

Forging Citizens Through Geography: Decolonizing Spatial Imaginaries In Algerian Textbooks

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Abstract:

This paper discusses the role of geography education on national belonging and citizenship in post-independence Algeria. It derives upon a qualitative historical content analysis of geography textbook in primary, middle, and secondary education since 1962. The paper examines how spatial stories were enlisted by the state to confront colonial imaginations of the Algerian land and to create a national sovereign geographical imagination. The article is published at the juncture of Critical Geography, Sociology of Education, and Citizenship Studies and it theorizes citizenship as a spatial process that is constituted by representations of territory and identity as well as belonging. The study is based on a sample of Arabic and French language textbooks written over three important political and educational periods, including the early post-independence decades, the Arabization and consolidation of the state period of the 1980s-1990s, and the competency-based reforms that have taken effect since 2003. By using the thematic analysis and systematic coding, the paper follows the evolution of the depictions of the Algerian territory, resources, regional diversity, and global position throughout the years. They focus on the story of territorial incorporation, particularly, the symbolic reintegration of Sahara, the discourses of resource ownership, discourses about demographics, and the role of students as civil actors in particular.

The results expose three phases in the formation of spatial citizenship, which include cognitive decolonization and territorial reclamation, (1960s-1970s), Arab-Islamic identity and developmental citizenship (1980s-1990s) and, post-2003 competency-based learning focusing on critical thinking, environment responsibility and global consciousness. In general, it can be seen that geography textbooks are more than pedagogical instruments; they are also the tools of political influence that construct territorial identity and citizenship.

Keywords: Citizenship Formation, Decolonization ,Spatial Imaginaries, Geography Textbooks.

Introduction

Active citizen participation in the domains of schooling, national identity, and citizenship is a central concern for nations globally with a particular crescendo in post-colonial contexts. In such contexts, the school framework has a central responsibility: to knit together a citizenry from populations that were often deliberately separated and mentally distanced by colonial rule (Williams & Bokhorst-Heng, 2016). As such, this challenge involves educating but also creating a narrative related to forging a new nation. In recent decades with broad differences and resonance throughout the globe, a number of trends have developed: Canada has attempted to respond to incorporating

multicultural citizenship; Turkey's school programs aim to cultivate a neo-Ottoman citizenry (Gür & Çalışkan, 2025); Tunisia is currently refocusing its nation identity after the Arab Spring . At their core is a single instrument common to all: the school textbook as a highly effective vehicle for transmitting to future generations the state-approved version of history, civics, and territoriality (Hickling-Hudson, 2010).

In Algeria, a country that endured 132 years of multiform cultural violence during the colonial period, this new educational project was avant-garde. The French colonial state pursued a multi-pronged strategy of cultural assimilation—through its policy of French education delivered via a segregated school system—that sought to eradicate the Algerian identity. Its geography curricula were particularly important for these efforts and developed a spatial imaginary for Algeria as a mere extension of France, referring to it in texts as Mediterranean Africa or African France (Clerc, 2021). This spatial imaginary legitimized the colonial state by mapping Algeria into the European world, while simultaneously erasing its Maghrebian, African, and Arab identities. After an extremely hard-won independence in 1962, the newly formed Algerian state had the formidable task of abolishing this colonial geography and forming a new, sovereign geographical imaginary in its instance.

While the role of history and civic education in this nation-building project has been the subject of scholarly inquiry (Remaoun, 2013), the specific function of school geography has remained comparatively underexplored. This is a critical oversight. As scholars like Staeheli (2011) argue, citizenship is inherently spatial; it is constructed through “spatial imaginaries”—the collective mental maps that define belonging, from the local neighborhood to the global community. Geography education is therefore not a neutral recitation of facts about rivers and capital cities. It is a potent political practice that answers fundamental questions: What is the territory of the nation? What are its constituent parts? Who owns its resources? And what is its place in the world? The answers to these questions form the bedrock of territorial identity and national attachment.

This article addresses this significant gap by investigating the evolution of geographical discourse in Algerian school textbooks from the early years of independence to the present day. It argues that these textbooks served as a primary battleground for decolonizing the Algerian mind and constructing a new model of citizenship. By adopting a historical approach and conducting a detailed content analysis of textbooks across the three educational cycles (primary, middle, and secondary), this study probes a central research question: How did Algerian geography textbooks, as instruments of a sovereign state, systematically deconstruct colonial spatial imaginaries and construct a new geographical discourse to foster a distinct and evolving model of Algerian citizenship?

