

The Contested Post-Socialist Rehabilitation of the Past: Dual Narratives in the Republishing of Tibor Mendöl's *Introduction to Geography*¹

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Abstract: This paper aims to unravel the contextual layers of the postsocialist republishing of a prominent Hungarian geographer's textbook originally written in the 1950s, which is considered here as a vehicle of the contested narrativity in the "big historical gap" of postsocialist Hungarian geography. Tibor Mendöl's *Introduction to Geography* [Bevezetés a földrajzba] was a hybrid text written in a dual narrative: first in a traditional "age of discoveries" narrative of the previous conservative-nationalist regime, and second in the obligatory Marxist-Leninist language of the later Sovietized regime. In 1999, the two rehabilitators of the text were driven by different motivations (such as the return to a formerly glorious geographical tradition, or the selective confining of a discredited socialist past), but in both cases through a symbolic contestation of the author. This ultimately led to the arbitrarily reediting of the text, first by deleting its most compromising parts, second by reframing it in a "completed" form by "finishing" its historical span, and third by selectively and incompletely "translating" some of its burdened phrases into a partly de-ideologized language. My aim is to provide a layer-by-layer historical analysis of the text's contexts, because without a dense hermeneutical and historical reinterpretation, we are entangled in the "hermeneutic trap" of Mendöl's interwoven dual narrative. In the last part I also offer a sketch for possible reinterpretations of the textbook in light of critical theories, drawing from anti-Eurocentric literature.

Keywords: *Tibor Mendöl, History of Geography, Postsocialism, Narrativity, Dual Narrative*

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Introduction: A Phantom of the Past

As a bachelor of geography student taking part in one of Róbert Győri's workshop seminars at the Eötvös József Collegium, in which we were discussing the life work of our geography workshop's name-bearer, Tibor Mendöl (1905–1966), I was drawn towards his posthumously republished book (Mendöl 1999 [1952]). Realizing its curious Marxist-Leninist language, I became puzzled by several of its attributes: first, the fact that it was republished and was being used as a textbook for teaching; second, that it seemed unlikely for Mendöl to have written the text; and third, that there were only mystical rumors circulating about the original. In this paper, I will attempt to unravel this "phantom of the past" as a case study about narrativity by putting it into the broader perspective of postsocialist knowledge production in Hungarian geography. This story is about an introductory textbook on the subject and history of geography, an *Introduction to Geography* [*Bevezetés a földrajzba*] originally written for first year geography students by a leading Hungarian human geographer, under the harsh Stalinist era of the 1950s (Mendöl 1950a, 1951a, 1952, 1953a). The spice of the story is that Mendöl was not a communist geographer, but a human geographer of the pre-socialist era obliged to write his study partly along Marxist-Leninist lines. The fact that his study was later republished in 1999 (see Fig. 1) for exactly the same original purpose of teaching the history of geography, already sounds like a rather dubious attempt, and raises immediate questions to be answered in context. How was this achieved and why? Whose interests did it actually serve? How can such a text be used for teaching? And finally, has this really led to the rehabilitation of the author, and if not, how could this be fulfilled?

In order to tackle these initial questions, my study will rely on contextualist and critical historical approaches, drawing from the interdisciplinary fields of Science Studies and critical theory. Responding to analytical, objectivist, and reconstructivist understandings of historical knowledge (Jenkins 2004), and traditional presentist narratives of an ordered, successive line of historical figures and events (Livingstone 1979, Berdoulay 1981, Mayhew 2011), critical and reflexive historical studies mark a turn towards accepting the social construction of scientific knowledge (Hess 1997, Bourdieu 2004) and towards an understanding of situated, embodied epistemologies and objectivities (Harding 1982, Hartsock 1983, Haraway 1988). This "new historicism" (Malpas 2006) has led to historical inquiry following a shift in emphasis from text to context, and a focus on deconstructing the genealogies of knowledge claims under wider discourses (Foucault 1980[1977], 2002[1969], Said 2003[1978], Jenkins 1997), all within an analysis of social, political, economic, and geographical factors in knowledge production (Livingstone 1992, 2003). Further critical focus should be given to the important role of textbooks in the production and dissemination of geographical knowledge, and the textbook narratives of inner disciplinary consumption (Taylor 1976, Aay 1981).

I will begin with an analysis of the historical context of Mendöl's era, and will progress towards an understanding of the intentions and actions of particular actors leading first to the original and then to the republished version. My study is based upon archival material and information gleaned from two formal interviews with Ferenc Probáld and Gyula Gábris, and several informal interviews conducted at the geography departments of Eötvös Loránd

University. The republishing of Mendöl's socialist-era textbook will then be situated within the context of the "postsocialist condition" of Hungarian geography, with comparisons being drawn with other (re)published books of geographers from the pre-socialist era. After this contextual analysis, I shall attempt to deconstruct the text in order to elucidate various manipulations of reediting, and to provide a hermeneutical analysis of its encoded meanings. Doing so helps us unfold the play of an antagonistic dual narrative of a "traditionalist" and a "Marxist-Leninist" language that organizes the text. Lastly, I will provide a critical reading of its Eurocentric expansionist narratives, as well as its imperialist vision and rationalist Enlightenment view on science, using critical historical studies of anti-Eurocentric literature connected to post-colonialism, world-systems theory, and Marxism.

Mendöl's Context: A Contested History

Tibor Mendöl's biography and the later narratives on his work and life are very interesting and complex (see Györi 2009), but I shall only focus on aspects relevant to my specific arguments. Mendöl developed a close relationship with historians, as he followed the French *Annales school* tradition of historical landscape geography (*géographie humaine*), which was introduced to Hungarian geography through the works of Pál Teleki (Mendöl 1932, 1981[1928]). But in many respects, he exhibited the leanings of a more careful and empirical-minded positivist than he did a drama-seeking romantic nationalist lapsing into teleological historicist or environmental determinist ideas, which were common among many of his contemporaries. Mendöl's expertise was settlement and urban geography (his specialty was the Great Hungarian Plain), and he is considered to be the most prominent founder of this research field in Hungary, pioneering the method of *functional morphology* (Mendöl 1963, see Jankó 2005, Tolnai 2014). This approach connected rural-focused morphological landscape analysis and physical classification of dwelling and settlement types (an approach embedded within an historicist and ethnic discourse) to an urban-focused approach which analyzed the spatial hierarchy and catchment areas of market and administrative services and the divisions of labor (with the modernist potential in planning the settlement system). In this respect, Mendöl was also trying to reconcile different aspects of German and French geography (Mendöl 1935; see also Tolnai 2014). His talent and vigor as a geographer surfaced without question through his career, which ultimately resulted in his appointment as head of the newly founded *Emberföldrajzi és Leíró földrajzi Tanszék* ['Department of Human Geography and Descriptive Geography'] at the University of Budapest in 1940 at the age of only 35.

