two countries were former French colonies and the two textbooks were written in French by a French publisher (Hatier).

In several non-EU members (Brazil, Burkina Faso, the USA), the teaching of Europe seems significantly impregnated by the regional school approach to geography, emphasising the geographical specificities of the places studied: thus, the vision of Europe provided in these textbooks primarily remains based rather more on traditional themes than on current geopolitical issues (policy, governance, development goals, etc.).

In the countries taken into account here, ‘Europe’ is often presented in curricula as a collection of diversified places, features and data about physical particularities of the milieu, population and demography, level of development and elements of culture and lifestyle. Such an ambiguous presentation leaves open the possibility of adopting an essentialist vision of Europe.

Consequently, the time spent on the European topics within the regional part of the teaching of geography largely differs: it is a quite long time in the European countries and a shorter one abroad. The relative importance given to Europe in African textbooks taken into account in this survey may be related to the fact that they have been edited with the cooperation of a French publisher (table 2).

In European countries, ‘Europe’ is studied across an entire school year (France, Sweden). Outside Europe its study is generally associated with the other continents (Brazil, Burkina Faso, Russia, the USA). Note that in the EU members (Malta, Portugal, Sweden and France), specific attention

Table 2: Share of Europe in the representation of the whole world

Burkina Faso	31%
Brazil	16%
France	33%
Guinea	23%
Russia	22%
India	7%
USA	10-14%

*The calculation of the share of textbook pages allocated to Europe is based on the chapters devoted to the regional presentations of the world in textbooks of different countries. For some countries these statistics do not take into account the time spent on the country where the pupils live: Russia and Brazil during the 6<sup>th</sup> year, France during the 3<sup>rd</sup> year. General geography (physical and human) is not taken into account.*

is given to the EU as an emerging place. In Portugal and in Malta, the curricula even mentioned the Treaty of Rome (1957). In France, the ‘civic education’ syllabus<sup>1</sup> also requires teachers to stress the importance of two important treaties, Rome (1957) and Maastricht (1992). In extra-European textbooks (Brazil, Burkina Faso, Guinea, India and the USA), the EU is also mentioned. In Russia however the EU is not mentioned at all.

### **Educational contexts: conclusions**

A number of important changes seem to have impacted the teaching of geography: the use of computer tools, the emphasis on general issues (e.g. the environment, geopolitical issues) in a context where geography is frequently presented as a social science. This means that geography lessons are intended to provide a current and relevant overview of areas chosen by teachers. The main objective is not an accumulation of factual knowledge but more a ‘comprehension of relations’ between societies and the space where they live. This mutation does not preclude a certain pedagogic stability: the importance of textbooks, the persistence of the national framework, or the emphasis on places in close proximity to the pupils’ country.

Even if we observe the perpetuation of traditional elements in the representation of Europe (physical and cultural topics), the increasing emphasis on the EU tends to highlight the political dimension of the European identity. However, the separation between the two perspectives available (Europe as a

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<sup>1</sup>In France, ‘civic education’ is a specific subject close to ‘political sciences’ in some other countries. It is usually taught by history and geography teachers. The main objective is to educate students in citizenship.

natural continent and Europe as a political project) remains ambiguous, as the two perspectives being taught on different levels of the curriculum may be unconnected. This indecision does not protect the teaching of Europe against the temptation of geographical essentialism, inconsistent with the values underpinning the European project.

### **3 Europe in textbooks: an evanescent identity**

The representation of Europe in textbooks is often based on complex and contradictory discourses, mixing elements belonging to different intellectual spheres and to antagonistic epistemological traditions. No consistent or universal vision seems to clearly appear. Consequently, Europe seems to be a place with a fuzzy and ambiguous identity. This indecision however leaves open the possibility for multiple interpretations. The lack of consensus on what Europe's identity is thus can be interpreted as an opportunity to improve discussions and reflections with pupils.

#### **3.1 Europe as a continent: the perpetuation of the classical approach**

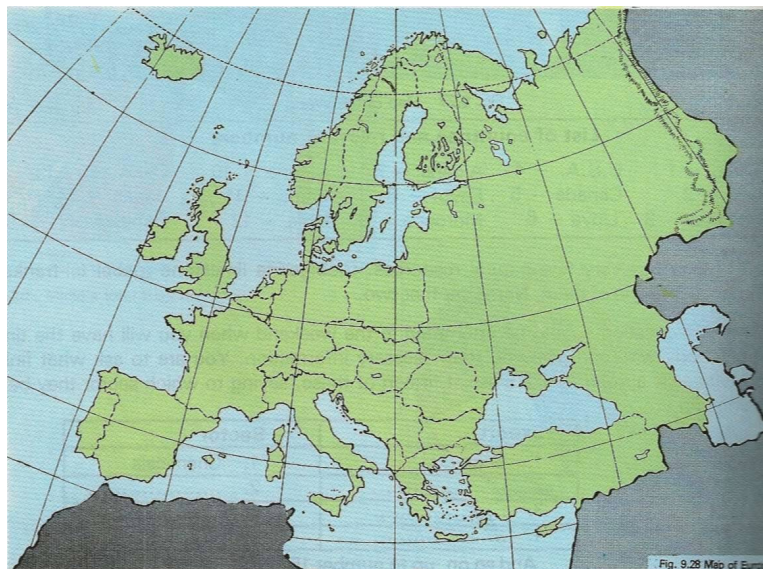
In textbooks, Europe is very often portrayed as a continent, that is to say, as a set of elements seemingly natural, supposed to circumscribe and define a region of the world larger than nation-States. The concept of continents belongs to the registry of classical geography. It refers to the idea of a world ordered by the existence of physical and regional realities that scientific work would tend to identify, describe and explain. This naturalisation of the essence of places is visible through different representations present in textbooks.

First, the naturalisation of European borders is very commonly used to reify its identity. Europe is very frequently mentioned as a region, clearly and strictly delimited on the basis of physical criteria. Europe is most often presented as a peninsula surrounded by three marine areas, the Mediterranean Sea to the South, the Atlantic Ocean to the West and the southern fringes of the Arctic Ocean to the North. Maps are helpful to diffuse this kind of representation. Mediterranean Islands (the Balearic Islands, Corsica, Sardinia, Crete and Cyprus) are systematically represented as a part of Europe, despite the obvious fact they are physically separated from the 'continent' called Europe. It is the same for Great Britain, Ireland and Iceland. In all the parts of the world, Europe is also portrayed in the same way.

What differs the most is the place chosen to fix the eastern border. On most maps, the Ural Mountains are artificially highlighted by a range of hatchings to suggest the existence of a 'natural' oriental border. This rhetorical exaggeration is visible in the case of a Maltese map (figure 1) by the fact that other mountains are not represented at all. The green colour used to



Figure 1: Europe seen from Malta



Mal-G-1999, p. 172

cover the European area adds a subconscious environmental dimension to this supposed natural continent. On the contrary, the Caucasus Mountains are omitted. This allows authors of the map to include Turkish territory in the European continent. This ‘naturalisation’ of Europe avoids the fact that continents are primarily intellectual and political constructions, invented in the past by European people for political purposes and re-appropriated through generations to justify some visions of what Europe and the world should be (Grataloup, 2010). For example, we have to remember that the habit of placing the oriental border of Europe on the Ural Mountains comes from a tradition inherited from the Russian geographer Tatishchev, at the beginning of the XVIII<sup>th</sup> century, to support Peter the Great’s geopolitical project of hitching his empire firmly to the destiny of Europe (Foucher 1998, 1999, Lévy 1997). This historical creation is often omitted in textbooks. In each country of the sample taken here into account, the highlighting of the Ural Mountains is used to artificially draw the border of Europe, without mentioning that it is not, actually, a natural border.

Differences do however occur from one country to another. In the French textbook, the Ural Mountains are highlighted by a tight red line. It is almost the same in the Brazilian textbook (figure 2). On the map provided by the Europa website, the shape is more confused since North Africa and the Caspian Sea are fully visible (figure 4). In this case, no border is clearly underlined. In the Brazilian textbook, Central and Eastern Europe is unclear

and sometimes attached to Russia within the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) (figure 2). In the textbook published by Holt-McDougall and Litell in the USA, the whole of Turkey and all of the countries resulting from the collapse of the USSR are excluded: Russia but also the Baltic republics, Belarus, Ukraine and Moldova. Instead they are attached to the Russian sphere of influence. In the textbook published by Glencoe, McGraw and Hill, only Russia is considered apart (figure 3). In this case, political borders are viewed as the conventional limits of what is supposed to correspond to the 'European continent'.

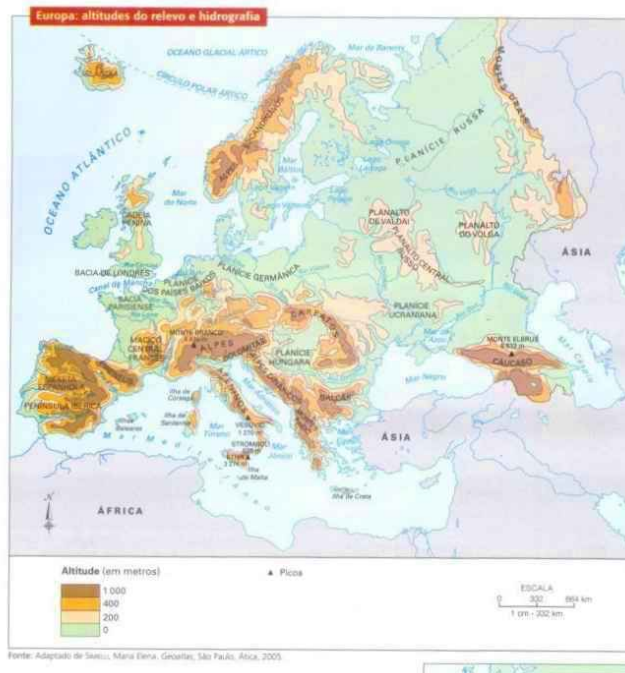
In Russia, Europe's border is no longer placed on the Urals but instead runs between Poland and Romania on the western side, and Russia, Belarus, Ukraine and Moldova on the eastern side. Europe presented here excludes the CIS and Turkey (figure 5). This delimitation of what is presented as a 'foreign Europe' is an implicit way to suggest that there would exist another Europe, placed under the influence of the Russian power, which includes Ukraine, Belarus and Moldova.

