



CONSTRUCTING THE SOCIALIST HOMELAND AND PATRIOTISM WITH GEOGRAPHY

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ABSTRACT

The Romanian socialism spanned over a long period (1948-1989), transforming and shaping the education system so as to accommodate and promote communist ideology. Drawing on expert advice from several didactics of geography published during socialist Romania, on how to use propaganda information in geography classes, I employed discourse analysis to show that this process of ideologizing education was a conscious endeavour of didactics of geography authors. One of their aims was to enable geography teachers to construct discursively and visually the socialist nation and socialist patriotism during geography classes. Moreover, propaganda, according to the analysed sources, considered Geography of Romania classes as the main means to present socialist achievements to students and further introduce political messages to them.

Keywords: didactics of geography, geography education, visual imagery, patriotic education, communist ideology and propaganda

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STATE OF THE ART

The Romanian socialism spanned over a long period (1948-1989), strongly impacting citizens' life in all fields as a result of communist leaders' efforts to create materially and discursively the socialist nation and national communism (Demaitre, 1969; Tismăneanu, 2005; Morar-Vulcu, 2007; Copilaş, 2015). Education systems are key players in the formation and development of cultural representations, and school textbooks are a powerful medium to communicate them to students and teachers. For teachers, in Romania, as early as the first decade of the 20th century, books were published on how to realise geography education (cf. Popescu, 1907). Many more and elaborated ones were produced especially during socialist Romania (Dulamă & Ilovan, 2017).

However, studies on how geography education should be or has been done in Romania, from historical or interdisciplinary perspectives, are quite recent (Caramelea, 2015; Ilovan, 2024a). In this country, research on the development of geography education considered especially the period from the 18th century to 1989 (Stănescu & Bărgăuanu, 1977; Dulamă & Ilovan, 2015; Ilovan et al., 2019), with a special focus on the communist period (Dulamă & Ilovan, 2017; Ilovan, 2024a).

Therefore, in Romania, besides a present strong trend in research on environmental education and learning geography online (Ilovan et al., 2018; Rus et al., 2019; Buda et al., 2020), or the one represented by the growing number of studies on using innovative teaching methods to learn geography (Ciineanu et al., 2020; Conțiu & Conțiu, 2010, 2013a, 2013b; Conțiu et al., 2022), in research on geography education more attention has been paid by Romanian authors to how space is produced (cf. Lefebvre, 1974/1991) both materially and discursively in varied historical periods.



In this vein, many recent studies explore how geography education has been shaped especially during the development of communism in Romania (Ilovan, 2018, 2020a, 2021, 2022, 2024a; Ilovan et al., 2018). Such research showed how space was constructed materially and visually, and how its consumption was shaped by communist propaganda. It also showed that the construction and then use of *cultural representations* had a significant role for the building of national territorial identities and people's overall perceptions of the society (cf. Anderson, 1983; Agnew, 2013). Also, in our research, the concept of *representation* was relevant in the study of *spatial representations*, as constructed through discourse in schools or through the material landscape of the certain place (Hall, 1997; Dubow, 2009; Söderström, 2010; Anderson, 2019; Ilovan, 2024b). Previous research on the discursive construction of nation and national identities emphasised the role of cultural representations in this process (De Cillia et al., 1999; Bhabha, 1990; Archard, 1993), an aim that was successfully achieved also in the case of constructing the Romanian socialist nation, especially through propaganda (Morar-Vulcu, 2007; Ilovan, 2024a).

