



J-Reading is born

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1. Why a new magazine?

In recent years a great number of online magazines have appeared, among which some on geographical education. The increase in their number is to be considered positive for the development of research and for the advantages that it creates in its use and interactivity, for example through *forums* and 'distance didactic-scientific dialogues'. Then why propose a new online magazine?

It must first of all be remembered that the promoting body of this editorial initiative is an association of geography teachers (from primary school to university) and experts in geographical subjects: the Associazione Italiana Insegnanti di Geografia (AIIG) – Italian Association of Geography Teachers. Since it was founded in 1954 it has always published a magazine, first of all called *La Geografia nelle Scuole* and since 2001 known as *Ambiente Società Territorio – Geografia nelle scuole*. Furthermore, since 2005 it has issued a series of publications entitled *Ambiente Società Territorio*, which develops a geographical project focussed on the research-didactics combination, organised in two converging channels: one of scientific research, divided into different theoretical and applicative sectors and one of research in the didactics of geography, an expression of the inescapable link between the worlds of university and school.

It is along this trend, which has always the AIIG's mission, that J-Reading is moving, employing also other focal points which are illustrated below.

2. Integration between research and didactics

The aim of contributing to the construction of a bridge between didactics and research, strategic for the development of the subject, is at the basis of this new editorial project, which, inserted in the history of the AIIG, sets out to highlight its international approach that is so essential in a globalised world. The terms didactics and research, in fact, complement each other and combine for a solid cultural education in order to deal with analytical-interpretative and educational-professional needs.

The contributions of research should be integrated with didactic ones in order to translate the disciplinary knowledge into projects focussed on truly efficient educational concepts and objectives. The coherence and balance between the scientific and educational-didactic importance are substantial since they give a meaning to information, skills, knowledge that would risk being deprived of their context.

The magazine aims to highlight how the

epistemological progress of geography can gain from the dialogue between research and didactics. The international scope helps to better understand how important true reciprocity is in the research-didactics relationship, as research gives its contribution to didactics just as it receives it. In the first case – the contribution given to didactics by research – there are no doubts about it as such passage is evident and acquired.

On the contrary, great uncertainty still exists with regard to the contribution given by didactics to research. Undoubtedly the motivations at an ethical and socio-cultural level, deriving from the interactions with didactics, could be well implemented by research, thus avoiding the danger of remaining self-referential, charging scientific knowledge with values: new and traditional knowledge, to be reviewed in the light of the different needs of the young and societies. Didactics however is also a reflection on the structure of knowledge and its ability to be translated into a coherent construction that can connect research and often very fragmented and specialist considerations.

It is also important that J-Reading acknowledges the role of university and school didactics involved in fostering rationality and emotions, creativity and imagination with the education into which they merge: important ingredients also for the scientific method. The valorisation of didactics is realised by means of: a real interaction between theory and practice, through the recognition of the scientific bases of the learning-teaching practices and techniques; research concerning school organisation; experimentation in a curricular context; the fostering of a laboratory approach.

3. Course of research and new technologies

The magazine sets out to show the diversity of paths and approaches of contemporary geography, including the elaborations of new models and theories, mathematical data processing, the application of new mapping and statistical calculation techniques in computerised cartography and in the geographical information systems (GIS), which have considerable

application possibilities in the socio-demographic and economic-tourist fields, in terms of environmental and cultural heritage and risk analysis etc. This diversity, translated into and applied in the school curricula, represents a great potential for geography, since it proposes a huge number of interpretations and points of view, fostering the understanding of territorial realities on the different geographical scales.

J-Reading counts greatly on the contributions that will valorise the inclusion of IT in the didactics of geography. With their attractive technological appearance the Geographical Information Systems are used in didactics, involving the students' curiosity and interest during their scientific studies, and can deal with a series of different subjects, in diversified spatial-temporal contexts and produce cartography, graphs, three-dimensional models and virtual scenarios.