We propose this development happened in three identifiable phases: a first, initial phase focused on remedial, declarative knowledge to establish basic sovereignty; a consolidation and Arabization phase that deepened this discourse in an ideological frame of Arab-Islamic identity and state-led development; and a contemporary phase sparked by the competency-based approach reforms in 2003 that prepares students for global action while also confronting transnational issues. By illustrating the trajectory of this development process, this study helps identify the irreplaceable, and often forgotten, role of geographic education in shaping the position of the Algerian citizen in relation to the nation's space, helping situate geographic education within the broader frame of how education shapes the spatiality of citizenship in the post-colonial context.

The spatiality of citizenship

The analysis of textbooks as tools for citizenship formation necessitates a theoretical framework that bridges critical geography, educational sociology, and citizenship studies. This paper is guided by the central premise that citizenship is not merely a legal or political status but is also profoundly spatial (Staeheli, 2011). The relationship between an individual and the state is mediated through their understanding of, and connection to, a defined territory. School geography is the primary disciplinary vehicle for constructing this spatial consciousness.

Traditional definitions of citizenship often emphasize the political-legal relationship between the individual and the state (Bosniak, 2012, Gosewinkel, 2010). However, a more geographical perspective argues that this relationship is inseparable from territory. As Desforges, Jones, and Woods (2005) contend, citizenship is enacted and experienced in space; it involves "new geographies" that define belonging and participation. Geography education, therefore, is not about passive knowledge but about actively "creating the citizen" by giving them an awareness of their responsibilities within a specific spatial context—from their local environment to the global stage. This process involves the formation of what can be termed "spatial imaginaries"—the collective, often unconscious, mental maps that define the boundaries, content, and significance of a given space. The colonial project relied on imposing a specific spatial imaginary (e.g., "African France"). The post-colonial state's first sovereign act was to dismantle this and replace it with a new national imaginary based on different affiliations (Maghreb, Arab, African).

School textbooks are far from neutral vessels of information. They are cultural artifacts that reflect the ideologies and priorities of the state institutions that produce and authorize them (Ghalem, 2012). In the context of post-colonial Algeria, they became a key battleground for Laurin, Klein, and Tardif (2001) call "une géographie citoyenne" (a citizen's geography)—a geography that aims to create informed citizens capable of critical engagement with their space, rather than simply promoting a nationalistic agenda. This article analyzes textbooks as tools that have an ideological role. The transition from colonial to sovereign discourse is a deliberate attempt to use geographical content for three objectives: to de-territorialize by disassociating the cognitive relationship between Algeria and France; to re-territorialize, by producing new connections between Algeria and its Maghreb, Arab and African contexts; and to internalize by producing an image of the national space that binds the Coast, the Highlands and the Sahara into a single and indivisible territorial unit.

Following this theoretical framework, the content analysis of geography textbooks is framed around several key questions, moving beyond simple content listing to look critically. First, at the level of spatial scale, the analysis asks: how do textbooks define Algeria's position in the world spatially; what kind of hierarchy of affiliations is created-- the local to the national, Maghreb, Arab, African, and worldwide; and how do these affiliations change over time. Second, concerning internal integration, the investigation focuses on the representation of Algeria's geo-diversity, which incorporates, for example, the Sahara, Kabylie: how has the Sahara's place in the nation been redefined post-administrative separation during colonialism, and approach how geographic regional affiliations have reshaped itself over time? Third, regarding the narrative of ownership, the analysis pays attention to the language of ownership of natural resources, especially does discourse shift from extraction- "resources to be exploited" - to the rhetoric of ownership and development - "our oil", "our agricultural revolution". Finally, the analysis examines the citizen's role: in what way is the student-reading positioned vis-a-vis national space?

By applying this framework, this study will demonstrate how the Algerian state, through its geography curricula, embarked on a deliberate project to construct a spatially grounded citizen, whose sense of belonging and civic duty was intrinsically linked to a newly sovereign and re-imagined national space

Method

To trace the evolution of geographical discourse and its role in constructing citizenship, this study employs a qualitative research design centered on historical content analysis. This method is particularly suited for systematically examining textual materials to identify patterns, themes, and shifts in discourse over time (Moodie, 1971; Schreier, 2014).