Studies at the international level demonstrate that geography education was shaped by school textbooks aligned with ideologies of the period; they were created to reflect the hegemonic discourse of the political system (Hajdú & Paasi, 1995; Fedotova et al., 2014; Bagoly-Simó, 2018; Shinabe, 2018). The roles of textbooks in school and society are strongly connected (Venezky, 1992), previous research exploring this subject mainly when considering the construction of nation states (Hooson, 1994; Williams, 2014). For Romanian geography studies, in recent years, special attention was paid to the relationship between propaganda and geography textbooks in the formation of the Romanian socialist nation (Ilovan et al., 2018, Ilovan, 2024a) and the impact of previous cultural representations on the contemporary discourse about the territorial identity of Romania (Ilovan, 2020b). The alignment of socialism and education had a communication function in communist Romania, in order to contribute to the construction and control of social consciousness. In fact, textbooks were already defined as such tools in previous publications about geography education in both communist and non-communist states, where knowledge and truth were socially and politically laden (Paasi, 2000):

[...] it is education systems that serve as primary institutional conduits for dominant, even hegemonic narratives imbuing geographic space with sociocultural meaning. Textbooks [...] can be vital vessels for the transmission of pedagogies of space (Silova et al., 2014, p. 122);

[...] textbooks of geography are one mirror of the dominant ideologies of a nation(-state), they are crucial in the construction of the narrative of a nation (Paasi, 2000, p. 18).

Recent research explored geography education through textbook images (Silova et al., 2014; Kucerova et al., 2018; Ilovan & Merciu, 2021). Nevertheless, besides images in school textbooks, more diverse visual imagery created the development discourse at the country level. For Romania, territorial development was reflected by picture postcards and even by comics for communist pioneers, images and accompanying text which rendered the long-term process construction realised by communist propaganda for the territorial identity of Romania (Ilovan, 2018, 2020a, 2021, 2022; Ilovan et al., 2018). Thus, spatial and cultural identities were constructed through written and visual representations of space (Ilovan, 2020a, 2024a).

Against this theoretical background on cultural representations and, more specifically, on the use of communist propaganda ideology in the study of Geography of Romania, I further explored this topic, this time focusing on the role of didactics of geography produced in socialist Romania. Thus, this article proceeds with a methodology section, detailing the research material and the method for data analysis and interpretation. It continues with the results and discussion section and ends with brief conclusions and further research ideas.

METHODOLOGY

Research Material

Several didactics of geography from the socialist period of Romania were analysed. I considered the provided didactic advice for the lessons on the *Geography of Romania*. These books are the following:



- Ardeleanu, V., Bărgăoanu, P., Bender, C., Ghibedea, V., Ionescu, N., Onofrei, V., Popeangă, V., Roșca, I. Șuțu, M., Teodorescu, Gh., Țircovnicu, V., Valașek, & I., Vulcu, B. (1964). *Metodică. Predarea Geografiei în școala generală de 8 ani* [Methodics. Teaching Geography in the 8 Years Gymnasium]. Editura Didactică și Pedagogică.
- Erdeli, V.G. (1950). *Metodica geografiei. Prelucrare din limba rusă* [Methodics of Geography. Processed after the Russian Language Publication]. Editura Cartea "Rusă".
- Dăneț, O., Enache, M., & Olănescu, E. (1984). *Metodica predării geografiei la clasele V-VIII* [Methodics of Teaching Geography for the 5th to the 8th Grade]. Editura Didactică și Pedagogică.
- Stoica, D., & Bușe, L. (1985). *Metodica predării geografiei la clasele I-IV. Manual pentru clasa a XI. Licee pedagogice* [Methodics of Teaching Geography for the 1st to 4th Grades. Textbook for the 11th Grade. Pedagogical High Schools]. Editura Didactică și Pedagogică.
- Mândruț, O., Ungureanu, V., & Mierlă, I. (1982). *Metodica predării geografiei la clasele IX-XII* [Methodics of Teaching Geography for the 9th to the 12th Grade]. Editura Didactică și Pedagogică.

In addition, other sources such as the following were considered because of their influence in the period (Dăneț et al., 1984, p. 45; Stănescu & Bărgăoanu, 1977; Ilovan, 2020; Ilovan, 2024a):

- Consiliul Național al Organizației Pionierilor [National Council of the Pioneers' Organisation] [CNOP] (1985). *Ghidul Pionierului* [The Pioneer's Guide]. Întreprinderea Poligrafică "Bucureștii Noi".
- Cucu, V., Ilie, I.D. (1977). Evenimente de însemnătate deosebită în viața poporului nostru [Highly Significant Events in the Life of Our People]. *Terra*, 9(2), 3-7.