But after 1945, Soviet political pressure rose incrementally, and in 1949 a completely new Soviet science policy and institutional framework was implemented (Péteri 1998). Despite oversimplification and the intermeshing of significant particularities, I would argue that, in general, there existed within this emergent system "conservative-nationalist" as well as "Marxist-Leninist" or "Sovietized" regimes of knowledge (see for example Myhul 2002), both with their own political affiliations and ideological standards of legitimation, modes of regulation and knowledge control in generating scientific capital (Bourdieu 1999[1975]), discursive demarcations of useful and non-useful knowledge, institutional and spatial settings, specific sites of production, dissemination and networks of knowledge diffusion (Livingstone 2003), and their own practices and symbolic rituals (see Connelly and Grüttner 2005). The latter regime should also be supplemented by a postcolonial reading of a Sovietized Hungarian science under decisive centre-periphery relations (Moore 2001, Györi and Gyuris 2012, Gyuris and Györi 2013).

For obvious political reasons, new scientific standards were erected, new journals were established (*Földrajzi Értesítő* ['Geographical Bulletin'] from 1950), and the Hungarian Geographical Society was also dissolved in 1949 (officially in 1950), only to be reestablished in a severely altered form in 1952 (Koch 1952). Under the "cleansings" of 1949, all four geographer fellows of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, including Mendöl, were expelled. New, politically loyal and very ambitious people were summoned (most of them without qualifications in geography or an university degree, such as the "superspy" cartographer Sándor Radó (see Heffernan and Györi 2013), or the political journalist György Markos), and previous geographical traditions became peripheralized or were pressed into a monolithic economic geography (Györi 2009). As Róbert Györi notes:

Up to the middle of the 1960s the "old" Hungarian geography, especially human geography [*emberföldrajz*] almost completely vanished. The old geographers had either died or got retired, their disciples were impeded or marginalized, and the important positions were filled by the "new." With this Hungarian geography itself had sunk to a de-ranked, peripheral discipline, which strove to confine its own past (Györi 2014: 30).

[Az 1960-as évek közepére a "régi" magyar földrajz, azon belül is mindenekelőtt az emberföldrajz szinte teljes egészében eltűnt. A régi geográfusok meghaltak vagy nyugdíjba vonultak, tanítványaikat ellehetetlenítették vagy a perifériára száműzték, a fontos pozíciókat pedig az "újak" töltötték be. Ezzel együtt a magyar földrajz is presztízsét veszített, periférikus tudomány lett, amely igyekezett a saját múltját is elfeledni.]

Geography was especially affected by this political change due to its embeddedness in conservative, Christian-nationalist state policy and its scientific and ideological practices of revisionism against the Trianon peace treaty (1920) signed in the wake of World War I (Krasznai 2012). Thus its leading proponents, such as the prominent geographer and former prime minister Pál Teleki, were labelled reactionary "fascists" of the interwar Horthy era (Andics 1945, see Ablonczy 2005). Resulting from this uneven struggle under a "monopoly of symbolic violence" (Bourdieu 1991[1984]: 239), the previous conservative *status quo* faced a difficult situation: the fate of conservative-nationalist scholars was either to be banished from academia, or to compromise with the new system (Györi 2011a). The latter meant joining the Party or at least developing a kind of self-critique (eventually of their previous masters), as well as adapting to Soviet geography by embedding their work in Marxist-Leninist jargon. This practice of "translating" previous research into this ideological language affected both human and physical geography, but because the latter was more protected and less needed in state planning (Soviet geography even divided the previous holistic geography institutionally), many human geographers fled into the natural sciences (for example András Rónai). A good example of ritual self-critique is evidenced in the life and work of the regional geographer, Ferenc Koch, who had joined the Party and produced a rather formal and controversial critique of his previous master, Teleki (Koch 1956, Probáld 2001a)

Mendöl never joined the Party, but as he managed to stay at the university, he put all his efforts into conforming to these new requirements and had adopted a sort of passive resistance (Györi 2009, see also Bulla and Mendöl 1954). But in spite all of his efforts, he and his disciples

soon came under harsh attacks from fresh communist economic geographers, particularly György Markos (head of the Department of Economic Geography at the University of Economics in Budapest) and then young Zoltán Antal amongst others (Ankét 1961). The rural-focused morphological analysis of dwelling forms and settlement types, drowned in conservative-nationalist historicism, stood against the high modernist utopia of Marxist-Leninist industrial planning ideology (this ran parallel with draining local government funds to supply general industrial planning, see Belényi 1996). In fact, in this initial period even the functional-mathematical ideas of locational analysis and centre place theory—also partly pioneered by Mendöl in Hungary—were banished from spatial planning as “bourgeois formalism” (Vitaülés 1954, Radó 1957, see also Timár 2009a). This local ideological rhetoric had diffused from the centre—from Stalinist Soviet science policy—but later these concepts were applied in spatial planning under the “technocratic turn” of the *Új Gazdasági Mechanizmus* [‘New Economic Mechanism’] (1968), as in the *Országos Területfejlesztési Konceptió* [‘National Concept of Spatial Planning’] in 1971. But the “Mendöl school,” if there ever (would have) existed one, was disintegrated, as after Mendöl’s death, his last disciples were fired from the university or became peripheralized in academia (Györi 2009, Czirfusz 2011, 2012).