The Indian mapping of Europe is quite interesting. There is only one map (see figure 6) concerning Europe in the 28 textbooks provided by the NCERT for the teaching of the social sciences. The shaping of the European space is portrayed in the traditional manner and is based primarily on the national framework. What is most striking here is the omission of North Africa and Turkey which seem to be completely submerged by the Mediterranean Sea. Three kinds of countries are visible: the older EU members, the new ones and the external countries.

Such an indeterminate approach to the location of natural borders and the political instrumentation of physical features is also visible concerning the Bosphorus, often presented as the natural border of South-eastern Europe by those who are against the entry of Turkey to the EU, arguing that Turkish territory is mainly situated in Asia. This is a frequent justification provided by political decision makers. The uncertain status of the relationship between Turkey and the EU is visible through the way this region is mapped in textbooks. It is quite common to see that Turkey has been figured in two different colours, suggesting an implicit and invisible division across both sides of the Sea of Marmara. In the middle school French textbook maps, 'Asian' Turkey is dismissed as being outside Europe by a red line suggesting the idea of a tight barrier (figure 7). The naturalisation of borders appears then to be something of an obstacle to the possibility of Turkish integration within the EU, an issue that is sometimes mentioned in textbooks (figure 8): the aim of this humoristic sketch is to invite students to question the real reasons that prevent Turkey, presented as an Oriental country (see the flying carpet), joining the EU (the problem of Cyprus, human rights, EU public opinion and 'islamophobia').

In Russia and in the United States, the part of Turkey usually considered to be European is clearly excluded from the continent, and is attached instead

Figure 2: Visions of Europe in a Brazilian textbook



Bra-G-2006, p. 18



Bra-G-2006, p. 66

Figure 3: Visions of Europe in some US textbooks



US-G-2007a



US-G-2003

Figure 4: Visions of Europe in *Let's explore Europe!*



Eur-G-2010, p. 4



Figure 5: Foreign Europe according to Russian vision



Рис. 52. Растениеводство в зарубежной Европе

Rus-G-2009, p. 190

Figure 6: The Indian European Union map



Class XII, *Contemporary world politics*, p. 53

Figure 7: Visions of Europe in a French textbook



Fra-G-2006, p. 212

Figure 8: Is the Turkish integration limited by a natural obstacle?



Fra-G-2007, p. 295

to the Middle East.

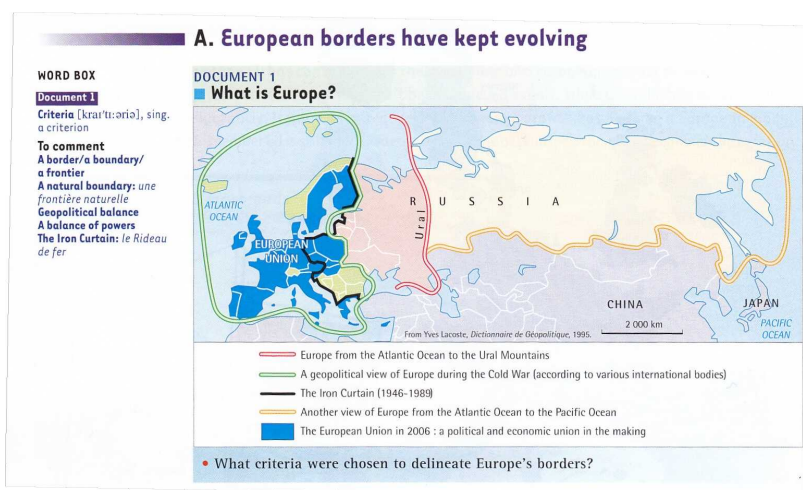
Omission of the fact that even European borders are something of a social construction tends to suggest that Europe is a natural entity. This flawed vision has progressively been reproduced, repeated and unconsciously integrated into collective thought. The mapping vision developed by European geographers since the late middle Ages to represent Europe has become an inescapable scope used in all current textbooks, including those published outside Europe.

In the textbooks, few documents are available to make pupils be aware of the fact that the borders of Europe are geopolitical constructions, and thus not immutable. The main exception here is a French textbook published for pupils involved in specific 'European classes' (figure 9). This textbook is actually the only one to implicitly refer to the Tatishchev's legacy:

*From a geographical point of view, Europe is an Asian peninsula whose limits are difficult to set, particularly on the eastern side. As early as the 17<sup>th</sup> century, geographers, urged on by Russian tsar Peter the Great, established the Ural Mountains as the eastern border of the continent, though this definition is still much debated. (Fra-HGEG-2006, p. 81)*

As such, the position of Europe's borders are presented as ambiguous and necessarily the result of a geopolitical construction. This exception apart, textbooks commonly avoid this dimension because it is often more

Figure 9: ‘What is Europe’, an invitation to reflect on the significance of European borders



Fra-HGEC-2006, p. 72

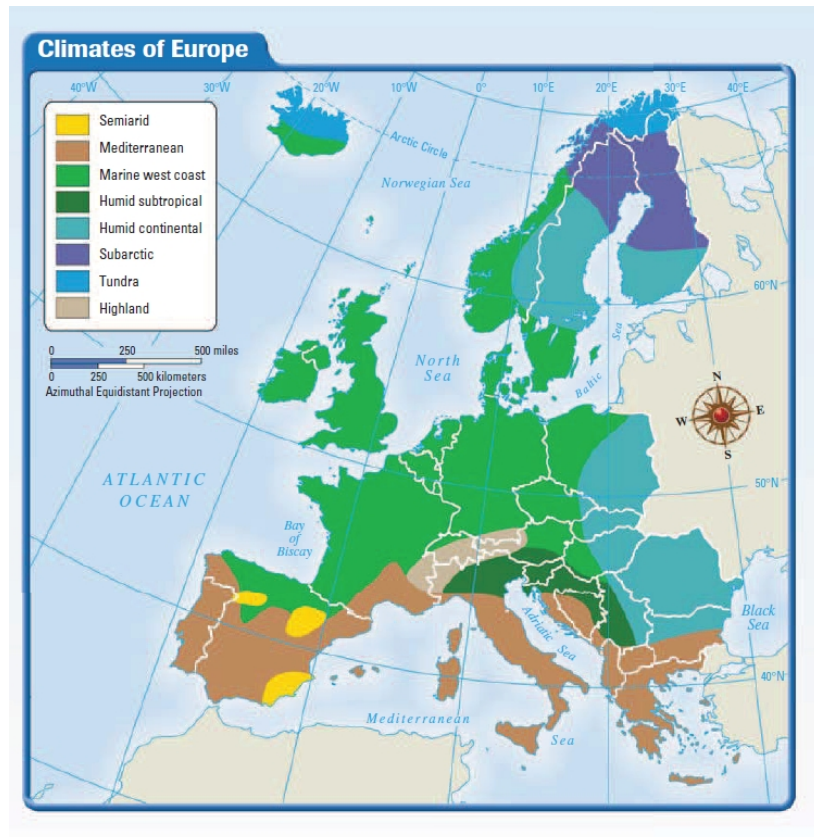
convenient to stick to a single vision of Europe and to ask pupils to learn locations rather than question their political and ideological foundations.

Thus, the infinite repetition and replication, across the world as a whole, of the same iconographic structure leads to a globalised and standardised representation of what Europe is or can be. Thus, when a policy maker wants to specify what Europe is, it is common to see him re-using this conventional representation, arguing that all the pupils in the world learn such obviousness, updating more or less unconsciously the Eurocentric framework inherited from the production of Western Modernity. During the Cold War, French president De Gaulle used to present Europe as an area spreading from ‘the Atlantic Ocean to the Ural Mountains’. This vision was a way for him to affirm the unity and the autonomy of Europe and to contest the hegemonic geo-strategy conducted by the United States in Western Europe. Today, the naturalisation of Europe appears as a common and a useful manner to reify and to depoliticise its identity. Emphasising the physical and biotic aspects of the European territory reinforces its naturalist dimension.

Photographs of natural landscapes seem to be another means of naturalising Europe. 25% of the photos presented in chapters devoted to Europe represent either nature or the countryside, except in the Russian textbook. This percentage is even higher in Swedish iconography. Reinvesting the aesthetic codes of Romanticism, they represent grandiose sceneries: the Alpine mountains, the fjords of Norway or the rugged coastline of the Mediterranean Sea. All are shown as sublime and impressive spaces. This variety of land-



Figure 10: Europe: a land of climate diversity



US-G-2007a, p. 266

scapes presented in the textbooks suggests that Europe corresponds to an assemblage of disparate and magnificent forms.

This diversity is also visible through the maps on physical relief, climate and vegetation which, following the classical conception of regional geography, are also helpful to highlight the natural dimension of the identity of Europe. Most climate maps distinguish several domains: oceanic, continental, polar, mountain and Mediterranean. These maps figure in the French, Portuguese, American and Brazilian textbooks, and climate seems to be a recurrent feature used to differentiate the space of Europe (figures 10 and 11).