The first one – *The Pioneer's Guide* – was useful in finding educational advice about the topics of the Geography of Romania textbooks, while the second source is relevant for the contents of *Terra*, the scientific journal of all geographers in Romania, read at the national level (both pre-university and university levels) (for the relevance of *Terra* in this respect, cf. Nedelcu, 1977).

Method. Data Analysis and Interpretation

Discourse analysis was employed, first to identify key ideas in teaching geography and then to interpret the respective ideas connected to the political ideology of the period. Discourse analysis (Bowers & Iwi, 1993; Cook, 2008; Gee, 2014; Jorgensen & Phillips, 2002; Popa & Dulamă, 2017; Potter, 2008) is one of the most appropriate and useful methods to deconstruct the persuasive narratives of communist propaganda, which used the educational system as a tool to build the socialist nation (Ilovan, 2024a).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents my findings after the analysis of the materials referring to geography education and patriotism or love for a particular nation: the socialist one. Other topics in connection with geography education during the Romanian socialism will be presented in a future article.

Ideology is (re)produced by language and then used in educational products. Katherine Verdery argues that, during socialism, Romanian intellectuality was very much concerned with defining national identity and national values, as much as the political class. Who educates the teachers was a matter of political ideology during that period (Tudor, 1981). Verdery underlines the influence of communist perspectives in producing knowledge and constructing reality through textbooks:

- The stakes are who gets to write the school textbooks that present a particular vision of reality, or to produce an official history, or to define the literary 'canon', or to render the lineage of philosophical knowledge (Verdery, 1991, p. 94).
[...] schoolbooks must now omit the fairy tales of the Brothers Grimm and include only Romanian historical legends and myths (Verdery, 1991, p. 125).

Against this ideological background, during the socialist period, *in Romania, the positivist approach to geography* was leading because one of the declared aims of teaching geography was "forming a



geographical language [...] enabling the *clear and true expression of the geographical reality*" (Mândruț et al., 1982, p. 6; *my underlining*). This was rendered also through the way images in teaching Geography (photographs, films, diapositives, etc.) were perceived – as being truthful about the reality they were representing and not constructing that reality. Here are some quotations from books on the didactics of geography, published during the socialist period in Romania that support the idea that images in school textbooks reflect reality as it is:

Photographs¹ after nature have always raised students lively interest, being an undebatable proof of the exactness of the communicated information (Erdeli, 1950, p. 178); [...] they render truthfully and clearly what exists in reality Or Well coloured slides also render a correct image of the real colours in nature (Erdeli, 1950, p. 184); Slides and films have the following advantages they offer a clear and truthful image of geographical objects; they are attractive, ... they ensure all students' active participation; understanding phenomena even without much explanation, the emotion of authentic exploration; audio-visual materials: ensure the entrance in school of the accurate image of the world, understanding in detail geographical phenomena and processes in different moments of their unfolding (Dăneț et al., 1984, p. 43); Films and TV images give the clear and truthful image of geographical phenomena and objects (Stoica & Bușe, 1985, p. 27); [...] they should have correct scientific contents, they should nor include misrepresentations and errors, which would determine a wrong reflection of reality into students' mind (Dăneț et al., 1984, p. 37).

In order for *geographical education to foster students' patriotism*, spatial imagery can be in the form of progressive goals (the nation) and regressive goals (excluding the Other) (Paasi, 2020). In Romania, one of the most visited topics in didactics of geography was that of *patriotism*. In 1950, in a translation into Romanian of a Soviet didactics of geography, Romanian teachers were told that patriotism could be built through "studying the geography of the Homeland because it makes students feel more acutely the particularities of nature and the beauties of the USSR" (Erdeli, 1950, p. 176). Later, patriotism was equalled to knowing and loving the country, the people, the Romanian Communist Party, and the Supreme Leader (Ilovan, 2020a, 2024a). During the socialist period, besides geographical knowledge, Geography classes were supposed to transmit also other types of knowledge, because education in general and the geographical one in particular, were politicised, as the following excerpt from *Terra* scientific journal showed:

Romanian geography at the 30th celebration of the republic. Achievements and future tasks

The documents of the recent National Conference of the Romanian Communist Party, along the ones of the 11th Congress of the Party, include orientations of an exceptional importance for the social-economic development in the five years of the technical-scientific revolution (1976-1980) and in the future. Many target the geographical education system and research, activity fields that should be still anchored on the line of making our youth more sensitive concerning the dialectal knowledge and interpretation of geographical objects, phenomena and facts to get to know the country, developing patriotism, forming and educating the young generations through and for work (Cucu & Ilie, 1977, p. 3).