Although Mendöl became physically and mentally worn out (Boros 1957, Kovács 2005), and his strength and vigor slowly faded under these disturbed circumstances, he kept working on. In fact, his last productive period was in the 1950s, when he concentrated on producing teaching materials (Antal and Perczel 2005). Compiled from his previous works and years of teaching experience, he finished his grandest and most mature study, *Általános emberföldrajz* [‘General Human Geography’], which was never to be published. If it had been, it probably would have represented the grandest contemporary study of Hungarian human geography. He took the largest part of this manuscript on settlement geography (40% of its content) and finalized it for the Academy’s publisher in 1957, but as it was severely criticized by some Marxist-Leninist proponents, it only came out in 1963. The proofreaders were Artúr Lehel (geographer), Máté Major (architectural historian), Gyula Prinz (geographer), Vilmos Sándor (economic historian) and Antal Bartha (historian). The “geographer” Artúr Lehel, the harshest of all his critics, concluded in 1959: “I have studied professor Tibor Mendöl’s manuscript and have arrived at the conclusion that, from the point of view of socialist science, it is unsuitable for publishing.” (ELTE Archive 420/b. 4., July 27, 1959) [*Mendöl Tibor professzor úr kéziratát áttanulmányoztam és arra a következtetésre jutottam, hogy az a szocialista tudomány szempontjából kiadásra érdemtelen.*] Although Mendöl gave a polite but dismissive reply, he later carefully added references from Marx and Engels into his book (ELTE Archive 420/b. 4., September 14, 1959). Lehel was one of an older generation of formerly illegal communists returning from emigration in the 1950s (under the Rákosi dictatorship). Without any qualifications he attained the academic title of candidate (C.Sc.) in geography in 1959, when he retired from the Ministry of Interior’s Office of National Security (*Belügyminisztérium III. Főcsoportfőnöksége*, the successor of the notorious national terror organization, *Államvédelmi Hatóság*) as a so-called “III./III.” intelligence agent and high ranking police officer (colonel-commander). Despite Lehel’s “considered” critique, this book is widely regarded as Mendöl’s masterpiece (it received the golden award of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences). Because he had been stripped of most of his titles, he submitted a 600-pages study as his dissertation to become a Doctor of Science (D.Sc., a rank of the new system), but his antagonists hampered the procedure, and he only received the well-earned title posthumously in 1967, after his untimely death in 1966 (Györi 2009). His academy fellowship was also only rehabilitated after the system

change in 1989. Although he still had a few proponents, and was formally remembered in journals and elsewhere, nobody really discussed his works or his contested life. To cite his recent biographer:

I was studying geography and history at the University of Budapest in the middle of the 1990s and had the experience of reading Mendöl's works, whose vigor was beyond anything in the "flat," catalogue-like textbooks on economic geography. As it happens, I did not encounter Mendöl's name in economic geography courses, but in history. (Győri 2009: 49)

Apart from his grandest studies, he had also organized a new, separate course on the introduction and history of geography in the 1950s as part of the new curriculum (mainly featuring economic geography). His *Introduction to Geography* was put together from parts of his previous lectures in human geography, and his studies on "the great discoveries." Mendöl worked on the fifth volume of a grandiose five-volume project (Cholnoky et al. 1938) covering the history of discoveries, and also helped writing entries for a supplementing lexicon of discoverers (Kéz 1938), which was later republished in 1997 and 2008. He used this experience to compile his own lexicon into an appendix of the 1952 and 1953 versions of his text, left out from the 1999 revised version. As a form of his compromising resistance, Mendöl had embedded several of his works in Marxist-Leninist jargon, mostly on settlement geography (1951b, 1953b, 1956, 1967), and a lecture text on economic geography (1950b), but he had applied the jargon of Marxist-Leninist ideology in *Introduction to Geography* more than anywhere else in his works. As Győri writes:

In this work, periodization and drafting a picture of social history are applied along Marxist lines; even the usage of concepts diverges from what the reader could ordinarily associate with Mendöl's studies (Győri 2009: 47).

Or, as one of his curriculum reviewers and his greatest antagonist, Markos, even acknowledged:

The subject matter, argumentation and sequence is obviously given. Everything depends on the mode of discussion, the proper and consistent application of dialectical and historical materialism. The intention of doing this is by all means existent in the programme (12 May 1952, ELTE Archive 420/b. 4.).

[*A tárgykör, a gondolatmenet és a sorrend itt természetesen adva van. Minden a tárgyalás módjától, a dialektikus és történelmi materializmus helyes és következetes alkalmazásától függ. Az erre való törekvés feltétlenül fellelhető a programban.*]

Although Mendöl started teaching the course, it seems that this was soon passed on to his disciples under changed course titles for fourth-year students, and was later given to the economic geographer Csaba Kovács from the 1960s (Az Eötvös Loránd Tudományegyetem Értesítője 1955–1970). According to Mendöl's former student, Ernő Wallner (1976, 184), the text was still used for teaching in the 1970s. Later on, as a young academic, Gyula Gábris (later

head of the Department of Physical Geography) was recruited by Kovács to lead historical seminars parallel to his more philosophical lectures, and Gábris had even compiled a short historical reader consisting of rather short and selective excerpts, which was used until the 1990s (Gábris 1977). After Kovács, a philosopher and historian of science, Márta Vinkovics (associate professor at the Department of Regional Geography) took over the lecture in the 1990s, but neither Gábris nor Vinkovics had ever read the text or had used it for teaching (Interview with Gyula Gábris, June 14, 2013). It thus seems that for decades the text was seldom used, and it soon turned into a "phantom." It almost completely disappeared from libraries, and nobody actually knew anything about it. A list of its main topics and a less than two-pages excerpt (Mendöl 1953a: 38–39) was published in the journal *Földrajzi Közlemények* ['Geographical Review'] by Mendöl's disciples in 1976, which curiously consisted of only a weightless passage on auxiliary disciplines, under the rather meaningless title of "interdisciplinarity" (Havas and Zombai 1976, 184), and without any comments on the book's actual contents, language, or grand historical endeavor. The text itself was only cited by some in formal fashion (see for example Probáld 2001b), with even fewer ever looking up the original. Its oblivion went together with the deterioration of both historical insight and the historiography of geography in Hungary.