The impact of climate on vegetation is emphasised to highlight the diversity of natural landscapes typifying Europe, which is, in effect, reduced to a kind of collage of sublime sceneries. Again, this approach is emblematic of the traditional approach to the teaching of geography: the stress placed

Figure 11: Europe as a set of bioclimatic diversities



US-G-2008a, p. 330

on physical forms is one way to provide a scientific description of the natural diversity of a specific place, avoiding the fact that this variety could simply be evidence of its lack of consistency. Europe is commonly divided into four parts, which are defined by their cardinal positions (North, South, West, and East). In each of these parts (three, four or five according the textbooks), the assemblage of countries varies.

In France, for example, three main domains are identified:

- *Northern Europe is marked by cold temperatures. Sparsely populated, it is partly covered by taiga.*
- *Between the South and the North, Europe is composed of intermediate low lands; its climate is oceanic and continental from the west to the east. The environment is favourable to agriculture and there is no barrier to communication.*
- *Southern Europe has hot and dry summers and Mediterranean-style vegetation. The mountains and hills are covered by forest or scrub, sparsely populated, overlooking coastal plains, more populous and well appointed.* (Fra-G-2006, p. 224)

The neutral vision of Europe emerging from this division based on physical criteria is however highly problematic when it comes to dealing with Central Europe: this part of Europe is bound neither to the North or the

South but runs instead from West to East, highlighting the political stakes at play in the construction of the European entity.

Viewing Europe as a set of physical elements tends to suggest that any political discussion about what it is must be unnecessary. Textbooks participate in reinforcing the confused idea that Europe is an indisputable and natural entity. This focus on the physical aspects of Europe may be regarded as a way to create some social and political consensus, avoiding issues which could provoke disagreements, and geopolitical disagreements are masked or avoided.

### **3.2 Europe as product of the past: the building of a historicist narrative**

A second tendency present in the textbooks is to use various elements of the past to integrate them into a federative and providential narrative, considering Europe as the product of a number of essential principles that history would have revealed. This approach is mainly the result of a teleological reading of history which considers certain features of the past as constitutive, and sometimes exclusive, elements of the European heritage: according to this approach, Greco-Latin and Judeo-Christian heritages would have blended into an original civilization, whose emergence would be linked to a shift of geopolitical power from the Mediterranean Sea to the North Atlantic (Braudel, 1978). This retrospective vision of a Europe emerging spontaneously as the result of historic trends is often based on a selective reconstruction of the past, highlighting a set of economic, political, religious or artistic structures to justify the gradual assertion of a unique geographical entity named 'Europe'. The presentation of these historic structures that Europe would be the result is often used to reduce its identity to a number of essential and inalienable characteristics inherited from the past.

Emphasis placed on heritage and tradition is mainly visible in the extra-European countries (the USA, Brazil and Burkina Faso). In this specific case, the European population is presented as the result of a multiseccular aggregation of different people came from outside.

Thus, Europe is assimilated to a kind of long-established melting-pot. Meanwhile, the Brazilian and American textbooks insist on traditional and cultural particularities that characterise European people: traditional clothing, typical faces (figure 12). Such presentation built on cultural traditions provides a folklore-based vision of the European population (figure 13), suggesting the existence of cultural ethnotypes. Such stereotypes are reinforced while current changes in the European societies concerning the transformations of familial structures, ways of life or migration, etc are neglected. This approach to the portrayal of a territory refers to the old French regional school of geography, which tended to focus on so-called traditional ways of life ('genres de vie').

Figure 12: European ethnotypes according to a Brazilian textbook



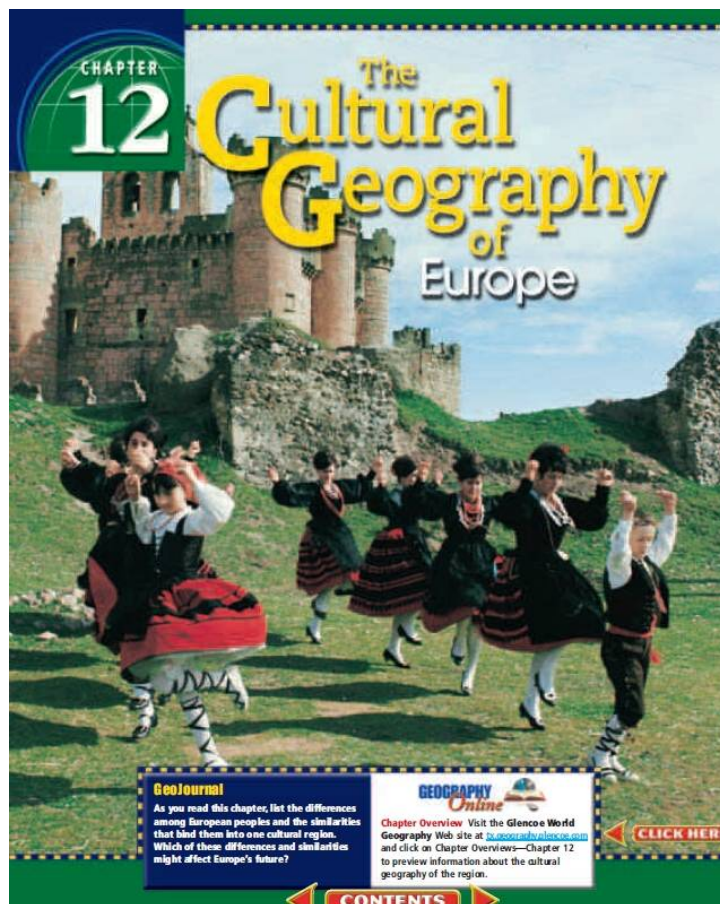
Bra-G-2006, p. 30

Note that photos of landscapes mentioned in the previous section do not necessarily enhance nature itself; comprising people in action, they often emphasise the relationship between nature and mankind, something which seems to be characteristic of Swedish iconography. In a different way, we note also the prevalence of patrimonial landscapes in the French textbook, of picturesque scenes depicting the cultural heritage of Europe.

This is visible through the very high number of photos showing typical cities, full of ancient heritage and recognizable by their characteristic and impressive monuments. European cities are shown as remarkable and lovely places, consistent with the picturesque ideal and with the romantic aesthetic that currently stimulates tourist activities and the civilisation of consumerism and leisure in the whole world. When looking at the various places represented in Europe without considering their symbolic meaning, one detects the recurrence of touristic countries such as France, Italy and Spain. London and Paris appear as the most 'iconic capitals' (figure 14), followed by Prague, Berlin, Rome, Athens, and Venice. This focus on the most well-known and charming cities tends to reify Europe and to reconfigure it as a kind of dreamland dotted with exciting and enjoyable playgrounds. Thus, textbooks contribute to the spread of the postmodern fashion for picturesque façades and typical urban spaces that we currently find through the 'new urbanism' in the United States, in Disney parks or in the casinos of Las Vegas and Macao, but also in most travel guides.

Another topic concerns the linguistic and religious diversity on which most textbooks stress, including maps of languages spoken within Europe. The lack of cultural, religious and linguistic unity encourages textbook authors to present diversity as the essential feature of the European identity. Moreover this diversity is emphasised by pointing out the contrasts concerning demography, wealth and migrations through maps, photos, data and

Figure 13: *The Cultural Geography of Europe* according to a US textbook



US-G-2003, p. 286



Figure 14: Paris is a feast: the building of an enjoying image



US-G-2005, p. 338

text. The identity of Europe is thus diluted through the image of its diversity. This emphasis on socio-cultural diversity is strengthened by all elements of natural diversity previously mentioned (relief, climate, vegetation).

In addition, the French textbook is the only one to associate European regions and countries with a dominant religion, omitting to underline that philosophical feelings and religious concerns are currently increasingly integrated in a mass culture, in constant transformation, deeply materialist, secular, individualistic and globalised. However, the French textbook mentions the existence of people who have no religious feelings.

In Russia, the textbook refers only to the linguistic map and to the spatial distribution of religions, forgetting that there are also Orthodox people in Europe. It deals only with Catholics and Protestants and the growing Muslim presence.

Basically, Europe is represented as a multi-dimensional ‘patchwork’. The highlighting of the various current aspects of this diversity often becomes implicitly associated with a symbol of tolerance. In that case, the scientific description joined an implicit and ideological discourse on the virtues of difference, complementarity and exchange: then, Europe is not confined only to a set of objective data but rather becomes a geographical entity carrying the social and political values of multiculturalism. Some philosophical values are also commonly associated with the cultural identity of Europe: democracy, pluralism, peace and human rights as mentioned in the textbook from Burkina Faso.

This selective vision of the history of Europe tends to suggest that it has emerged from a linear and providential process, driving to the affirmation of the liberal values, presented as if they had been deeply and unanimously accepted by European societies for several centuries. The association of a space called a ‘continent’ with a set of selective and positive moral values tends to provide an ideological vision of the past. Meanwhile, the identification of Europe with a list of political and moral values neglects the fact that the heritage of ancient Greece, democracy and public debate are also shared with other cultural traditions, in the Arab countries or in India for example (Sen, 2005, 2007). It is the same for the Roman and Judeo-Christians legacies about which Europe has no exclusive monopoly. Such Eurocentric and providentialist presentation does not encourage pupils to become aware of the historiographical debates nor to consider the various interpretations of global history. Europe history has also been marked by the experience of intolerance, imperialism and mass murder. In any case such a soothing vision often stands in contradiction to the teaching of history and geopolitics in most countries. The evocation of wars, conflicts and massacres which scarred Europe in the past, from Ancient times to the most recent wars, is a way to highlight the current fragility of peace. Thus, the memory of conflicts and violence in former Yugoslavia appears in almost all textbooks. In this context, the history of Europe is sometimes presented as a series of

key moments, mostly painful, during which a specific identity would have emerged spontaneously.