Or the following similar advice in didactics of geography for high school, emphasizing the need to include communist ideology in the teaching of the Geography of Romania:

Meetings through which the young and the people of Romania, the workers want peace (in this vein, examples will be given, quoted from the Party's policy, expressed on the occasion of many speeches delivered by comrade Nicolae Ceaușescu); Watching certain films and other shows dedicated to the Party, as well as participating at the "Cântarea României" [Celebration of Romania/literally, Song [of praise] to Romania] festival; visiting the Museum for the History of the Romanian Communist Party and of the revolutionary and democratic movement in Romania, visiting the Doftana Museum, the Museum for the History of the Socialist Republic of Romania, etc.; Creating certain habits for students, such as reading the printed media and integrate in the lesson documents referring to the Party's policy in all sectors of the economic, social, political, and cultural-educational life (Mândruț et al., 1982, p. 4).

¹ All translations from Romanian into English were realised by the author.



This conception about the role of geographical education serving political ideology started in the primary grades and continued through all stages. During high school years, the aim of Geography is to form “the scientific, materialist-dialectic conception of the students” (Mândruț et al., 1982, p. 12). The didactics of geography were quite clear about the examples that teachers should use in order to answer this educational aim of the *Geography of Romania* classes:

The educational message of the geography classes, as well as of the educational actions (mentioned above) stimulates and raises on a superior level the attachment to and love for the Romanian Communist Party, towards the beloved leader – comrade Nicolae Ceaușescu. From both an ideological and ethical point of view, these feelings are at the basis of forming and developing students’ socialist consciousness, cultivating their respect for the Party, as well as their wish to become members of the Romanian Communist Party (Mândruț et al., 1982, p. 5).

According to these Didactics of Geography, school should be reconsidered and reformed in socialism, reflected in the accelerated rhythm of territorial development, based on change and innovation (Mândruț et al., 1982, p. 5). Under such circumstances, the youth had to be “multilaterally” trained so that they could integrate easily into the labour processes and into the socialist society (Mândruț et al., 1982, p. 5).

Students’ patriotic education is socialist and is considered the task of the entire Romanian education system as a whole (Mândruț et al., 1982, p. 13):

Patriotic education is an essential part of students’ multilateral education, a basic part of defining their social-civic profile. Therefore, educating students in the spirit of the high ideals of socialist patriotism is a major aim of the entire educational system (Mândruț et al., 1982, p. 13).

Students’ patriotic education is defined by education that enforces “attachment and love for the country, the Party and the people” (Mândruț et al., 1982, p. 13) and in this spirit it is a fact that “any geography lesson is one of patriotic education for the students” (Mândruț et al., 1982, p. 13). Geography is considered to have a “vocation for patriotic education”, besides History and Romanian language and literature – they are the nucleus of this education type (Mândruț et al., 1982, p. 12). For high school, *the Geography of the Socialist Republic of Romania* is considered the most important of these three disciplines (Mândruț et al., 1982, pp. 13-14):

The great changes, as never before, during the stage that our people undergoes, are to be distinguished through the new qualitative requests in the field of increasing and modernising production forces, in organising the society, in developing democracy, as well as in developing the socialist consciousness and the creation of the New Man. Accomplishing tasks of such large breadth intensifies even more the leading role of the Party in all fields of economic, social, political, and cultural-scientific life. These imperatives reflect in teaching geography in schools, grounding the contents of geographical subject matters and their formative features. A special value in *forming and developing the socialist revolutionary patriotism*, by cultivating the love for and attachment to the Party, belongs to the geography of the homeland lessons (the 12th grade), their contents reflecting the Romanian Communist Party’s policy of creating the socialist society, multilaterally developed and of Romania’s progression towards communism (Mândruț et al., 1982, p. 17; *my emphasis*).

