

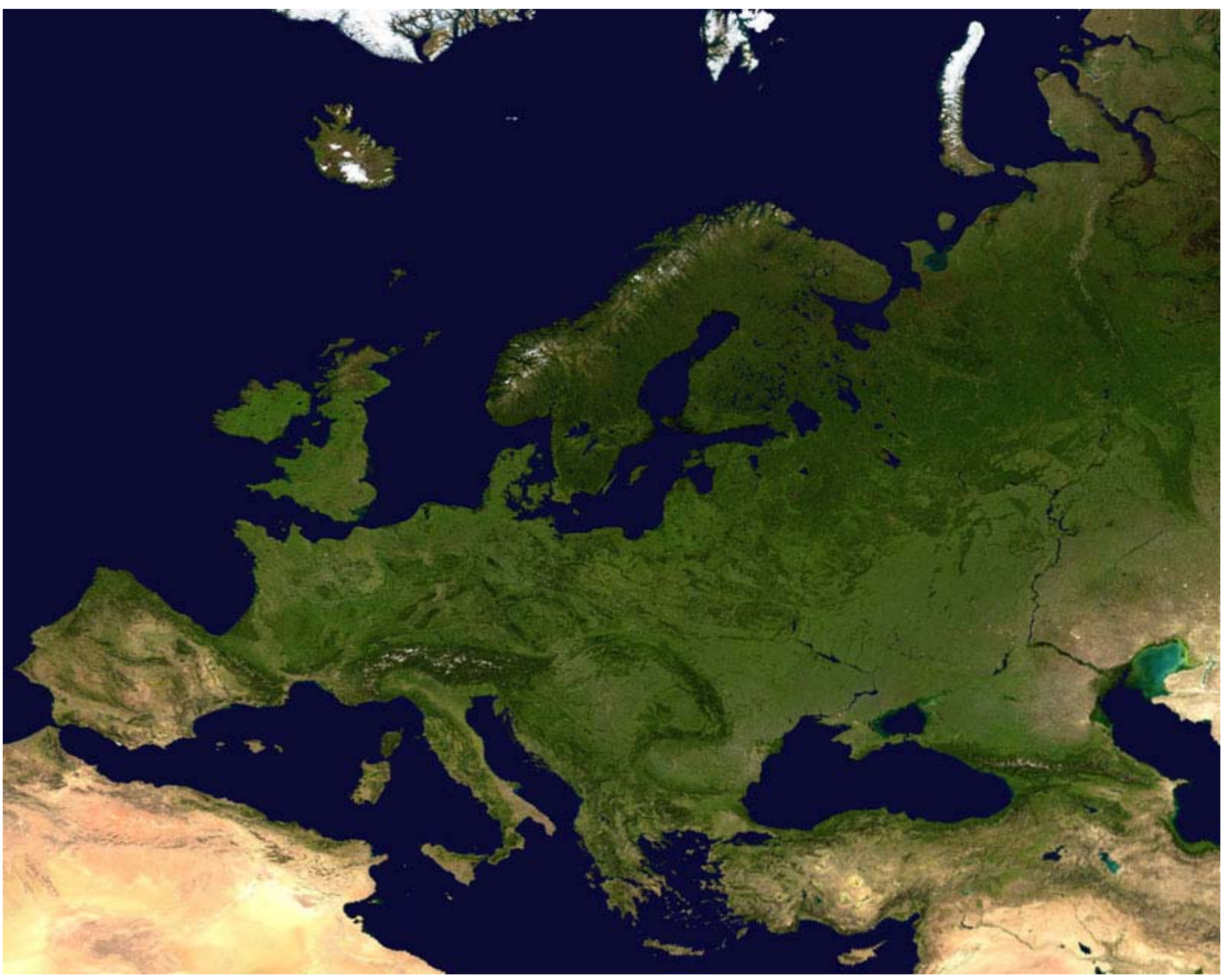
European geography and what it can do for the future: the case of a bi-communal project in divided Cyprus

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Exploring Europe and Ourselves:
Geographies and Identities at Work



Geography Education and 'Europe': sociology of curriculum theoretical background

- Geography as a social studies subject favoured for inclusion in many European countries' curricula since the 19th century as part of the modernist project of nation-building and construction of national identities
- More recently the European Union and the Council of Europe have associated in their policies Geography as a school-subject with the pursuit of a European dimension in education and the enhancement of a European identity and citizenship



This discussion may begin to frame our understanding of how the concept of 'Europe' becomes all the more complex in the case of Cyprus, an island lying in the Eastern Mediterranean and very close to Asia proper, part of the Byzantine and Ottoman Empires at different historical periods, lying at the margins of traditional geographical definitions of Europe but also of the Middle East, a space of cultural crossings and exchanges, where East and West; North and South; Christianity, Judaism and Islam have met, co-existed and conflicted each other, as evidenced by its ongoing division.