This narrative takes the form of a repentant and cautionary story, as if history had logically taken place to ultimately lead to the celebration of brotherhood and the victory of peace and liberal values. This narration also considers the future of Europe as constrained by the historical matrix in which it was forged. It tends to neglect the possibility that Europe might be seen as a contingent political project which has to be discussed and redefined by each generation, by ignoring or abandoning certain legacies of the past if necessary.

The comparison with the visions provided by extra-European textbooks is interesting. The providentialist approach to the history of Europe is shared by the main US textbooks. The Greek and Latin legacy is presented as a European monopoly. The history of Europe unfolds as a succession of great steps which lead to a period of geopolitical expansion that runs from the fifteenth century to the twentieth century, followed by a phase of disasters and decline leading to the emergence of a Europe pacified and convinced by the benefits of democracy. Europe is presented as the depository of a complex heritage, opposing mistakes of the past (imperialism, racism, mass murders due to the WWII) to the hope of a happy future based on the improvement of peace, human rights and democracy.

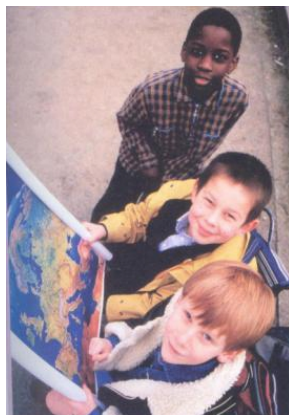
In the Indian textbooks the vision of Europe is less attractive without being explicitly critical. Europe is presented as an imperial power which has known its peak between the eighteenth century and the middle of the twentieth century. It is shown as being responsible for the integration of the different regions of the world within a global market dominated by European merchants. Thus, Europe is intimately linked to the legacy of colonisation and imperialism. Since the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, Europe seems to have become less important in a global context.

### **3.3 Europe as a political project**

Europe is often explicitly presented as a political project. Here, emphasis is placed on its institutional aspect, adding a third dimension which appears rather disconnected from the other two (physical and historical). In this case, the textbook authors insist on using the history of the European Union, its current organisation and the key geopolitical issues that affect it. This third perspective is obviously in some ways contradictory to the other two: either Europe is a predefined entity by nature or the providential outcome of a particular history, or the construction site for a political project. It cannot be regarded as both, simultaneously a given object and a political horizon still to be defined. In most textbooks, the presentation of Europe is portrayed as if it could, at the same time, match a collection of objective facts and a set of political ambitions. The epistemological contradiction



Figure 15: A happy representation of the EU as a multicultural society



Bra-G-2006, p. 115

implied by such juxtaposition is rarely if ever alluded to. This educational inertia results from an institutional tendency to avoid the political aspects of geographical knowledge, and the de-politicisation that characterises the teaching of geography converges with the tendency, implicitly rooted in the European project, to avoid ideological conflicts.

### 3.3.1 The EU seen by the EU members and by abroad

When it is specifically referred to ‘the European project’ is often romanticised and reified. The multiplicities of contradictory objectives of the European project (peace, democracy, growth, competitiveness) and its profound ambiguity have been repeatedly highlighted (Denord, 2009; Foucher, 1999). Let us simply recall that, since 1951, the building of the EU has been based on three different kinds of liberalism: promoting peace and human rights (conforming to the liberal-egalitarian tradition), respect for tolerance (consistent with the principles of multiculturalism, document 15) and the development of a social market economy based on the standards of German ordoliberalism (organisation of free trade, monetary stability and respect for free and undistorted competition - with the state given a major role as the guarantor of ‘fair play’). In textbooks, the two first goals are often highlighted while the third is either muted or absent.

French textbooks note that ‘the building of the EU has contributed to the awakening of a European identity defined by common values and interests’ (Fra-HGEG-2006, p. 70). Emphasis is placed on governance performance rather more than on these ‘common values’ or the ‘rights and liberties’ that are supposed to be commonly shared:

Figure 16: The European Union flag: a recurrent symbol of Europe in construction



Bra-G-2006, p. 112.



Portugal, 2009

*The European constitution aimed at reforming EU institutions to enable a more efficient working of the 25-member EU. It also included the EU charter of fundamental rights, stating the rights and liberties guaranteed to every EU citizen (Fra-HGEG-2006, p. 70)*

Such an ambiguous presentation of the political goals implemented through the EU agenda is rarely seen as controversial. The EU is generally portrayed as a collection of concrete achievements and institutional problems still to be solved. This descriptive approach avoids most of the controversies currently involved in the public debate concerning EU funding and spending for instance.

This depoliticised image of the EU is reinforced by the focus on its abstract and disembodied symbols, mostly federative and consensual because of their lack of connection with current political confrontation and because of their implicit ideological ‘harmlessness’ for pupils. The European flag, photos of coins and banknotes, the European buildings in Brussels and in Strasbourg are commonly used to embody a unifying and non-confrontational image of Europe (figures 16 and 17). This celebration of a rediscovered harmony within the European construction is as prevalent in European countries as in books published in Brazil, in India or in the U.S.

In some European countries, more details are given concerning the institutional functioning of the EU or the role of the founding fathers like Jean Monnet and Robert Schuman.

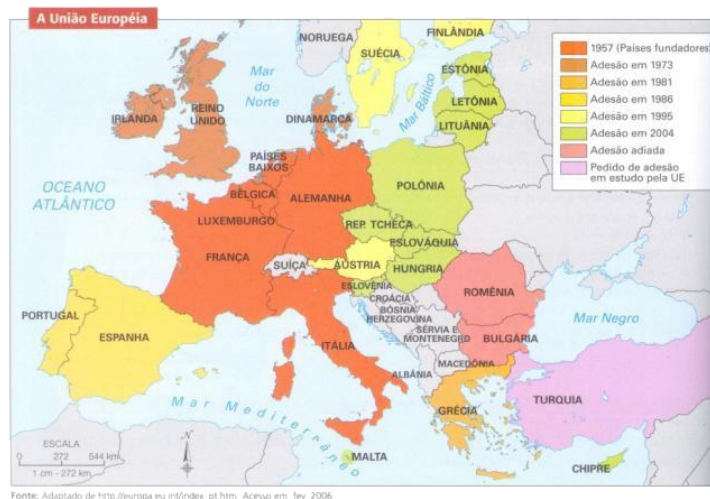
The different steps of the EU enlargement are also commonly mentioned in textbooks as a symbol of a great adventure and the evidence of the increasing of the importance of the European project, both inside and outside Europe (figure 18).

Figure 17: The exaltation of peace in the educational material provided by the EU institutions



Eur-G-2010, p. 36

Figure 18: The EU enlargements on a Brazilian map



Bra-G-2006, p. 110

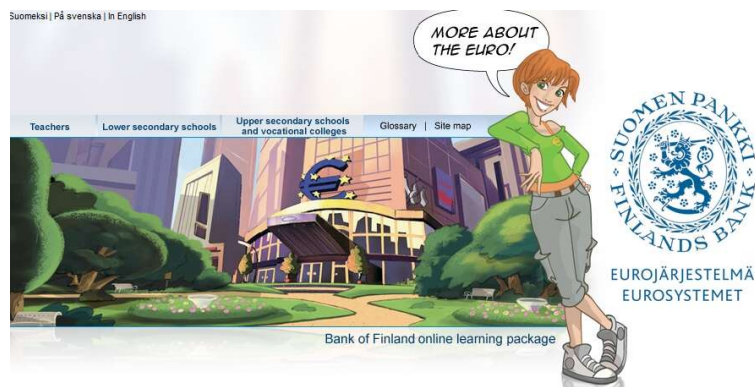
Basically, in most textbooks, the European Union is regarded as a source of progress. However, there is a strong difference between European textbooks and the vision promoted by the website ‘Europa’, depending on the EU institutions, which explicitly stresses the importance of ordoliberal values. In the material provided to teachers on this website, several topics emphasise the importance of neo-liberal norms of governance: monetary stability, competition, entrepreneurship. Thus, the challenges for the future of the EU are presented as follows:

*One of the challenges facing Europe today is how to make sure that young people can have jobs and a good future. It’s not easy, because European firms have to compete for business with companies in other parts of the world that may be able to do the same job more cheaply. There are other big problems today which can only be tackled by countries around the world working together, for example:*

- *pollution and climate change;*
- *hunger and poverty;*
- *international crime and terrorism.* (Eur-G-2010, p. 42)

The lexical priority given to economic competition on others stakes (pollution, poverty, security) is emblematic of the European institutions’ agenda. In some teaching materials provided for pupils, it is written that ‘Economic

Figure 19: Making Frankfurt and the European Central Bank glamour



<http://www.euro.fi/e/index.html>

affairs and monetary policy can be fun’ to understand the ‘importance of price stability’. The European Central Bank in Frankfurt appears in drawings which evoke a fantasy and attractive land (figure 19). In another document aimed at secondary school students, ‘business’ is mentioned as an essential activity to the achievement of the European project. Students are encouraged to become creative and competitive entrepreneurs necessary to make the world a better place.

This neoliberal vision of the goals of the EU are not the only ones underlined in the European teaching material but it obviously appears that such ideological norms are asserted with more determination and enthusiasm than in national textbooks. However, even if economic norms of neo-liberalism are strongly highlighted, other goals are also mentioned such as the respect for peace, human rights and democracy or the respect for cultural diversity.

Basically, European curricula and textbooks provide an enthusiastic and normative vision of what the EU is and should be. Students are not encouraged to either discuss or to criticize the federalist or the neo-liberal foundations of policies that have shaped political integration since the 1950s (Denord 2009). In textbooks, the EU is commonly reduced to a consensual and non-confrontational territory unanimously accepted, and as a political actor, as neutral as possible.

However, euroscepticism is not omitted from these textbooks but its explanations remains rather obscure; suggesting that mistrust of the EU would be the result of some kind of atavistic defiance or due to some misinterpretations about the goals pursued by the European institutions. The refusal of the future proposed by European institutions is attributed to sovereignty-based tensions and to a kind of exacerbated nationalism.