The "Big Historical Gap" in Postsocialist Hungarian Geography

The political change of 1989 in Hungary has also led Hungarian geography into a "postsocialist condition" (Fraser 1997, a term analogous to Lyotard's [1984] "postmodern condition," for an overview, see Gille 2010). Although Fraser concentrates on the possibilities of a new political Left following a crisis of vision after 1989, the general question here is whether this condition designates: 1) an historical epoch with structural explanations of demarcation (for example, the "transition" to a market economy); 2) a state of culture, mind, memory, or behavior that lingers on and surfaces contradictorily through inherited structures; or 3) a critical epistemology employed not only to reflect upon "actually existing socialism," but also to explore the middle ground between often essentialized "capitalist" and "socialist" worlds, and "Western" and "Eastern" concepts (Frank 1991, Verdery 1996, Chari and Verdery 2009, Bockman 2011, Lampland 2011). The rather "closed" and sometimes provincialized concepts of both socialism and postsocialism—often as the Oriental "Other" of the West—should also be treated differentially and relationally (Hann et al. 2002, Outhwaite and Ray 2005, Stenning and Hörschelmann 2008, Silova 2010, Cervinkova 2012) and should be contextualized along globally uneven relations and circulations (see Bockman and Eyal 2002, Tulbure 2009, Bockman 2011, Gille 2010, Éber et al. 2014). But here I will mainly focus on the second above-mentioned aspect of this "postsocialist condition," and its consequences in narrativity and knowledge production in geography.

Postsocialism in geography meant change but also constancy: it was a contested and negotiated play of ruptures and continuities. Many Hungarian geographers delved into a seemingly freeing liberalism (Timár 2006), and began the pioneer land grab for previously forbidden or idle fields of study (for example ethnic, religious, cultural, political, and historical geography), carved out from a formerly monolithic "economic geography," now re-labeled as "social geography" (Dövényi and Hajdú 2010). A telling example of this is that historical geography, already resurrected in the 1980s, could feature on one of its textbook covers the formerly tabooed image of Hungary's pre-Trianon borders (Frisnyák 1999). But in many respects, *with no elite change in geography, this was more of a "re-labeling ritual"* (similar to the "regionalizing ritual" in American geography, see Livingstone 1992). The contest had begun

for new conceptual territory, with a concurrent "translative" process of "white-washing" previous intellectual currency now assumed ideologically biased.

After 1989, with the political crisis and symbolic delegitimation of the technocratic elite, the devaluation of former political capital was countered by many by transferring, or maintaining and legitimating, the continuity of their cultural or academic capital (Bourdieu 1986, Eyal et al. 1998). In actual practice, previous research traditions of a reductionist economic determinism and a narrowly empiricist, statistics-based positivism (Timár 2009b), and previous textbook traditions of communist geographers on economic geography were continued (Markos 1962, Radó 1963 cf. Perczel 2003, Vidéki 2008), often under seemingly pluralized labels (the array of this postsocialist subdisciplinary pluralism is well demonstrated by Tóth 2002a, 2002b). Textbooks were only rewritten and rearranged in new narratives of either the "transition" to a market economy, or to the European Union, or from the East to the West, but in an unchanged theoretical perspective and in the remnant technocratic language of deideologized Marxist-Leninist ideas (Timár 2006, see Perczel 2003). The peripheral shift from serving a Sovietized planning economy to supplying a similarly redistribution-based European Union regional policy also warranted much of geography's survival in spatial planning (still dominating the human geography curriculum). This secured the continued ideological need for a positivistic ethos, and the focus on quantitative analysis and applied technical knowledge to be provided for bureaucracies and planning agencies (Timár 2004, 2009a). Adapting to these needs, Hungarian "regional science" as a typically postsocialist academic field was founded in the 1980s and was institutionalized at university in the end of the 1990s by technocrats formerly working at the *Tervgazdasági Intézet* of the *Országos Tervhivatal* ['Institute for Planning Economy of the National Planning Office'].

Under this stirred symbolic setting, there also evolved a habit of producing objectivist accounts of previous geographers' neutral achievements, concealing actual social, political, and personal contexts, and often repositioning them in a presentist, "Whiggish" fashion (Livingstone 1979, 1992). Apart from maintaining a comfortably selective silence, the hunt for ancient forerunners and founding fathers to legitimate present interests began, and the dusty name of Mendöl again became quite fashionable (Györi 2006, Czirfusz 2011, 2012). For example, upon the centennial anniversary of Mendöl's birth in 2005, Zoltán Antal, his successor as head of the renamed Department of Social and Economic Geography, put Teleki, Mendöl, and Markos in one successive line as the pioneers of Hungarian economic geography, labelling Mendöl an "economic geographer" (Antal 2006). Antal and his successor, Perczel, wrote similarly biased accounts of the Department's history (Antal and Perczel 2005), concealing actual intentions and events (Györi 2009).

The main tension in this "postsocialist condition" is what I would call a "*big historical gap*." Concerning the broader context of republishing Mendöl's work, several books or manuscripts have been (re)published after the system change to fill this "gap" in remembering geography's past. These were: the exact reprint of the grandiose four-volume (1839-pages) *Magyar föld, magyar faj* ['Hungarian Land, Hungarian Race'] (Prinz et al. 1990–1991[1937–1938]); the book of the leading geographer and conservative politician, Pál Teleki, a Hegelian analysis of the dialectical historical evolution of the "geographical idea" [*földrajzi gondolat*] (1996[1917], for an analysis see Karaffa 2014); Cholnoky's irredentist account of Hungary's geography, featuring the Trianon borders on its cover (2010[1929]); Ferenc Fodor's "outlaw's diary" which is a biography on Teleki (2001[1950]), and his lengthy, drama-like, though rather enumerative historical study of Hungarian geography (2006[1951]); Mendöl's prize-winning

early study on his home region (1981[1928]), his previously published grand study on the Carpathian basin co-authored with his good friend, Béla Bulla (1999[1947]), and finally his lecture book, *Introduction to Geography* (1999[1951–53]). Neither of these (re)published texts were used as textbooks, except for Mendöl's historical study. But there are two further aspects to stress here in order to understand the context of its republishing.