Research Design and Corpus Selection

The study examines a combination of primary, middle, and high school Algerian geography textbooks produced since independence to represent significant historical moments in terms of educational perspectives. This includes textbooks and curricula from the National Pedagogical Institute (IPN) from the 1960s and 1970s that made an important contribution to creating sovereign discourse (the first textbooks of *L'Algérie et le Maghreb* published in Arabic, 1968, 1971). The analysis examines textbooks during the educational reform and Arabization policies era in the 1980s and 1990s, as well as from 2003 to present with the most recent promulgation of educational reform emphasizing the development of citizen competencies. Importantly, it covers textbooks in Arabic and French perspectives as assessing the shift in language educational policy is significant for understanding the full extent of the discourse.

Data Collection and Analysis

The data collection process involved identifying and retrieving archival materials from the National Institute for Educational Research (INRE) located in Algiers. The content analysis took place in a sequence of steps. Initially, the textbooks were read horizontally to have a preliminary understanding of its structure, visuals such as maps and photographs, and its overall narrative flow. The data was then coded based on the theoretical framework articulated in the previous section which necessitated developing a coding scheme through deductive (theory driven) and inductive (data driven) methods. Ultimately, the coded data was subjected to thematic analysis to highlight overarching themes and important shifts in discourse throughout the periods in question. It was necessary to pay attention to the contrasting of the discourse of the early post-colonial era with the later historical periods to address the evolution of the "spatial imaginary" of the Algerian citizen.

Limitations

Although this approach lends significant insight, there are limitations. Despite sampling in a purposive manner, the textbooks serve as a sample and cannot adequately reflect or represent all school textbooks from the last sixty years. Additionally, content analysis examines the "intended curriculum" (the text in and of itself) but does not examine the "implemented curriculum" (how teachers taught the text), nor does it address the "attained curriculum" (what students actually learned). Readers might find it valuable, however, for future studies to interview textbook authors, teachers, or former students to hone the understanding obtained through content analysis. The methodological approach described here provides a systematic, theoretically driven approach for

analytically studying how the Algerian state used school geography as a mechanism to build a sovereign citizenship.

Results or Findings

The content analysis of geography for Algerian students signals an intentional, voluntary, and evolving pedagogical project, where the discourse of space is utilized as a primary device for engaging in citizenship. The analysis spans three historical moments with a defined trajectory: the first, a foundational project of decolonizing the geographical imaginary by undoing colonial misconceptions, while asserting territorial sovereignty; the second, which solidified a national identity tied to Arab-Islamic culture and state-led development; and third, the present moment of reinforcing a globally engaged citizenship able to critically engage in a complex interconnected world. Each moment developed a unique iteration of the ideal citizen of Algeria constructed around the evolving agendas of the state and the relationship of citizens to its territory.

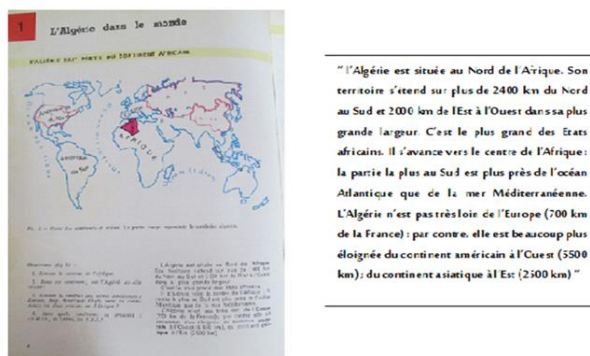
Deconstructing the Colonial Spatial Imaginary (1960s-1970s)

The immediate post-independence era was characterized by an urgent project of cognitive decolonization. The new Algerian state, through the newly established National Pedagogical Institute (IPN), had to rapidly produce educational materials that would forge a sovereign geographical consciousness. The analysis of the first geography textbooks reveals a deliberate and systematic effort to dismantle the colonial spatial imaginary and replace it with a new one based on national unity and non-aligned affiliation.