*Since joining the EU in 1973, Great Britain has never been a*

Figure 20: The infantilization of the European peoples: a way to represent Euroscepticism



Fra-HGEC-2007, p. 67

*whole-hearted member of the club. It has always feared European technocracy might mean the country losing its sovereignty. (Fra-HGEC-2006, p. 74)*

However, in most recent textbooks, euroscepticism seems enlarged. Then, textbooks present the systematic failures encountered during the last ten years by the various projects of European referenda as if they were due to the parochialism of the different countries composing the EU. For example, the refusals of the Treaty establishing a Constitution for Europe in France and in the Netherlands in 2005 are attributed to political disagreements between neighbours. The hypothesis that some ideological disagreements felt by well-informed citizens (e.g. against federalism or neo-liberalism) would partly be responsible for the recent refusals of these different treaties is completely omitted (figure 20).

Emphasis is mostly placed on the rivalries of interests between European countries: 'Today, the 25-member EU is still very divided over the issue of political, social and economic integration' (Fra-HGEC-2006, p. 70), 'The EU enlargement to the Eastern countries was first seen as a treat. Outsourcing to other countries where labour was cheaper was much dreaded. This fear partly accounted for the Irish rejection of the Nice treaty in June 2001' (Fra-HGEC-2006, p. 80). The only disagreement mentioned and based on differences of opinions between countries concerns the war which began in

Iraq in 2003.

### 3.3.2 The EU seen from abroad

Among the five non-EU members we focused on, Russia is the only one to ignore the EU. In this specific case, the only regional organisations mentioned are the Council of Europe and the OSCE, two organisations which Russia is a member. The EU simply does not appear. Concerning ‘Foreign Europe’, this textbook is only interested in the internal political organisation of States (distinguishing between unitary states and federal states) and in the various political systems in force (monarchies or republics). The absence of any reference to the European Union perhaps reflects in part the fact that there is no high-level Directorate dedicated to the EU in the Russian Foreign Ministry, implying that the EU was not really an important partner for the Russian policy makers. Russia wants clearly to be seen as a significant player in the European area. Its membership to the OSCE and to the Council of Europe must then be highlighted to promote evidence of its participation in European political affairs.

In Burkina Faso, the only comment made about the EU seems to refer to a previous period and should have been updated to be more relevant: ‘The success of the EEC, which completes the economic union of its 12 members, attracts many states such as Turkey, Austria and the former countries of the East’. In other countries, the EU is mentioned as a relative success, even if a particular stress is placed on current difficulties faced by the EU in a bid to improve its own functioning. In India and in the United States, the European construction is presented as a direct consequence of the WWII and Western European leaders wanting to put an end to violence across the continent.

In India, the EU is presented as a remedy to its own decline but also as a means to develop peaceful relations between its members and with the rest of the world. The federalist ambition is clearly highlighted: ‘The European Union has evolved over time from an economic union to an increasingly political one. The EU has started to act more as a nation state’. The main stakes for this organisation seem to concern its own governance after recent enlargements and the increasing of popular defiance against the European institutions: ‘The process has not proved easy, for people in many countries are not very enthusiastic in giving the EU powers that were exercised by the government of their country. There are also reservations about including some new countries within the EU’.

In the US textbooks, doubts about the relationships between the European institutions and its members are also highlighted (euroscepticism, popular defiance, level of political integration, governance, national egoism, etc.) but the ‘benefits’ of the common currency are presented as mostly positive, ‘including greater business efficiency and increased international



Figure 21: Wars and mass murders in former Yugoslavia: a European tragedy



US-G-2007a, p. 323

trade’.

Note that in Brazilian and in American textbooks, the peaceful ambition is presented as compromised by local tensions and ethnic conflicts. The problem of former Yugoslavia is mentioned in many American textbooks as a major political stake for Europe (figure 21), and in some this is seen as an issue which is perhaps as important as the achievements already won by the EU since the early 1950s.

*Tensions among some European ethnic groups have led to armed conflict. The Balkan Peninsula has long been a shatter-belt, a region caught between external and internal rivalries. In the 1990s, the Balkans was a battleground among Serbs, Croats, Bosnian Muslims, and Kosovar Albanians. Following World War II, these and other Balkan peoples had belonged to a communist-ruled land called Yugoslavia. For a time, hatreds were muted. But after the communist system’s fall in the early 1990s, ethnic tensions erupted, resulting in Yugoslavia’s breakup into separate independent republics.*

*Within some of the new republics, ethnic hatreds were serious enough to spark the worst fighting in Europe since World War II. The republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina and the Serb-ruled territory of Kosovo were centres of the most brutal warfare. Following a policy called ‘ethnic cleansing’, Serb leaders expelled or killed rival ethnic groups in these areas. (US-G-2003, p. 203)*



### 3.4 Is Europe considered as a superpower?

A fourth register currently being developed by school textbooks concerns the question of whether Europe (or the EU) could or should be considered a great geopolitical power. Europe mostly appears as a potential superpower, with substantial assets but still weakened by a number of negative points (the political divisions, an ageing population and internal inequalities).

In French textbooks, the EU is nicknamed ‘the wanabee superpower’ and considered as ‘one of the main leaders in the globalisation process’.

In most countries, including non-EU members, the power of Europe seems to be based more on economic performance than on military or diplomatic influence. Economically, the Russian textbook notes that ‘foreign Europe’ represents the first global power, both in terms of industrial production, exports of goods and services or tourist attractions. In this economic unit, four countries dominate: Germany, France, Italy and the UK. The textbook goes on to detail the various economic sectors: industry and agriculture. No reference is made to the Common Agriculture Policy (CAP). In India, the EU is presented as ‘the world’s biggest economy with a GDP of more than \$12 trillion in 2005, slightly larger than that of the United States’. Here, the focus is placed on the EU presented beside ASEAN as a competitor to the United States.

Moreover, the EU is a fruitful tool for Europeans to reinforce their influence in the rest of the world and in global negotiations. This influence resembles a kind of soft power based on diplomacy more than ‘coercion and military force’. India is the only country outside Europe to stress the political influence of the EU in addition to its generally acknowledged economic power.

Elsewhere, the economic dimension of European power prevails. This relies on a series of great achievements concerning agricultural production and crop yields, industrial innovation and new technologies in several domains such as transportation, aerospace and energy.

For business, the trading ports of Rotterdam and Antwerp appear as two of the major and most important gateways between Europe and the rest of the world. Thus, Europe is also viewed as a major pole in global trade and as an attractive area for financial flows around cities like Frankfurt, London, Paris or Milano (figure 22). In a few countries (France, Burkina Faso - see figure 23), the European Megalopolis appears as the economic core of the European power. Major cities have developed a solid network based on economic exchanges and, thus, they participate to the economic integration of the European territory. In French and American textbooks, tourism is also presented as one of the highest profit-making activities, especially in the Mediterranean countries.

Photos of economic activities such as high-tech industries, R&D, agriculture and tourism are another common mean to highlight the economic power

Figure 22: The CBD of Frankfurt: a financial center, symbol of the European economic power



Fra-G-2007, p. 296

Figure 23: La Défense in Paris, a French CBD seen from Burkina Faso



BF-G-1994, p. 22

Figure 24: Antwerp in a French (left) and in a US textbook (right)



**Antwerp, Belgium**  
The cafés in this square in the heart of Antwerp's historic district are typical of Europe's outdoor cafés.

of the European area.

US textbooks do not deal with economic power as much as in other countries. Unlike the French textbook, Antwerp is not shown as a major European trading port but rather as a charming historic town (figure 24). However they afford greater importance to cultural aspects and ways of living. The European population is presented as enjoying a high standard of living, with a high purchasing power, privileged access to a high quality of life and to abundant recreation opportunities.

Urban life, material wealth and free time are also significant features identified in the textbook from Burkina Faso. It tempers this apparent dreamland, pointing to a few limits. Europeans are always portrayed as 'in a hurry to work', 'work pace is very fast and tiring'. Job conditions are considered stressful and precarious because of the race for productivity and because of the economic competition (figure 25). Behind this veil of general prosperity, it insists on the existence of important inequalities:

*A small minority (10%) of Europeans do not live like you just seen. These poor whose numbers have increased in the 1980s are unemployed or isolated seniors. The poorest among them have nowhere to live. All subsist only through charitable organizations: they are and they feel excluded from society. (BF-G-1994, p. 33)*

It is significant that this textbook highlights the fact that immigrant workers and women are the first victims of economic competition within

Figure 25: The stressful European way of life according to a textbook from Burkina Faso



BF-G-1994, p. 32

Europe, as if African pupils needed to be defended against a too highly embellished vision of Europe, especially for those who would be potential future immigrants.