First, the outcome of this is that there is still no up-to-date overview or textbook on the discipline of geography in Hungary that would present Hungarian and international geography in a proper historical and international perspective. There were, of course, some modestly ambitious attempts, but these do not provide a comprehensive account of Hungarian geography, nor are they theoretically or historically informed. Rather, they are largely biased in their descriptive and selective presentations of international trends (see for example Cséfalvay 1990, Tóth 2002a, 2002b, Mészáros 2000; for the perspective of regional science, see Nemes Nagy 1998, 2009). The "hermeneutic gatekeepers" of knowledge production followed provincial strategies in reproducing local interpretation patterns, providing a rather narrow reception of international literature. This is well demonstrated by the fact that the only two books having been translated belong to an older positivist "spatial science" tradition (Haggett 2006, Benko 1999), creating a highly biased and anachronistic picture of actual international trends.

Second, all of this is due to the fact that the high modernist project of a rationalized planning economy discredited previous nationalist historicism, which has led not only to the tabooing of any meaningful critical discourse on geography's burdened heritage, but also to the "deskilling" of historical sensibility in geography altogether. In my view, this (re)publishing frenzy, especially regarding Mendöl's work, represented the Hungarian geographical community's admission of failing to provide a comprehensive historical account on geography. The highly pragmatic motivations behind (re)publishing is clearly shown by the fact that the most problematic historical texts were neither published nor well explored by geographers (a single counter-example is the very recent heightened interest in Ferenc Fodor's works, see Jobbitt 2011, 2013, 2014, Probáld 2012, Győri 2012, Gyuris 2014, Czirfusz 2014). Rehabilitation was thus part of a "postering" technique; namely the narrative textbook practice of writing catchy but simplified accounts that seemingly fulfill the basic needs and didactic myth-makings of education and inner consumption (Taylor 1976, Aay 1981, Mayhew 2011), but are marked by the tension of listing things *without* revealing their actual historical substance, in order to preserve the local canon. Textbook narratives were in many cases frustrated attempts to produce caricatured accounts on recent international trends by a generation of Hungarian geographers who were trained in an era with scarce opportunities to acquire international knowledge due to Cold War science politics and Hungarian geography's intellectual isolationism and disadvantaged position amongst other sciences after WWII. This has erected a conformist, seemingly coherent but rather fictitious intellectual landscape to fill the void of the "big historical gap," because of the failure of critically narrating the controversial pasts of both the "nationalist" and the "socialist" geographical projects.

The (Re)Publishing of *Introduction to Geography*: Different Rehabilitators, Different Texts and Lack of Historical Analysis

The idea of (re)publishing Mendöl's *Introduction to Geography* can be attributed to Ferenc Probáld (b. 1941), a meteorologist and regional geographer, and former head of the Department of Regional Geography from 1993–94. This idea came to him after taking over the lecture on the history of geography from Vinkovics in 1996 (after Probáld, the lecture has since been held by

Róbert Győri). As a noted regional geographer authoring several leading textbooks of regional geography, Probáld only began researching the history of geography from thereon. He wrote a few rehabilitative papers on Teleki students such as Ferenc Koch, Ferenc Fodor, and Mendöl (Probáld 2001a, 2005, 2012), and was critical towards the biased remembrance of some communist geographers. In his rather renegade "minority report," he raised strong objections against the euphemistic commemoration of the superspy-cum-cartographer Sándor Radó's geographical work through a double issue of the journal *Földrajzi Közlemények* ['Geographical Review'], which was countered by the editors (Probáld 1999a). It is also interesting to note that his promotion to associate professor was hampered for political reasons, as he was for a long time the only one at the university among economic (social) geographers without Party membership (Győri 2011b).

According to his interview, his intention was twofold: to provide a proper textbook for his teachings and to "save the text" in order to rehabilitate Mendöl (interview with Ferenc Probáld, July 4, 2013). However, Probáld assigned the duties of reediting and framing the text to his former yearmate, the economic geographer, György Perczel (although it must be emphasized that Probáld proofread the reedited text), who was the head of the Department of Social and Economic Geography. Perczel (1941–2007) was originally a Party member, and had left the university in 1973 to establish a successful political career in policy-making (first in the Party's *Központi Bizottság* ['Central Committee'], then as vice minister of the *Környezetvédelmi és Vízgazdálkodási Minisztérium* ['Ministry of Environmental Protection and Water Management']), only to return in 1990 as a "parachutist,"² to succeed the long reign (1965–1993) of the "red baron"³ Zoltán Antal as head of department (1993–2002). The editorship was passed on to Perczel because of only very practical reasons: Probáld was very busy finishing his textbooks on regional geography, and Perczel had a better secretary with good typing skills, and had the position, resources, and time to have the work done. He was also in direct contact with Mendöl's widow, and had symbolic interests in rehabilitating the former head of his department.

² The "parachutist" label is used on individuals who had previously been working in politics or public administration while supported by the Party, but were given politically less risky, though important positions after the system change.

³ The term "red baron" originally labelled the legendary Ede Horváth (1924–1998), who was known to use his Party connections to reform the *Rába* machine producing company of Győr as a semi-capitalist enterprise (under socialism!) with international (mostly American) connections. In many fields of science, similar "provinces" were established at university departments by ambitious leaders with good organizational skills and Party connections guaranteeing their stable careers. A good example was Sándor Radó, who had built cartography up to international standards, but another was Frigyes Dési in meteorology, succeeding the former head of department, József Száva-Kováts after his imprisonment in 1953. Antal's exceptionally long, twenty-eight-year reign as department head was also supported by his strong loyalty towards Party ideology, although economic geography at his department became very isolated.

But I find it important to emphasize that none of them were close to Mendöl (either personally or concerning their research) or had conducted any historical studies before. In this manner, the book's Preface sounds highly controversial:

It is not an usual event in book publishing, that a manuscript is published, which is fifty-sixty years old. The reasons for this may be twofold: first, that the manuscript bears timeless, outstanding professional values; and second, that *the grateful students would like to salute their master with a post mortem publication*. (Perczel 1999: 7, emphasis added)

[A könyvkiadásban nem gyakori esemény, hogy olyan kéziratot jelentenek meg, amely ötven-hatvan évvel korábban keletkezett. Ennek két oka lehet: először is az, hogy a kézirat időtálló, kiemelkedő szakmai értékeket hordoz; másodszor az, hogy a hálás tanítványok post mortem kiadással kívánnak tisztelni mesterüknek.]