Re-mapping Algeria's Place in the World

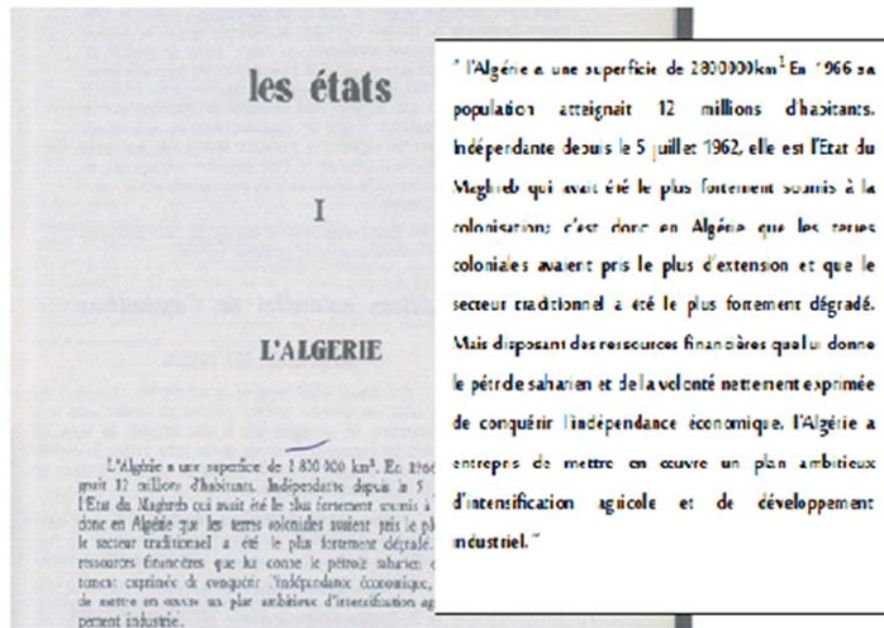
The most fundamental corrective action was to re-spatialize Algeria's global position. Colonial textbooks, as noted by Clerc, framed Algeria as “Mediterranean Africa” or an “extension of Europe,” a narrative that served to legitimize the French presence (Clerc, 2021, pp. 197-217). The IPN's 1968 textbook, *L'Algérie et le Maghreb*, begins its very first lesson with a powerful corrective. As shown in Figure 1, it opens not with Europe, but with a definitive statement: “L'Algérie est un pays du Maghreb” (Algeria is a country of the Maghreb). This simple sentence performs a profound discursive shift. It immediately places Algeria within a North African context, severing its artificial geopolitical tether to Europe. The accompanying map and text meticulously detail Algeria's coordinates within Africa and its Mediterranean coastline, not as a bridge to France, but as a feature of its own identity and a connection to the wider world.

Figure n° 1: Text taken verbatim from page 4, section 1, entitled: Algeria in the World, from the geography textbook, issued by the National Pedagogical Institute, Algeria, 1968



This re-orientation is further solidified in the 1971 textbook for secondary school. The text moves beyond basic location to embed Algeria within a global context of newly independent nations. The excerpt in Figure 2 is revelatory. It states Algeria “lives on a territory of 2,200,000 km²” and is an “independent state since July 5, 1962.” Here, the precise quantification of territory and the dating of sovereignty are acts of discursive assertion. The space is no longer a vague colonial possession; it is a precisely measured, legally sovereign national territory.

Figure n° 2: Text taken verbatim from page 93, Part Two, Countries, Algeria, from the geography textbook, issued by the National Pedagogical Institute, Algeria, 1971



The text further emphasizes Algeria’s agency, highlighting its “strong will to achieve its economic independence” through development plans. This constructs a spatial imaginary of a large, sovereign, and purposeful nation, a direct counter to colonial depictions of a passive territory awaiting European direction.

Forging Internal Cohesion: The Sahara as National Heartland

Beyond redefining external borders, the foundational textbooks worked to integrate the internal geography of the nation. The colonial administration had often administered the northern and Saharan regions separately, fostering a disjointed spatial imaginary.