The problem of inequalities is also underlined by several French textbooks. The reduction of socio-spatial inequalities appears as one of the main stakes that concern the Europe institutions:

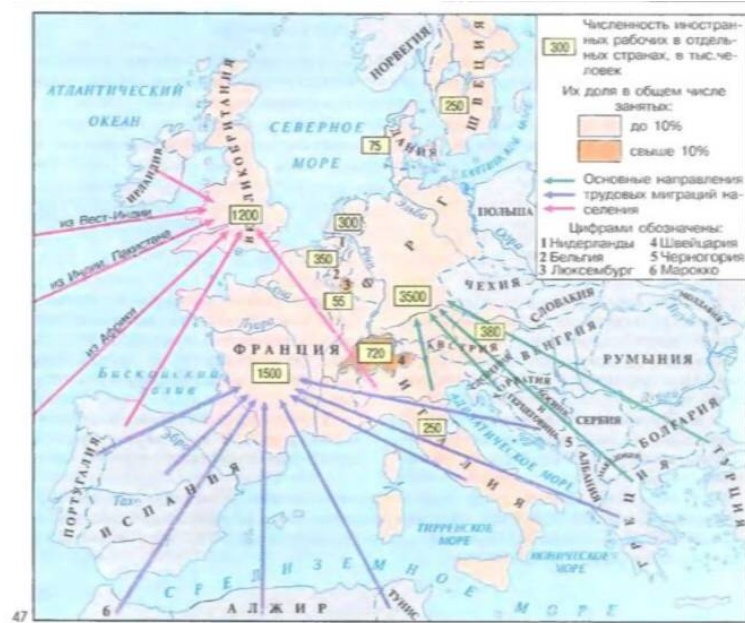
*At the global level, Europe is a rich continent [...] But there are great differences in wealth between the countries of Western Europe and those in Central and Eastern Europe, recently emerged from communism. These differences exist not only between countries but also within them, between regions (regional disparities) and between people (social inequality). (Fra-EC-2002)*

Textbooks point to the necessity of a spatial solidarity within the European space. It is the same in the document *Let's explore Europe*.

Despite these multi-scalar inequalities, Europe is often presented as an attractive place, especially for immigrants coming from poor countries. In most countries, Europe is mentioned as one of the main destinations of international immigration (figure 26).

This attractiveness has reached such a level, particularly concerning certain African populations, that it generates large flows of illegal immigration that European authorities are struggling to contain. This is causing accidents and clashes with police. Illegal immigrants are presented as the main victims of this situation (figure 27).

Figure 26: Guest workers in 'foreign Europe' according to Russian textbook



Rus-G-2009, p. 184

Figure 27: The drama of refugees attempting to immigrate to Europe



Fra-G-2007, p. 292

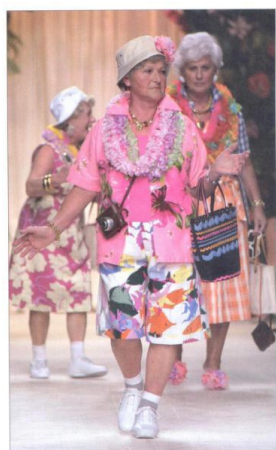


Embarcação com africanos chega a Fuerteventura, na Espanha, um dos principais pontos de entrada dos imigrantes ilegais na Europa.

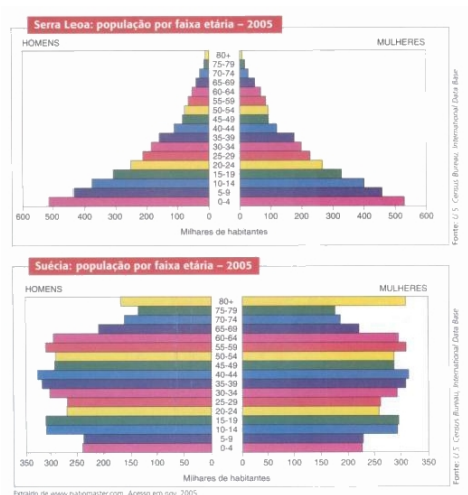
Bra-G-2006, p. 37



Figure 28: The ageing of Europe according to extra-European countries



Bra-G-2006, p. 105



Bra-G-2006, p. 33

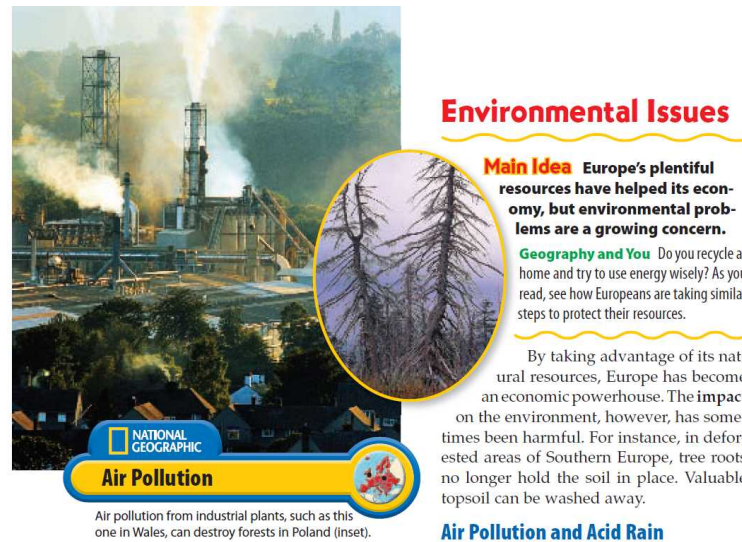
These difficulties in managing external migration flows are more or less highlighted in all of the textbooks of the sample, both inside and outside Europe. In the Brazilian and US textbooks, a direct link is made between illegal immigration and xenophobic feelings, especially concerning Germany and Austria. Nothing is however said about the far-right political parties in Belgium, France or in the Netherlands.

Another problem identified in all of the textbooks taken into account concerns the existence of an ageing population (figure 28). This general ageing is symbolic of emerging problems (loss of power, economic difficulties, to pay pensions and health costs), especially highlighted in Brazil and in Burkina Faso, the younger countries of the sample:

*Europe has completed its demographic transition. The collapse of birth rates leads to a very low natural increase, even negative in some countries like Hungary. The demographic weight of Europe in the world continues to decrease at the same time, lengthening the life span leads to ageing populations. The problem is how to finance pensions, more numerous and longer, and health costs that increase with age. (BF-G-1994, p. 25)*

A final weakness highlighted concerns pollution problems which are exclusively present and systematically emphasised in the US textbooks. These difficulties concern acid rain, air pollution, the effects of global warming, water pollution but also clean up efforts and wildlife protection (figure 29). Environmental issues are linked to economic growth and to the relations

Figure 29: The representation of Europe as a polluted area in US textbooks



US-G-2008b, p. 279

between nature and societies.

### 3.5 A focus on French books that exemplifies the evanescent identity of Europe

In what follows focus is placed on the French vision of Europe (chosen for cost reasons and because of the ability to quickly source the necessary textbooks). Here we aim to check whether the general image of Europe as 'diverse' defines Europe as it is or whether such an image defines any continent or any country depicted on a regional scale. Rather than adopting a traditional descriptive approach, as provided by the individual textbooks, we decided instead to compare Europe's identity with that of the other continents by using textbooks edited by the same author and printed by the same publisher (Martin Ivernel editor, Hatier publisher), one devoted to Europe (the 8<sup>th</sup> level textbook/classe de 4<sup>ième</sup> in France - 2006), with the second focusing on the other continents (the 7<sup>th</sup> level textbook/classe de 5<sup>ième</sup> in France - 2005). This focus both reinforces and shades the conclusions above. So, we looked into the sequences of photos and maps representing each of the four continents studied: Africa, Asia, America, Europe, then into the texts: the titles and subtitles of the chapters plus the words underlined in the text and the topics specifically focused primarily by being given double page spreads, in order to check whether Europe is depicted in the same way as the other continents or not.

The comparison is relevant: according to the curriculum instructions approximately the same time must be spent on the study of each of the four continents: 4-6 hours for Europe, 5-6 hours for Asia, 6-7 hours for Africa, 6-7 hours for America, with the number of pages and maps in the textbooks being equivalent (though the number of photos is often very different). The depiction process, if not the order, is the same: the contrasts of the peopling, the cultural and natural diversity, the unequal development or wealth insist on the diversity of each of the continents while various facts characterise what can be considered as their identity. Except for Africa, whose identity is strongly emphasised, all the continents look display diverse as well as specific traits. This first conclusion can be extended to a regional representation made on a higher scale: in the textbook on Europe, each of the countries is described in both diverse and specific terms. This diversity and specificity is illustrated through texts, maps and photos. As to the maps, we noticed a kind of standard applied to each continent or country: topography, climate, demography, cities, wealth, religious and linguistic facts are always mapped.

Nevertheless, Europe's portrait is strongly differentiated from the others which is not surprising when looking at the instructions whose purposes are different. On the one hand, the aim is 'to present the European mosaic' and 'to explain the landscapes and the organisation of space'; on the other hand, it is 'to provide knowledge of the main features of the continents'; moreover, each of the other continents must be addressed following in the current evolution of the world.

According to the hypothesis that the first map and the first photo in a textbook are particularly significant, the title of the map concerning Europe is meaningless: 'Europe in 2006' (unless it means the fear of further political divisions as suggested in chapter 2.1: 'more and more countries'?) and its content, just representing location, is neutral while the maps of the other continents are meaningful: 'the problems in Africa', 'HDI in America', 'the countries of Asia and their populations'. The first photo reinforces this: 'Lagos, a great African city' (the photo shows the contrast between the CBD and the slums, the title suggests that this particular city is a model); 'rice-fields in Indonesia', 'the border between Mexico and the USA'. These two photos related to topics developed on double pages in the book are respectively symbolic of a traditional aspect of Asian culture and of the contrast in development between the two Americas (also shown on the first map). The first photo of Europe's book is a poster in Moscow that shows, if not emphasises, the victory of free trade: is that symbolic of the Europe and its people, of European culture, of specific social problems or is it just symbolic of the defeat of communism? When looking at all the photos of each of the books, the importance of a significant vision of Africa, Asia, America given through emblematic cities, through photos symbolising specific problems is obvious while, on the other hand, a neutral vision of Europe clearly emerges. Social disasters (8 photos), natural disasters (5 photos) respectively characterise



Africa and Asia; violent contrasts between the two Americas and inside each of the societies specify America (5 photos) while a single photo defines the major perceived European problem: immigration flows. These photos are very meaningful because they are related to topics that are developed across double or indeed multiple pages and maps. The plagues of Africa, through maps, photos and texts represent 32% of the pages dedicated to that continent; the natural disasters that strike Asia 14.5%; American social contrasts and discontinuities 20%; while immigration to Western Europe is afforded less than 8% of the total afforded to Europe.