It is also underlined that Geography and History are complementary, while Romanian language and literature and social-political knowledge have their special contribution to students’ patriotic education (Mândruț et al., 1982, p. 13). The knowledge system about the homeland includes the land, the people and the economy (that transforms nature) (Mândruț et al., 1982, p. 13).

Geography teacher’s role is to translate students’ “knowledge achievement into forming patriotic convictions” (Mândruț et al., 1982, p. 13). In this respect, learning about the achievements of the country is paramount (Mândruț et al., 1982, p. 13). *Certain topics were given more attention than others*, and this was obvious in the indications given to Geography teachers. Among *the Geography topics recommended for special attention* are the following:



[...] systematisation of settlements; the study of hydrographical basins aiming at their complex arrangement (Mândruț et al., 1982, p. 6); the urban network and its territorial balanced features; the stages in the development of the urban network; the economic development basic features of the Socialist Republic of Romania and future issues; superior exploitation of energetic and mineral resources; territorial repartition of industry (on industrial branches and groups) (Mândruț et al., 1982, p. 14);

The aim of this topic is to show students the fundamental changes that the towns in our homeland have undergone during the socialist regime and their strong development. (...) photocompositions and albums with images from our towns, especially with the new residential areas, with new towns, buildings and new factories, filmstrips (Ardeleanu et al., 1964, p. 152); Industry and its development during our regime (revision lesson); increasing the coal production during our socialist regime (Ardeleanu et al., 1964, p. 155);

Present towns of our homeland; yesterday and today in our village (town-neighbourhood) (Dăneț et al., 1984, p. 38).

In the Didactics of Geography, teachers were advised where to look for information and one may understand the heavy-laden ideological approach to geography education:

These [high responsibility tasks] result from the Party and state documents, from the speeches delivered by the general secretary of the Romanian Communist Party, comrade Nicolae Ceaușescu, at the 12th Congress of the Romanian Communist Party, at the Congress on Education and on the Educational System and at the Working Meeting on organisational and political-educational work from the 2nd and 3rd of August.

In the following we present the most important tasks of the geographical education system in order to require geography teachers' permanent attention, as these tasks are priorities in achieving the educational objectives established by the Party for the present stage: forming the materialist-scientific conception about the world through dialectical understanding and interpretation of mechanism, causes and inter-conditionings between the natural environment and the human society; forming a 'geographical culture' by assimilating a system of fundamental knowledge concerning the geography of our planet (as a whole), of continents, countries and first of all of our homeland; students' patriotic education by getting to know the beauty and richness of our country, of its economic and social achievements and of Romania's development perspectives, envisioned in the Party Programme and in the documents issued by the 12th Congress of the Romanian Communist Party; cultivating the feelings of love for and attachment to the Romanian Communist Party by getting to know the main aspects concerning the present and future economic and social development of our homeland, as a reflection of the Party's policy of raising Romania on the heights of civilization and progress; developing the feeling of friendship among peoples, by understanding the geographical characteristic features of other countries, of international collaboration and cooperation in the field of rational preservation and capitalization of land resources and as a whole, and by underlining the contribution of our country to solving present problems of the contemporary world; forming and developing students' intellectual capacities (of assimilation, transfer, scientific investigation, etc.) that allow students' independent achievement of geographical knowledge, explaining causes and the interdependences between the natural environment and the human factor (Mândruț et al., 1982, p. 5).

Memorisation of information was a significant aim of geographical education during the communist period, with a significant impact on how geography was perceived (i.e., as an encyclopaedic science that encourages memorisation):

It is advisable that students care about learning and memorising as many phenomena, data, and names as possible because through this they amplify the knowledge volume about our country (Mândruț et al., 1982, p. 15); images help "memorising the material to be learnt" (Erdeli, 1950, p. 174).