The new textbooks explicitly worked against this. The vast Sahara Desert, previously portrayed as a remote, empty expanse or a resource zone for external exploitation, was recast as an integral and vital part of the national territory. The 1971 text (Figure 3) is again pivotal, explicitly linking the Sahara to the nation’s economic sovereignty by highlighting its “important material resources due to its availability of various natural resources such as oil.” This narrative of resource ownership (“our oil in our Sahara”) was crucial for internal cohesion, symbolizing that the nation’s wealth was distributed across its entire territory and belonged to all its citizens. This helped forge a unified national space, rhetorically stitching the northern Tell with the southern Sahara into a single, indivisible entity.

The Citizen's New Role: Knowing and Owning the National Space

The positioning of the student citizen in these early texts is primarily that of a learner and an heir. The primary civic duty implied is to know the true dimensions, resources, and recent history of the homeland. This knowledge itself is framed as an act of reclaiming ownership. By learning that Algeria is 2.2 million km², that it is part of the Maghreb, and that its Sahara holds oil for national development, the Algerian child is intellectually dispossessing the colonial narrative and taking possession of their sovereign space.

The act of studying these corrected facts was a foundational step in citizenship formation. It equipped students with the basic cognitive map upon which more complex civic values—like duty to develop the country or to defend its territorial integrity—could later be built. The discourse is declarative and pedagogical, aiming first to establish a corrected geographical baseline from which a new Algerian identity could grow.

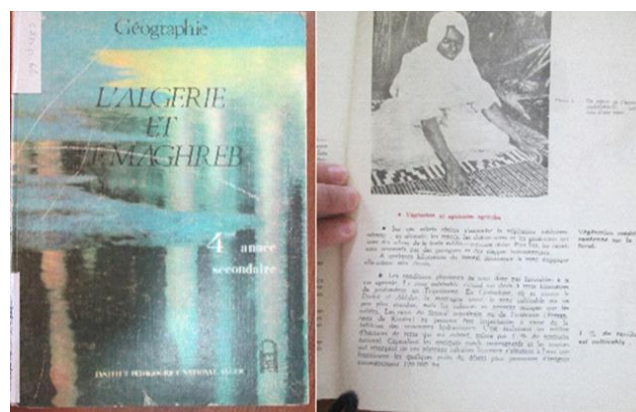
Deepening the Sovereign Discourse: Consolidation and Arabization (1980s-1990s)

Building on the foundational corrections of the 1960s and 70s, the subsequent period was defined by the full implementation of Arabization policies and the 1976 educational reform. This era saw the sovereign discourse evolve from establishing basic facts to promoting a more deeply ideologically and culturally aligned form of citizenship. The geographical imaginary expanded from a primarily national frame to a stronger emphasis on pan-Arab and Islamic affiliations, while also beginning to engage with the demographic realities of the nation.

The Linguistic Shift and its Ideological Implications:

The literal translation of textbooks from French to Arabic, as seen with "Al-Maghrib al-Arabi" (Figure 3), was more than a linguistic change; it was a fundamental re-territorialization of knowledge. This shift, influenced by the influx of teachers and curricula from Egypt and Syria (Courreye, 2020), actively worked to position Algeria within a broader Arab-Islamic cultural sphere. The change in the book's title from the geographically focused "L'Algérie et le Maghreb" to the culturally-and politically-charged "Al-Maghrib al-Arabi" (The Arab Maghreb) is highly significant. It explicitly framed the region not just by its shared geography but by a shared Arab identity, constructing a spatial imaginary that stretched eastward across the Arab world.

Figure n° 3: The geography book “Al-Maghrib al-arabi” for the fourth year of middle school, literally translated into Arabic from the book “L’ALGERIE ET LE MAGHREB” for the fourth year of secondary school (two versions; French and Arabic)





This period's textbooks often began modules by emphasizing Algeria's identity as an "Arab-Islamic" nation, a descriptor that became a central pillar of civic identity. The discourse moved beyond "where we are" to "who we are," inextricably linking place, language, and culture as the core of citizenship.

Narratives of Economic Sovereignty and Development

The content of geography textbooks became a primary vehicle for celebrating the state-led socialist development model. Lessons extensively covered the achievements of the Agricultural and Industrial Revolutions and the nationalization of hydrocarbons. This was no longer just about listing resources ("our oil") but about narrating a story of national triumph and economic sovereignty under the state's guidance.