We can note also, in terms of the iconography of Europe - both quantitative and qualitative - a certain deficiency. A single view of a city (the first photo in the book on Europe, a poster in Moscow, is not 'a view'), moreover neither is it symbolic of the EU (no reference to the EU can be seen on the photo or on the caption) and is weakly representative of the most famous European cities while the cities illustrating the other continents are likely chosen as models or at least refer to a collective image: Hong-Kong, Dubai and Shanghai, Lagos and Casablanca, New York and Quito. In addition two further aspects can be highlighted in this comparison.

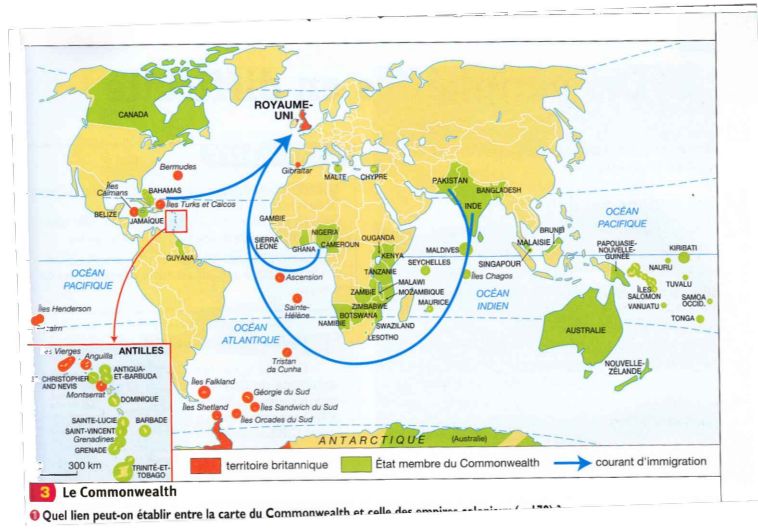
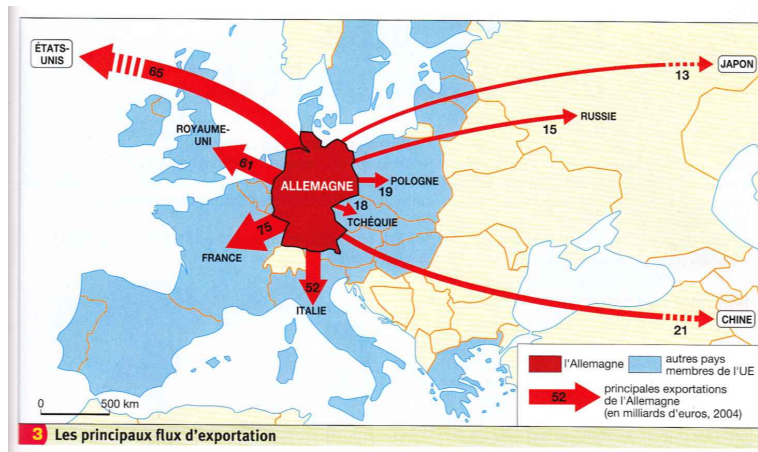
First, we notice the absence of any mention of the relations between the continents as if each of the continents was a closed world. This point of view is confirmed concerning the chapters focusing on France, Germany and the UK in the textbook dedicated to Europe (8<sup>th</sup> level). As such we can highlight a single allusion to the world attraction of Paris, a mention of the economic power of Germany ('the third power in the world behind the USA and Japan') illustrated by a map, and a graph showing British trade with the USA and with Europe (figure 3.5).

Only a few words are given about the world influence of London (Lloyd's is 'the first insurance company in the world') or of Rotterdam (ranked among the five largest harbours in the world), although a double page is dedicated to each of them in the book. The focus is placed on their role in Europe: a map shows the position of Rotterdam at the mouth of the Rhine river, or, in relation to London, on its renewal.

We could perhaps however expect that Europe - studied as a great power with the USA and Japan (in the textbook dedicated to the great powers, 9<sup>th</sup> level) - would no longer be represented as a closed world. Four world maps show the role of the USA in the world, one shows the trade partners of Japan in the world, another the trade flows in Pacific Asia while not one map illustrates the world dimension of Europe nor its relations with countries outside Europe. Moreover, on each of the 11 maps of Europe the borders of the states of the Union are drawn; on the other hand we note that state borders are drawn in only 1 of the 9 maps of the USA. There is no map of the EU as a territory; mapping Europe remains a task of mapping an association of contiguous states.

Secondly, we note that a geopolitical point of view is emphasised concern-

Figure 30: The positions of Germany and the UK in the world



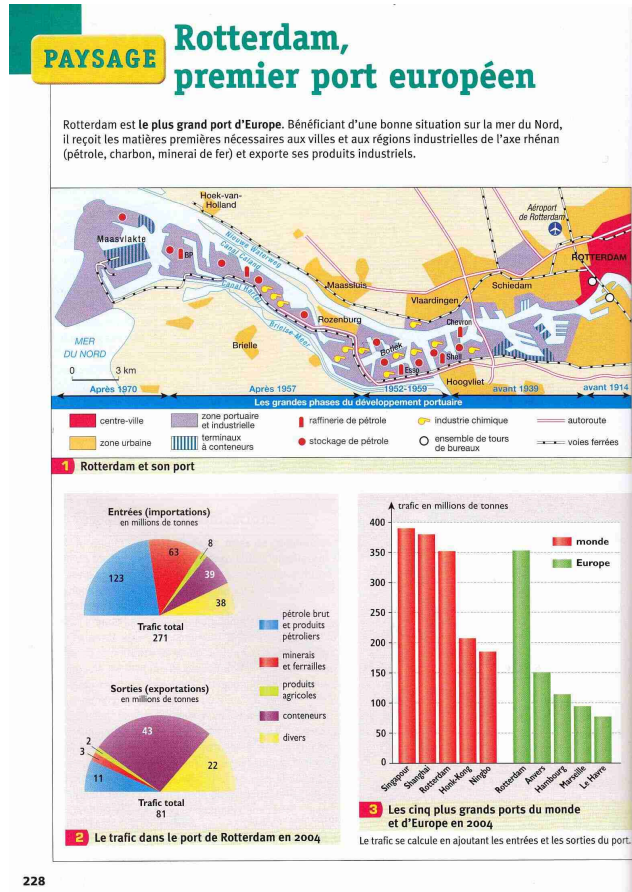
Fra-G-2006

ing Africa (3 pages, that is 12% of the chapter, on conflicts, wars, refugees, exodus) and concerning America (1 map on the economic and political influence of the USA on Latin America, 1 page on the political action of the Indians in America); it is less marked about Asia (a mention of rivalries and riots in the text, a mention of the main conflicts since 1990 on a map); Europe is ignored (inside geopolitical stakes as well as outside). Once again, the vision of Europe is clearly neutral. Neither is a geopolitical point of view taken into account when Europe is studied as a great power (9<sup>th</sup> level). While the military renewal of Japan (one text plus one photo) and its reconciliation with China and Korea (one text) are mentioned, while the military presence of the USA in the world and its political and military power are emphasised (maps, graphs, photos on 6 pages constituting 17% of the chapter on the USA), what is highlighted about Europe is the Turkish question and the absence of a common foreign policy, both shortly evoked.

The absence of the mapping the EU as a territory as well as that of photos symbolising Europe as a whole is noticeable. Nevertheless, in the 9<sup>th</sup> level book, a photo of the Ariane rocket launcher is supposed to exemplify European success while a view of Frankfurt CBD entitled 'The European megalopolis' (figure 22) is supposed to represent the core of Europe. These two photos are symbolic of Europe as a global power though a level of ambiguity remains over the label 'Europe' and what it actually entails.

Figure 31: The trading port of Rotterdam

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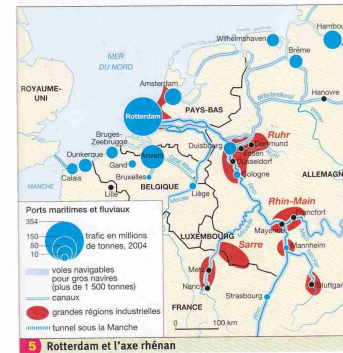


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**4 Le port dans le secteur de Botlek**  
1. Terre-plein. 2. Cuves de pétrole. 3. Bassin de déchargement. 4. Raffinerie de pétrole. 5. Nieuwe Waterweg. 6. Conteneurs.



**ACTIVITÉ**

1. Doc. 3 p. 215 et doc. 5 Dans quel pays et sur quelle mer se situe Rotterdam? À l'embouchure de quel fleuve?
2. Doc. 3 Quel est le rang de Rotterdam parmi les ports mondiaux? les ports européens?
3. Doc. 2 Quel est le principal produit importé (en tonnage)? Quels sont les principaux produits exportés?
4. Doc. 5 Expliquez l'importance du trafic de Rotterdam en vous servant de la carte.
5. Doc. 4 et 1 Durant quelle période la partie du port photographiée a-t-elle été aménagée?
6. Doc. 1 et 4 Dans le port, quels sont les industries et équipements liés à l'importation du pétrole?