As it results from the following didactic advice, *the Romanian homeland was equalled to the Romanian Communist Party*:

Thus, by learning the geography of our homeland we must pay attention to forming to our students certain attitudes and convictions such as: respect for the previous generations' activity, progressive civic attitude towards to beauties, richness and achievements of our country, disapproving attitude towards the trials of mystifying the realities of our country, the love for and attachment to the Romanian Communist Party, towards



the native land and to the homeland, fighting certain manifestations of wasting natural resources (Mândruț et al., 1982, p. 15).

The homeland was equalled with the Romanian Communist Party's achievements, and referred to the country's material heritage, where the construction of socialism is proved through progress:

Through in-depth knowledge of the homeland geography, students learn to appreciate more the beauties and richness of their homeland, to enrich its wealth, to become industrious citizens, capable of defending the national territory, to sacrifice themselves, if need be, for defending our people's revolutionary conquests, to protect and develop the national heritage of values. The geography of the homeland is the main means of presenting the achievements obtained by our country during the years of socialist construction, under the leadership of the Romanian Communist Party, of the economic-social progress and of the luminous perspectives for the construction of the multilaterally developed socialist society and for Romania's progressing towards communism (Dăneț et al., 1984, p. 159).

The politicised geographical education was enforced with clear indications about "using in lessons the Party and state documents and comrade Nicolae Ceaușescu's indications" (Dăneț et al., 1984, p. 159). Politicised geographical education is strongly related to the politicised mass media and its powerful propaganda, as the following quotation from a book on the Didactics of Geography shows:

[...] mass communication means (mass-media) among which a special role belongs to the radio-TV broadcasting, the printed press, and to geographical readings. Informing students through these means contributed to awakening their interest in internal and international political events, to enabling their understanding of these events, to making them more prepared for their integration in the social and political life. Our duty, of the geography teachers, is to use mass communication means in the interest of these aims. Printed media and Party materials, selected competently and attentively integrated into lessons, offer the possibility to teachers to constantly update geographical knowledge. Used in a methodical manner, the printed media may become a passionate pedagogical tool for geography lessons, allowing the updating of knowledge as well as levelling the boundaries among subject matters (ensuring the interdisciplinary character). Students can get geographical information by reading newspapers, "Scînteia tineretului" [The Spark of the Youth], "Scînteia" [The Spark], "România liberă" [Free Romania] and the local papers, interesting since they focus on the characteristic features of each county or municipium (Dăneț et al., 1984, p. 44).

Propaganda information was transmitted about the achievements of the socialist system:

Informing themselves from the lecture of newspapers and from radio-TV broadcasting presents aspects such as: on the high run-off rivers (Olt, Argeș, Bistrița, Siret, Cerna, etc.), they have built and are still building tens of hydropower plants; in numerous centres they build many industrial objectives; Bucharest metro is being built; they built the Danube-Black Sea canal; in the country, they modernise roads, they increase the surface of the plantations for fruiters and vineyards, etc., about which the geography school textbooks will write only after a number of years. Only through scanning the newspapers, one may understand how are achieved the great objectives envisioned in the development plans of socialist Romania, why it matters to be economical with resources, the commercial and cultural exchanges of our country, how our Party's and state's policy is asserted daily in the international sphere, how the friendship relationships are realised between our state and other states, which are the principles that form the basis of these relations. Besides newspapers, also geography periodicals are part of the media, among which the most accessible to students is "Terra", the trimestral magazine of the Society of Geographical Sciences, but also the weekly "Magazine" edited by the Front of the Democracy and Socialist Unity (Dăneț et al., 1984, p. 45).

The attachment to the special achievements from our homeland during the years for the construction of socialism, patriotic pride for the long-term position of socialist Romanian in the world, etc. (Mândruț et al., 1982, p. 16).