Neither Probáld nor Perczel were aware of the fact that there were different versions of the original text. In his interview, Probáld explained that he first came to know of the text in 1960 or 1961, when Sándor Katona—a geographer of serious antiquarian habits, considered by some as “a good Mendöl student”—showed him a copy he had enthusiastically bought in a book shop. This copy was later used by Probáld, but Perczel also had a copy—both were the 1952 versions. The first, 1950 edition of Mendöl's text entitled “The subject and development of geography” is rather homogeneous, and remained very much unfinished: the “great discoveries” suddenly stop with Magellan, and interestingly it is yet devoid of any Marxist-Leninist language (Mendöl 1950). The 1951 version was published in almost full length (Mendöl 1951), but the 1952 version is the first “complete” one (Mendöl 1952), with Mendöl even adding 36 pages of encyclopedic entries listing great discoverers as an appendix, but even some extra content on imperialism and Marxist-Leninist ideology (for his additions and sketches, see ELTE Archive 420/a. 3.), which seems to have been a response to Markos's relentless critique in his review of the course's proposal (ELTE Archive 420/b. 4.). However, there was also a 1953 version, with slightly different and more mature form and content, parts of it put in small-letters for didactical reasons. This evidence shows that the rehabilitators did not seem interested in unraveling the genealogy of the text, which is reassured by the astonishing fact that *there is not even a clear reference, nor a contextual historical analysis in the 1999 version on the original sources*. Concerning the book's context, the all-too-brief and highly euphemistic biography of Mendöl in the end of the new version by Perczel had completely silenced the ruptures of Mendöl's career, which ironically led to the birth of the original text.

Manipulating Contents, “Completing” and “Translating” the Original Text

Republishing meant that the text's content had also been changed by the editor, which is admitted to and explained in the Preface by the following:

Throughout the whole editing, my intention was to present professor Mendöl's creation to the reader in its most complete form. *However, it was inevitable to have to delete some smaller parts that have already been exceeded by the*

progression of our discipline, so as not to distract the attention of the reader
(Perczel 1999: 7, emphasis added).

[*A szerkesztői munka során mindvégig az a törekvés vezetett, hogy a legteljesebben kerüljön az olvasó kezébe Mendöl professzor alkotása. Elkerülhetetlenül meg kellett azonban oldani azt, hogy szakmánk fejlődése miatt meghaladott kisebb terjedelmű kéziratrészekkel ne kössük le az olvasó figyelmét.*]

However, although this act was presented as the self-evident and common-sense editing of a not up-to-date historical text, it actually meant a quite deliberate and complex manipulation of its content (which was nowhere highlighted or detailed in the republished version).

The original text is divided into four parts (see the table of contents in Fig. 2), but actually consists of two larger themes: first a general view on present geography, and second, a study of geography's historical evolution. As the first part served in a traditional vein as a logical justification of contemporary geography, republishing the text as an university textbook in 1999 obviously carried the anachronistic message that these statements on geography can and should still be considered contemporary today. One could also be puzzled by the fact that large parts of the introduction, parts on the approaches of physical geography (altogether about 24 pages), and the 36-pages appendix of great discoverers were deleted— according to Probáld because of their “minor importance” (see Fig. 2 in the appendices). The name of the book was also changed— without any explanation provided in the new edition—from *Bevezetés a földrajzba* [‘Introduction to Geography’] to *A földrajztudomány az ókortól napjainkig* [‘Geography from Antiquity to Present Times’], because they agreed with the university's publisher that the real merit of the book is its historical account of geography. Another argument was that the historical course on geography was for decades given to students in their fourth year, and Probáld insisted upon teaching it not as an introductory text, because first year students “lack the proper experience to cope with its material.” (Interview with Ferenc Probáld, July 4, 2013). This, however was in conflict with Mendöl's original intentions, and all previous reviewers of the original course agreed that either the “great discoveries” or the Marxist-Leninist ideology should be taught as propaedeutics from the first year (from an anonymous reviewer, a review from Mendöl's good friend, the physical geographer Béla Bulla, and the mentioned critical review from György Markos, ELTE Archive 420/b. 4.). Today the lecture on the history of geography is held by Róbert Győri for first year students in their second semester, although he does not use the text.

For the purpose of teaching, the text also had to be “modernized.” This was achieved by some minor stylistic refurbishments, some changed geographical names, and some supplemented new maps. But since the original historical account was limited, and the description of the then-contemporary Soviet Marxist-Leninist geography omitted (about eighteen pages, see Fig. 2.), Probáld ultimately decided to “complete” Mendöl's text for modern times (Probáld 1999b). This consisted of writing a shorter historical account of the “last expeditions” (Probáld 1999b: 226–234) and even a more critical account of “the evolution of Soviet geography and its effects in Hungary” (Probáld 1999b: 251–255; both were partly rewritten versions of Mendöl's more problematic accounts), and a longer narrative on recent developments in international geography (Probáld 1999b: 224–226, 234–251, 255–257).

The first problem with this is that Probáld's own account stopped somewhere in the 1970s, forgetting to give an overview of recent international trends (of which he was highly dismissive and sceptical, see Probáld 2001b, Győri 2011b). Apart from this anachronism, his narrative was