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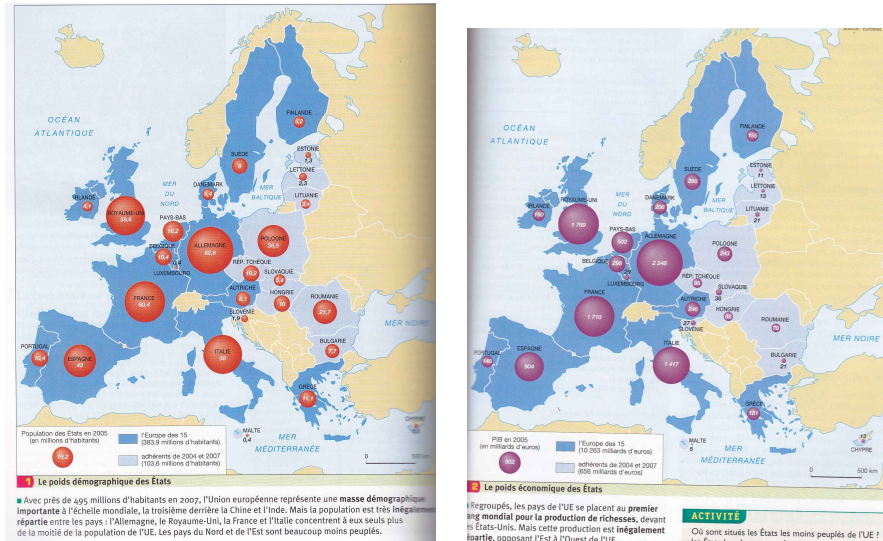
Fra-G-2006

When defining each of the three powers (9<sup>th</sup> book, §3), Europe is understood as an aggregate defined on the basis of demographic and economic criteria. It is depicted as ‘a great pole in the context of globalisation’, constituting ‘20% of global production’, with ‘a powerful and comprehensive industrial base’, with ‘great companies investing especially in the USA’, the second agricultural power in the world just ‘behind the USA’; it is also ‘the first trade power’.

As such, it is a superpower in spite of its high unemployment rate and its growing old age population. But even when considered in an aggregate sense (‘a demographic mass’, ‘the first wealth’, ‘as a whole’) Europe remains a collection of states as the maps and their captions show. Apart from a text titled ‘Erasmus, a European success’, these two pages focus on the economic identity of Europe (§2 and 4) as illustrated by almost all the words that are underlined: ‘common market’, ‘the firms may invest everywhere’, ‘the euro’, ‘a common agricultural policy’, etc. A single mention is made to the people *via* the Schengen treaty. This economic identity is reinforced in the following two pages which emphasise Europe as ‘an attractive space’ for investments and immigrants. Concerning tourism, as noted previously, there is once more an ambiguity about Europe: it is both an entity (‘the most toured space in the world’) and a juxtaposition of states ranked without considering whether they are European or not (figure 32). Europe is also shown as an institution (§1 and 5) with actors, rules, treaties and policies being focused on economic purposes. The construction of this institution is still in progress: the European construction is evoked from its birth (‘1957: the birth of the EEC’) to its future (‘the stakes of the extension’). But the words do not narrate a political or utopian enterprise, but rather a sequence of treaties: Roma, Maastricht, Nice and the constitutional treaty. Europe is reduced to an economic space aggregating many states, a political process grounding this economic power, a union of partners rather than a territory. Except in a single occurrence (‘in many matters Europe is not unified’), Europe is always named the EU. How could a union that focuses on economic purposes be a territory? How could its identity be pictured, how could it be clear?

Moreover, this ambiguous image of Europe is reinforced by representing the same matter differently on each of the different levels. In the 7<sup>th</sup> level book, we note a double page spread focused on resources in America’s chapter, a map of resources and industrial regions in Africa’s chapter, information on industrial power and flows in a map of Asia (titled ‘Rich and poor countries in Asia’), while no map of European industry and resources is provided in the 8<sup>th</sup> book. A single view of an industrial site - Rotterdam - analysed across a double page spread while Asia and America get, respectively, 4 and 3 views. Does industry no longer concern Europe? A glance at the chapters dedicated to each of the European countries shows the contrary. Industry (through texts, photos, maps) represents approximately 11% of the pages dedicated to Germany, 12.5% to Russia, 10% to France, 7% to Italy, 3% to

Figure 32: The EU as a collection of States



Fra-G-2007

Spain and an unlikely - given its reliance on services and financial services in particular - 20% to the UK. Reference to industrial issues here is however generally related to broader concerns such as environmental and social problems rather than to power status *per se*. In addition, such references primarily concern Eastern Europe and Russia. Industrial sites in Western Europe are generally new according to the photos. European industry is however important as a demonstration of the global power of Europe (9<sup>th</sup> level textbook). Thus, Airbus and Ariane exemplify on 2.5 pages (more than 10% of the chapter devoted to the EU) 'the European success'.

The same ambiguity can be detected in respect of Europe's position in the world. Europe appears, in respect of its spatial success, as a unity in the 9<sup>th</sup> book. As to the other matters, the book represents the world influence of France in a chapter titled 'France, Europe and the world'. Thus, military and cultural influence is mapped; commercial influence is represented *via* photos which introduce the chapter. Last but not least, ambiguous in spite of its world influence, France appears in the 8<sup>th</sup> level book somewhat ambiguously, as both a rural or touristic country and as a modern country: agriculture and countryside (11 photos), tourism (8 photos), industrial places (8 photos), towns and cities (12 photos); communications networks get 3 photos while natural and industrial risks get 4 photos.

These statements cannot be extended to the other European countries without thoroughly analysing their textbooks, but perhaps one reason why Europe's identity suffers from such ambiguity relates to the weak coherence



of its national textbooks. Given that geography teaching is often based on different paradigms and is designed to pursue different, and often not necessary coherent, goals, it is clear that they are unlikely to provide a clear image of Europe.

## Conclusions

This survey concerning the teaching of Europe through the study of textbooks collected in various countries allows us to draw several conclusions. How the geography of Europe is taught depends on two main factors: the weight of different paradigms on the one hand and the proximity of the country to Europe on the other. Consequently, the teaching of Europe often vacillates between different geographical paradigms and attempts to pursue several educational goals at once. Thus, in most countries, the vision of Europe given by the textbooks is markedly ambiguous. Actually, several epistemological registers are used to characterise Europe, each inducing a specific ideological prism. In all textbooks, Europe appears evanescent and elusive.

In most countries, Europe is typically presented as a continent, that is to say an area supposed to be limited by natural borders, even if these limits actually depend on perceptions ingrained in the collective imagination. This natural approach effectively reduces Europe to a set of physical landmarks which in turn contributes to its de-politicisation, despite the uncertainty and the geopolitical stakes that prevail concerning the fraught issue of whether countries such as Russia or Turkey 'belong'.

A second register focuses on the historical approach, mixing a providential and a linear vision of the past of Europe, driving it to the advent of peace and of democracy, and a nostalgic and folklore-based vision of a supposed 'European way of life', founded upon the perpetuation of traditions and on the emphasising of old and picturesque city centres. Questioning the historicity of Europe would involve questioning the agents, the ideas and the philosophical background of any political choice. Such a questioning is no longer expected in the current textbooks, while it was addressed in the past, at least in history and literature books. Does the 'idea of Europe' - referring to hope and a somewhat utopian future as perceived by philosophers and writers - still exist? We found little or no trace of this in the studied textbooks. Nevertheless, it is important to underline that the survey primarily concerned geography textbooks. Perhaps a rather different vision of Europe could be found from literature and history books?

Thirdly, the terminological confusion between Europe and the European Union remains very common: in this case, the focus is placed on the EU's perceived symbols, namely, peace and its main achievements such as the free circulation of goods, people and services or on the common currency. Gov-

ernance problems are also mentioned through the prism of ‘euroscepticism’. The debate about the failed referendums on the European treaties, the increasing level of popular defiance against the perceived ‘technocracy’ of the EU and against some neoliberal policies is omitted. Moreover, the geopolitical problems in the Balkans are often presented as an example of the EU’s powerlessness. Europe is not presented as weak but its power is primarily viewed through the economic prism (in industry, agriculture or tourism), technological advances and in relation to its perceived high quality of life. On the other hand, the problems related to immigration and to population ageing are often presented as ongoing future threats.

The identity of Europe thus appears somewhat unclear. When comparing the identity of Europe with that of the other continents in the same educational context as France, we note that the vision of Europe is basically neutral while the vision of other continents is much more expressive. Thus, contrary to initial expectations, the image of the near, in the textbooks, is less clear than the image of the far. But, in accordance with valorising the ‘self’ and de-valorising the ‘foreign’, social and political problems are more or less, though rather more than less, erased from Europe while they are acutely emphasised abroad.

Textbooks do not foster the discussion about what Europe could or indeed should be for future citizens. This perspective does not consider Europe as a major geopolitical stake for current societies but, rather, it tends to reduce it to a depoliticised, academic and stereotypical topic. Thus, Europe is often depicted as a given object, based on some aspects (relief, climate, demography, traditional cultures, economic activities, etc.) whose only common point is to be located within the conventional boundaries usually used to define Europe. This tautological approach refers to the legacy of the regional school of geography which is still present if not hegemonic in a number of countries, including non-European countries such as Brazil and the United States. The perpetuation of this classical approach to the teaching of the geography of Europe can be explained by the fact that it is easier for pupils to deal with and the risk of provoking political controversies is much reduced. This search for an ideological consensus can be seen as the main reason for the continuing ambiguity in respect of how Europe is taught to pupils.

This major fact does not depend on the geographical context of teaching; rather, it concerns both European and third countries. The importance of this regional approach tends however to decrease in some countries such as India, Sweden and, more recently, France. Thus, the main difference between countries concerns the volume devoted to Europe in the presentation of the world: non-European countries tend to give less importance to Europe compared to the rest of the world and they naturally emphasise their own country. This was of course to be expected and it should not be considered as the main conclusion of this survey. Basically, it seems more relevant to highlight the overall de-politicisation of the teaching of Europe in



most countries. This can perhaps best be explained by the fact that pupils are not commonly encouraged, in the teaching of geography, to discuss the political and ideological bases of territorial projects such as the European construction.

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