Socialist patriotic education, as geographical education outside the classroom, meant certain activities that were recommended for Geography teachers:



Besides valorising the educational contents of geography lessons during the educational process, cultivating the attachment to and love for the Party, a fundamental objective of moral education, is realised through various means: organising visits and visit-lessons at factories and agricultural units – I.A.S.I. [RO., Întreprindere Agricolă de Stat – State Agricultural Enterprise], C.A.P. [RO., Cooperativă Agricolă de Producție – Agricultural Cooperative] – for knowing them as results of the economy of our homeland and achieving knowledge about the technologies in the branches of industrial and agricultural production, as well as with the aim of school and professional guidance; visiting certain exhibitions where the progress realised by the economy of our country is presented, as well as aspects concerning comrade Nicolae Ceaușescu's interests and work visits, as a secretary general of the Party and president of the Socialist Republic of Romania; special actions of the Union of the Communist Youth (political information campaigns, political education, literary-artistic compositions regarding bringing homage to certain important moments from the Party's past of fights, and to the comrade Nicolae Ceaușescu's personality (Mândruț et al., 1982, p. 18).

Patriotic education also aimed at forming certain attitudes in students, and Geography teachers had to be aware of these:

The aim of patriotic education in high school is to form students' assembly of knowledge, attitudes and convictions, which should reflect themselves accordingly in their appropriate human behaviour. Next, we will analyse exactly these knowledge, skills, attitudes, patriotic convictions and, finally, those parts of human behaviour that can be formed through geography. [...] In the 10th grade, comparisons and references to our country create the premises of understanding the place occupied by the Socialist Republic of Romania within the international division of labour, its economic connections to other states, the contribution of our country to solutions for the economic problems of the contemporary world, the development of the economy, etc.; at the same time, by cultivating the respect towards other countries and peoples, by revealing Romania's constructive position in all international matters, we implicitly emphasise the feeling of patriotic pride, of attachment towards our Party and state's international policy (Mândruț et al., 1982, pp. 13-14).

Teachers were asked to pay attention to certain behavioural features that students should be characterised of if they were true socialist patriots, because patriotism was represented as socialist first:

From the behaviour features that reflect awareness of *the socialist patriotism values*, we mention a few: In-depth knowledge of the homeland geographical features and creating the interest to achieve new knowledge, independently, to form and inform themselves continuously concerning these aspects; Forming their correct, scientific conception upon all major issues concerning the rational use of the environment and of natural resources, for the economic development of the homeland; Preservation and rational use of the land, preserving the quality of the living environment, rational use of natural resources, etc.; Forming their revolutionary attitude of fighting those that try to misrepresent certain realities of our homeland; Increasing students' interest to know their homeland directly, through trips and visits, to enlarge continuously their knowledge about the geography of the homeland; Proving through practical activities involving students that they understand to turn to good account their entire ability to contribute in this way to the economic development of the socialist homeland; Forming their conviction that by keeping unchanged the environment, valorising natural resources in a rational manner, contributing through their own activity to the development of the economy, each student, young citizen, in this way brings his or her important contribution to ensuring an appropriate living environment for future generations, to raising the homeland to new peaks of civilisation and progress. The above-mentioned ideas underline that, an object par excellence of patriotic education, geography has to fully valorise, at a superior level, all its possibilities in this field, so that students form an assembly of knowledge, skills, attitudes, and convictions, and finally a behaviour that proves that they learnt and applied the values of socialist patriotism (Mândruț et al., 1982, p. 16; *my emphasis*).

These findings show a conscious effort of those who wrote didactics of geography books to synchronise geography education with the communist ideology of the period, thus transforming Geography classes and means of education into propaganda tools that built students' characters accordingly.



CONCLUSIONS

During socialism, geography education was meant to shape Romanian students' knowledge, attitudes and behaviour in relation to the nation. Geography education aimed at forming and developing students' socialist patriotism. Propaganda considered geography of Romania classes as the main means to present socialist achievements to students. Didactics of geography books during that period reflected this ideological perspective on geography education.

Further research should consider exploring the impact of socialist patriotic education during geography classes on Romanians' representations about their homeland then and at present. Also, future studies could assess how much of the contemporary discourse about the territorial identity of Romania was forged during previous historical periods and how much of present cultural representations about the Romanian territory and society are indebted to the communist propaganda.

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