also relatively biased as it was based upon a triumphalist narrative of the holistic "landscape" and "human-nature relations" concept, or the "regionalist paradigm" of geography against the reductive positivist and progressivist "spatialist" or "spatial science" tradition. Consequently, he finished curiously with a rather vague and fictitious umbrella term of a "regionalist renaissance" in contemporary international geography, completely missing practically all other well-known approaches that have emerged since the 1960s. Nevertheless, his statements were much in tune with his life-long work in regional geography, and reflected—often politically heated—local debates and power struggles between certain geographers and a rising regional science ("spatial science") *inside* Hungarian human geography. Informed by one-sided claims of this dichotomous "performative discourse" (Bourdieu 1991[1982]: 223), Probáld explains that "logical positivism, and the physicalism derived from it inflicted severe damage on the image and evolution of social sciences; however, historians or literary theorists did not accustom their inner values to the dogmas of logical positivism [*A logikai pozitivizmus, ill. az abból eredő fizikalizmus súlyos károkat okozott a társadalomtudományok külső megítélésében és fejlődésében is; ugyanakkor a történészek vagy irodalomtudósok a maguk belső értékrendjét mégsem igazították a logikai pozitivizmus dogmáihoz*] (Probáld 1999: 245). However, such claims are highly unhistorical, since geography was lagging behind most social sciences in adapting practices of quantification and philosophies of neo-positivism, which helped geography strengthen its position among other sciences in the "quantitative revolution" of the 1950s and 1960s. Probáld even contradicts himself (rightly) claiming later that this actually "helped develop strong connections between geography and social sciences" [*szoros kapcsolatot teremtett a földrajz és a vele érintkező társadalomtudományok között*] (249). His modalizing language (Latour 1987) is burdened with positioning rhetorics such as "the rise and fall of the new paradigm" [*az új paradigma diadalútja és kudarca*], the "dethronement of regional geography" [*a regionális földrajz trónfosztásával*] (245), and the idea that "geographical spatialism proved to be a dead end" [*A földrajzi spatializmus végső soron azért bizonyult zsákutcának*] (249). In fact, his seemingly universal statements are actually referring to local debates and demarcational struggles contesting the *fields* of legitimation (Bourdieu 1991[1984], 1999). For example, he writes: "Whether there is any need to an individual spatio-social science—regional science in Walter Isard's terms—is still a matter of debate in academic circles [*Hogy vajon szükség van-e egyáltalán önálló társadalmi tértudományra—Walter Isardtól származó elnevezéssel regionális tudományra—, az szakmai körökben még mindig vita tárgyát képezi*] (249). Given that the former Department of Regional Geography was renamed Department of Regional Science in 2007 under József Nemes Nagy, and was thus in the debate between Hungarian regional geography and regional science, Probáld's account was embedded in a sort of defence speech for geography's rightful heir, regional geography (see Vita 1989: 77–80, Probáld 1995, 2007, Nemes Nagy et al. 2001, Nemes Nagy 1995, 2001, 2007, Mészáros 2000). Thus, the re-published textbook became more a vehicle of reproducing local traditions and provincialized power structures of knowledge production, than an indicative enquiry of international trends in geography.

The second problem is that Probáld's claims also fit with his rehabilitative intentions, closing the gaps between his particular ideas about geography and his arbitrary interpretation of Mendöl's account. In fact, he considered it "a thrilling challenge to complete the original in the spirit of Mendöl, by preserving his concept and argumentation" (Interview with Ferenc Probáld, July 4, 2013). In this respect, his narrative was a symbolic gesture of connecting to the old geography practiced under the "nationalist" regime (Mendöl) by a geographer working under the "socialist" regime (Probáld). As with the purging of harmful ideological baggage (see later), this

act could also be interpreted as a sort of moral purification from the discredited socialist past. But in my view, this narrative strategy has also led to uncritically accepting Mendöl's ideas, treating his history of geography in positivist fashion through an "objective lens" of a chronology of established facts, regardless of the original author's inherited and underdetermining perspective. Supposing that the original argument could be "continued" without any narrative errors thus led to concealing the particularity of Probáld's own narrative by naturalizing and solidifying it through Mendöl's work and the authority of an established geographical tradition of the past in a yet unstable and immature postsocialist present.

The second part of Mendöl's book provides an analysis of the various social environments and modes of production in different times of world history and their connecting geographical knowledges. Nevertheless, seen as a whole, this account was written in a *dual narrative*: first in a traditional emplotment of the romantic "great discoveries" project with competing European imperial nations in a widening Ecumene (a legacy of the "nationalist" regime), and second in a Marxist-Leninist argument of advancing modes of production and a linear and rather strict stage-by-stage progression of society. Concerning the tensions in language, the meaning and meta-narratives of different "explanatory affects" (White 1973), combined with the more individualist-cum-masculinist enterprise of explorers within an inscribed value-system that was based on merits in discovery and a fluid, romanticized world of contested but expansionist adventuring, are contrasted and unreconciled with the static, law-like constraints and processes of structuralism and economism, marching through the closed, Eurocentric, unilinear, progressive transition of succeeding ancient, feudal, modern capitalist, and socialist modes of production (see Frank 1991). Despite their obvious contradictions, Mendöl labored hard to carefully interweave these two meta-narratives (White 1987), and sometimes the former, sometimes the latter speaks to us more dominantly. More particularly, Mendöl's rhetorical defenses of demarcational lines between (Sovietized) economic geography and (his) settlement geography (Mendöl 1952: 45–51) also mark historical conflicts in the text. This dual narrative, with the proportions of structure, the relation of the whole to its parts, and the positioning of certain concepts and meanings, should have been given a proper hermeneutic analysis in order to provide any meaningful interpretation of the text (Gadamer 2004[1975], Hamilton 1996).

But instead, this problem was later solved by simply deleting the most compromising parts on Soviet geography and Marxist-Leninist thought, thereby practically forging the original text. It is a minor issue that the text was in some parts stylistically refurbished, but in very minimal—and sometimes unnecessary—ways. Much grander changes were the translative rewriting of some terms considered to be overly problematic: "bourgeois geographers" were changed to "some geographers," "political economics" into "economics," "imperialist aims" into "political aims," and so on. As Probáld explained, this was indeed necessary because "the Marxist-Leninist phrases would have discredited Mendöl" (Interview with Ferenc Probáld, July 4, 2013). But this desperate attempt to polish the text and weed out all incongruities turned out to be unduly naive and opportunistic, as only the most obvious connections to the Sovietized regime were purged. The most common assumptions of the Marxist-Leninist narrative were not dismantled at all, as this could only have been achieved by completely rewriting substantial parts of the text. But even more confusingly, terms like "geographical vulgarism" or "mechanical materialism" sometimes stayed in, and the whole Marxist repertoire of modes, forces, and relations of production, the endless progression of society, materialism, and dialectics continued to organize the 1999 text also. For example:

But neither the proponents of this approach [e.g. Passarge], nor those who in the 1930s proclaimed the social scientific aspects of economic geography, take into account the dialectical connections between the forces of production and the relations of production. *In this way the former are not devoid from vulgar geographism, and the latter hold an idealist position* (Mendöl 1952: 276, 1999[1952]: 220; the underlining is absent from the 1999 version, and the text in italics is left out entirely).