'Exploring Europe and Ourselves: Geographies and Identities at Work'

- Bi-communal project in Cyprus
- Conducted by the Department of Education Sciences (EUC) and POST-Research Institute
- Funded by the United Nations Development Programme-Action for Cooperation and Trust
- Supported by Teacher Trade Unions across the divide, HERODOT and two NGOs
- July 2007-October 2008



Aims of the presentation

- To provide an overview of the project so as to explore
- How comparative research on European geography across the divide can provide a forum for reconciliation and transcending divisions in Cyprus, thus contributing to the future
- How shared problems and concerns on European geography teaching and learning can provide the ground for bi-communal teacher training and teaching materials development on 'Europe' in Cyprus
- Discuss the role of HERODOT in this project and for the future prospects of Geography



Phase 1:

- Knowledge base outlining the position, scope, content and status of the subject of geography in school education across the divide
- Comparative analysis of representations of 'Europe' in Greek-Cypriot and Turkish-Cypriot curricula (textbooks, pupils' books, teachers' books) for primary and secondary education
- Content analysis, term analysis, map analysis of relevant documents:
 - GC: 18 books (2106 pages) for Grades 1-8
 - TC: 13 books (2162 pages) for Grades 1-10(-12)



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Some findings from Phase 1:

- The GC curriculum includes much more content on Europe (than other geographical areas) than the TC one
- Most maps in GC textbooks were European (34.03%) and Cyprus was shown as not-divided
- Very few European maps in TC textbooks (3.62%) and all maps of Cyprus illustrate it as divided
- Fewer references to ‘Europe’ in TC textbooks than GC textbooks
- In both cases the content ascribed to ‘Europe’ denotes more frequently material aspects and less frequently content which refers to people and their activity (as individuals or as a ‘European’ group)
 - Different representations of Europe as a geographical, political, economic, cultural, historical entity



Phase 2: Needs assessment

- needed to ground teacher training within teachers' needs as reported by themselves
- Quantitative Data: Survey
 - 460 questionnaires mailed to each GC primary and lower secondary school; one educator of a specific grade in each school filled in the questionnaire and mailed it back; response rate of 53,82%
 - Personal dissemination of questionnaire via Teacher Trade Unions to TC schools
- Qualitative Data:
 - Two Focus group and individual teacher interviews on each side



Some Findings from Phase II:

Agreement between GC and TC participants as to

- whether and how much each European region should be studied
- as to the degree various domains of Physical geography should be studied
- as to the domains of Europe's Environmental Geography that need to be studied
- as to perceived emphasis needed for geographical skills

Differences in what aspects of European Human Geography to study (different priorities for each community)



- Greater extent to which GC agree that Cyprus relations with rest of Europe, cultural and interculturalism (language, religion), social issues and problems, identity and citizenship issues and migration should be studied
- Greater extent to which TC agree that economic, communication and demographic issues as well as Europe's relations with the rest of the world should be studied
- Agreement over less importance for political topics



Phase 3: Teacher Training

- 140 Turkish Cypriot and Greek Cypriot geography educators came to together to discuss issues on European geography teaching and learning
- To approach the concept of Europe in more flexible and open-ended ways, ways which allowed them
 - to challenge 'Fortress Europe',
 - to locate Cyprus within Europe while recognising its multicultural historical past,
 - by defining Europe in geographical, but also in cultural, historical, economic and political terms whilst acknowledging the constructedness of these definitions.



Phase 3: Teacher Training

- Took place in Nicosia, Cyprus on 1-2 February 2008
- Three keynote speakers presentations and workshops:
 - Karl Donert: *Spatial learning for the young European citizen: a Geography toolkit*
 - John Halocha: *Defining 'Europe': Does geography have the answers?*
 - Maria Villanueva: *From a Europe of emigrants to a Europe of immigration. What do we mean when we say 'European'?*



Phase 4: Teaching materials development and dissemination to all schools across the divide

- GC and TC teachers worked on developing 3 lesson plans and corresponding worksheets:
 - Exploring the most Eastern city in the European Union with the use of virtual globes: Famagusta
 - Are European Sports Events necessary? The case of Euro 2008
 - Running out of energy: Cyprus and the EU as case studies.



-Example of Activity from Lesson 1: Photo of Famagusta (The Ghost City)



- 'Using' geography for other 'good' causes e.g. reconciliation in Cyprus?

Discussion

Geography in this project as useful:

- in exploring the different definitions of 'Europe' over time and space
- in illustrating the constructedness of 'Europe' and 'Europeans'
- in highlighting the changing criteria we use to define it or countries 'inside' or 'outside'
- in introducing a European dimension to school curricula in inclusive ways
- in providing the epistemological and methodological tools to show how geophysical features or human geographies etc transcend political, economic and social 'boundaries'



- to explore European (as social-ethnocultural) identities as hybrid, multiple, changing and inclusive (*postmodern and postcolonial critique*): what better example than Cyprus?
- to explore European and Cypriot citizenship (as political and economic identities) as shared
- to indicate the potential of Geography as a space of research and training to transcend political divisions
- to contribute in imagining a shared future in Cyprus and in Europe.



Acknowledgements

The role of HERODOT

Ευχαριστούμε
Teşekkür ederiz
Thank you



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