For example, a typical 1980s textbook might feature maps showing the location of new steel plants in Annaba or dams in the Cheliff region, presented as symbols of national progress and the state's ability to develop the territory for the benefit of its people. The citizen's role evolved from the "heir" who simply knows the territory to the "patriot" who takes pride in these national achievements and is implicitly called upon to contribute to this ongoing project of modernization. The spatial imaginary here is of a nation actively being transformed and mastered by its own people.

The Emergence of the Demographic "Problem"

A crucial evolution in this period was the introduction of demographic discourse as a central theme. The national narrative of a "youthful and growing population" began to be framed through a dual lens: as a source of national strength but also as a primary challenge for development.

Textbooks started to feature graphs and data on population growth, often linking it to the need for increased agricultural production, job creation, and expanded social services. This reflected the state's concern following the 1974 World Population Conference in Bucharest and the outcomes of the 1984 conference in Mexico. The citizen was now also positioned as a responsible actor in managing this demographic growth, implicitly aligning family choices with the national economic interest. This introduced a new, more complex layer to citizenship: a duty not just to the territory itself, but to the collective management of its human resources.

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The Globally Engaged Algerian Citizen: The Competency-Based Approach Era (2003-Present)

The educational reform of 2003, which introduced the competency-based approach (CBA), marked a significant paradigm shift. Moving away from the primarily knowledge- and ideology-transmission model of earlier eras, the new curriculum aimed to form citizens equipped with the skills to analyze complex situations and act responsibly in a globalized world. This pedagogical shift triggered a corresponding evolution in geographical discourse, moving from inward-looking nationalism to an engagement with global interconnectedness and contemporary challenges.

From Descriptive Knowledge to Critical Analysis:

The titles of textbooks themselves signal this change. Books like "Geography of the Contemporary World" for secondary levels indicate a shift in focus. The goal is no longer solely to describe Algeria's physical and human geography, but to analyze its position within global networks of trade, migration, and environmental change.

The pedagogical activities recommended in these textbooks are telling. Students are no longer just asked to memorize the location of oil fields or list the goals of the Agricultural Revolution. Instead, they might be tasked with analyzing a map of global energy flows to discuss Algeria's dependent/independent position or debating the socio-economic trade-offs of a proposed dam project. This constructs a citizen who is not just a proud heir or a patriotic contributor, but a critical thinker capable of understanding nuanced issues and making informed judgments.

Incorporating Global and Environmental Challenges

Filling these gaps, the spatial imaginary of the CBA period expands beyond national territories to include transnational and global scales, incorporating previously omitted or underrepresented themes. Environmental citizenship is a notable example, as climate change, desertification, and water scarcity are framed as global-scaled issues requiring students to assume responsibility for these world-spanning problems; thus, initiating an overall education regarding citizenship and global environmental stewardship. Relatedly, the theme of interdependence receives significant attention – the globalization unit exposes students to the country's vulnerability to oil market fluctuations and how events occurring at a distance can impact local economies due to the very nature of globalization.

Such perspectives consequently enhance students' perception of global interdependence of nations and economies. Moreover, the treatment of human or population geography sees a valence shift with greater symbolic weight attributed to the unit on international migration. This unit focuses on both push-pull factors accounting for Algerians who live abroad as well as the country functioning as a transit nation for sub-Saharan migrants trying to get to Europe. This is of course, a starker contrast

to the earlier textbooks' more unidimensional and oversimplified treatment of population categories and identity.

This discourse positions the Algerian citizen as an actor within a global community, with responsibilities that extend beyond national borders. The duty is not just to develop Algeria, but to do so sustainably and with an awareness of its place in a wider system.

Reframing the Demographic "Problem" as a "Challenge"

A significant movement in the language of citizenship in Algerian geography textbooks is with respect to demographic change. In the 1980s and 1990s, schoolbooks referred to the relatively higher fertility rate of almost eight children per woman by the end of the 1970s as a "demographic challenge" ensue consideration for national development. This view emphasized the relationship between population growth and economic planning by suggesting that demographic trends might affect the results of state-sponsored induand capital-intensive industrialization and agricultural projects. Within this context, citizens were encouraged to consider how demographic patterns interacted with broader national objectives.

In more recent times, and especially after the shift to the CBA (competency-based approach), textbooks not only framed demographic trends as something to worry about but also a "demographic dividend." This reframing of discourse occurred in the context of a wider global conversation, also reflected through frameworks from bodies like the UN which highlighted potentials offered by a young demographic. The new narrative included the data on decline in birth rates and demographic transition models, emphasizing education, health and skill development in leveraging human potential.