Great importance will also be given to the geographies of perception and behaviour, as well as the links with the disciplines that have broadened the interpretative schemes of the relationship between man, society and environment, directing the attention at the space seen and experienced by both insiders and outsiders. The space built by man, in fact, does not derive only from his economic needs or the need to adapt and fit in with the natural environment, but also from routes that societies follow moved by passions, feelings, impulses, mental representations: one space perceived and experienced in different ways by women, men and children.

4. From scientific theory to didactic practice

The potential of the didactics of geography, in research and knowledge production, is above all expressed in relating knowledge, the instruments (traditional and innovative) and the methods of geography with the learning-teaching processes. This fruitful scientific course can be developed in the magazine by means of theoretical and methodological research in various directions:

- on the relationship between the knowledge produced by geographies and

the knowledge to be developed in the curricula for students of all age groups;

- on the processes and progress of geographical research so as to identify how this can be effectively translated into teaching practice;
- on the contribution that the perceptions and ideas of didactic research offer scientific research;
- on the new aids and instruments able to facilitate research and geographical education;
- on the development of geographical competences and their inter-disciplinary value in the organising of knowledge;
- on the comparison of reflections and analyses of cases concerning citizenship, sustainable development and intercultural;
- on the comparison with civil society of the results obtained from research and on the creation of awareness to territory education.

5. Educational and scientific-disciplinary transversalities

The magazine aims to strengthen the geography of values (environmental education and risk approach, cooperation education and intercultural exchange, health education etc.), both directing research in the subject enriched with knowledge and competences at great social objectives, and involving a wider and wider catchment area, starting with the university and school world. Education in fact is one of the strategies that most make it possible to generate changes in the values and behaviour of society, which is why it is necessary to critically reflect on the contents that it transmits and on the very forms of transmission. One of the most significant results of the education policies is constituted by the guidelines which, in more or less open ways and according to each country, orient and place conditions for the teachers' cultural choices. The policy therefore comes into relation with the development of education and disciplinary knowledge, transmitting the new

acquisitions of knowledge into teaching, but also attempting to propose answers to the transformations in society. On these themes reflection can also critically reinterpret not only the discipline and the school but the whole society and its relations on a global scale too.

J-Reading sets out to strengthen a didactics of geography seen as a crucial research area, which requires the active support of the scholars involved in the community of geographers, as well as their attention to the totality of education sciences and a real commitment in the school world. Geography must be made compatible with the cognitive and educational needs of the students, at different ages, so that they can actively understand and experiment it. In reality the teaching of geography, in a deeply changing world in which the man-nature relationship is becoming increasingly complex and their equilibrium more and more fragile, can carry out an extremely important educational function, guaranteeing a qualitative presence with a high educational profile in a school that it truly alive.

This highlights the great number of directions that J-Reading intends to explore and go into, starting from the importance of the research-didactics relationship and gathering the innovative thrusts of the last decades. All these paths will be compared with the different geographic scales, just as they will be inserted in the important lines of study. The interdisciplinary question reserves considerable scientific opportunities for geographical education, exalting its role; the exchange with other subjects, furthermore, must be sought with the absolute conviction in the formulation of the educational-didactic project.

6. Exchanges between researchers and teachers

The magazine J-Reading is committed to encouraging and valorising the exchange between the researchers of the various scientific fields and teachers of different school years who work in different countries of the world. It also sets out to foster the close collaboration between university researchers and school teachers, so as to give the latter greater professionalism, contributing to the creation of the teacher-

researcher figure.

In order to achieve these results the magazine is committed to promoting research, courses, laboratory sessions that can fill the present gaps, showing the value of a dynamic didactics able to link scientific, educational and professional aspects.

Many thanks are extended to the all the

representatives of the Italian and international scientific community who have already expressed their support in these objectives along with all those who, with their precious contribution of ideas, will enhance the project and make it possible to achieve these common objectives.