It also affected the advice provided to students about their enrolment in demographic courses. Among the resource aids were actions on reviewing job policies, analyzing what was happening with people's older careers and planning better education systems. The goal was to encourage students' agency and informed participation as well as personal development to become national advancement in a global pocket. This trend in the textbooks is representative of a similar change in what is emphasized pedagogically, that is, providing students with knowledge to deal more effectively with complex socioeconomic topics in a constructive manner.

Conclusion and Discussion

In the sixty years since its independence, the Algerian educational system has engaged in a constant and developing project of citizen-formation, and school geography has been an instrument of choice for building a sovereign spatial imaginary. The analysis has traced the path of this project over the reclamation of time, with a clear and conscious movement from the urgent decolonization of knowledge to the more subtle preparation of citizens to face global challenges. The journey of the geography textbook as a tool of colonial legitimization to a site of national identity and as a manual for problematizing global engagement parallels Algeria's own path as a nation-state finding its place in the world.

The initial post-independence years were characterized by a work of cognitive decolonization. The first textbooks, published by the National Pedagogical Institute, were essential in performing a corrective surgery on the geographical consciousness of the young country. Their main role was to disrupt the colonial spatial imaginary that had placed Algeria as "Mediterranean Africa," as if it was an extension of Europe. Through careful mapping, declarative statements, and the (in)disposition of all of Algeria on a wall map, they remapped the country, placed it squarely within the Maghreb and

Africa, and claimed its territory and resources. The citizen constructed in the early post-colonial moment was the Heir, a learner whose most basic civic function was to know, and to claim, the real size and wealth of their newly sovereign space. This initial work of decolonization was less about complex ideological construction, and more about establishing a factual baseline for identity that could not be disputed.

The subsequent period of consolidation and Arabization exacerbated this sovereign discourse, moving from establishing facts to building a specific national ideology. The linguistic shift from French to Arabic was an effective act of re-territorialization, culturally and ideologically reorienting the nation eastward toward the Arab-Islamic world. Textbooks adopted a celebratory discourse, documenting the triumphs of the Agricultural and Industrial Revolutions and the nationalization of hydrocarbons. The spatial imaginary promoted was that of a nation very much engaged in constructing and modifying its territory with various modes of state-led governance. Simultaneously, the emergence of the demographic "problem" added another layer of civic obligation; individual family choices were now related to the national economic project. The ideal citizen was no longer simply an informed heir. The ideal citizen was the Patriot--a proud participant in the project of state-led development and a responsible steward of the nation's demographic future.

The Key Reform of 2003, featuring the debut of the competency-based approach, prompted the most systematic pedagogical and discursive change whereby there was a shift away from transmitting knowledge that made connections to nationalist ideas, values, and pride towards an effort to shape a citizen with the capacity to act in a globalized place. Previously, the geographical imagination stretched only to the boundaries of a nation-state with print-based educational resources. In contrast, now, the geographical imagination expanded significantly beyond national boundaries in order to include global issues such as climate change, desertification, and the global economy's interdependent nature. Educational resources now have title references like "Geography of the Contemporary World" and induce students to examine, debate, and critique complex issues that are no different than long held theoretical geographical debates in their understanding of the contemporary world. The educated citizen is now the Globally-Aware Critical Actor, where it is now acceptable for every citizen to undertake (explicitly or implicitly) responsibility to generate sustainable behaviors in their own lives and to understand how Algeria 'fits' within a larger interconnected system.

In conclusion, the transformation of geographical discourse through textbooks in Algeria shows that the concept of citizenship is always spatial and also always under construction. It is a story that is continuously revised by the demands of the times. From the original, fundamental act of mapping out borders in the mind to the contemporary challenge of transnational flows, the state, through the map and the textbook, has responded to the (more than) decades-long question: what does it mean to be a citizen of Algeria? This examination suggests that geography education is never a neutral description of the world; it is, instead, an act of powerful political and cultural practice. The maps within these textbooks are more than compasses; they are maps of belonging drawn out explicitly to orient each new generation to specific understanding of their relations to their nation, and the wider world.

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