[*De sem ennek az irányynak a képviselői, sem azok, akik az 1930-as években a gazdaságföldrajz társadalomtudomány-jellegét hirdetik, nem veszik figyelembe a termelőerők és termelésviszonyok dialektikus összefüggéseit. Ilyen módon az előbbiek nem mentesek a vulgáris geografizmustól, az utóbbiak pedig idealista álláspontot képviselnek*]

Moreover, French milieu theories (of Montesquieu and Voltaire) were “burdened by the ultimately stressed antagonisms of a dying feudalism” (Mendöl 1999[1952]: 163), but sections on Adam Smith and Malthus (160–161) are also revealing in preserving Marxist language, as

Malthus could not have known first, how great the role of the reserve army of workers in capitalist production is, second, he thought of the free competition of the capitalist mode of production as an universal law, with all its consequences.

[*Malthus egyfelől még nem tudta, hogy a kapitalista termelésben milyen nagy a szerepe a tartalék munkásseregeknek, másfelől örökérvényű törvényszerűségnek vélte a kapitalista termelési mód szabad versenyét, annak összes következményével.*] (p. 161)

Nevertheless, by deleting crucial parts on Marxist-Leninist geography, the true source and architectonic of this narrative was concealed from more naive readers (especially students). Even more curiously, Probáld’s own added content, continued in “Mendölian fashion,” is ironically free from this language, apart from sharing a positivistic and modernistic understanding of the ever-progressing accumulative nature of objective science (see below). This translative ritual of recoding previous modalities (White 1978) also fits well into the general objectivist narratives in Hungarian geography mentioned above. But the text’s hybridity served as a peculiar compromise characteristic of the selective but interconnected ruptures and continuities of postsocialist geography. The uncritical (but not irrational) selectivity of choosing between ideologically compromising and non-compromising parts of the text was a rhetorical technology built for survival (Latour 1987: 21–62)—either for the case of Mendöl (closer to Probáld) or a hidden Marxist-Leninist agenda (closer to Perczel). Whatever the interpretation, the overall result is that—against Probáld’s self-identified aims—we were still learning a Marxist-Leninist ideology of the 1950s Stalinist era, as—similarly to other textbooks—its narrative was rationalized and domesticated into “black-boxed” conventional wisdom (Latour 1987) to survive uncritically the system change.

Towards the Critical Reinterpretation of Mendöl's Text

After encountering the more personal rhetorics and hermeneutics of Mendöl's text in light of the different historical contexts of its contested republishing, matters of reinterpretation should also be considered within the broader perspective of recent critical theory.

First, the text's "great discoveries" narrative should be critically deconstructed and situated not only within a critique of discourses on Eurocentrism, colonialism, and imperialism, but also on nationalism, as the practices of discoveries were the main contestations of competing nations both geopolitically and scientifically (Bell et al. 1994, Smith and Godlewska 1994, Driver 1992, 2001). Mendöl's Eurocentric vision of world history is implicit in his narrative structure of European discoveries, with several concrete and very explicit manifestations of it in his text. According to Mendöl, in the case of pre-European civilizations (Egypt, Mesopotamia, Persia, India and China):

[...] the expansion of their *Ecumene* stops, their system of knowledge petrifies. They become isolated, and can only get out of this position at the beginning of the modern era, when the world-ranging *Ecumene* of the *slowly but hardily developing European societies* reaches them. We know well that the development of human society, and thus of science and of geographical knowledge, were in preceding centuries *primarily the development of European societies, European science, and European geography* (Mendöl 1999[1952]: 52, emphasis added).

[[...] *oikumenéjük terjeszkedése megreked, ismeretrendszerük megmerevedik. Elszigetelődnek és ebből a helyzetükből csak akkor kezdenek ismét kijutni, amikor a szívós lassúsággal fejlődő európai társadalmak az újkor eleje óta az egész Földre kiterjedő oikumenéje őket is eléri. Jól tudjuk, hogy az emberi társadalom fejlődése, így a tudományoké és azokon belül a földrajzi ismereteké is, a napjainkat megelőző századokon át elsősorban az európai társadalmak, az európai tudomány, az európai földrajz fejlődése.*]

The geographical importance of this, moreover, is seen as deriving from "the spatial path of development leading to Europe's hegemonic role. This path starts from Egypt and Mesopotamia, continues along the lands around the Mediterranean Sea, and from here later reaches the northernmost parts of Europe [*Ez a tény az Európa élenjáró szerepéhez vezető fejlődés útvonala a térben. Az útvonal Egyiptomból és Mezopotámiából indul ki, a Földközi-tengert környező tájakra vezet, és innét éri el később Európa északibb részeit*] (52). Thus, while concealing Europe's historical position on the global periphery before 1500 through clever rhetorics (Abu-Lughod 1989, Frank 1998), he visualizes a fictitious single origin of an essential cradle or hearth of development, with "European" knowledge of ancient Greek scholars preserved and passed on to the "chosen" civilization (the "superior" Hellenic culture derived from Aristotle and Ptolemy only to be "preserved" and "passed on" by Byzantines and Arabs, see Mendöl 1999[1952]: 53, 82, 87, 97), which is a prime myth of Eurocentric historians (Bernal 1987, Hobson 2004). As Mendöl wrote:

The scientific treasure of ancient classics, and thus *their geographical achievements, are guarded and saved for future development* not by the heirs of the empire, i.e., European people, but by Hellenized societies of the Middle East,

the Arabs from the eighth century. We will see how the new rise of European geography in the thirteenth century begins primarily with establishing contact with the Arabs. However, *the ultimate causes of this rise lies in the inner development of European society itself* (Mendöl 1999[1952]: 76, emphasis added).

[Az ókori klasszikusok tudományos kincsét, így földrajzi eredményeit is, a birodalom örökösei, tehát Európa népei helyett a hellenizált Közel-Kelet társadalmi, a VIII. század óta az arabok őrzik és mentik át a későbbi fejlődés számára. Látni fogjuk, hogy hogyan indul meg az európai földrajz új fellendülése a XIII. században, jórészt éppen az arabokkal való érintkezés révén. Ámde ennek a fellendülésnek végső okai magának az európai társadalomnak a belső fejlődésében rejlenek.]

Although decisive inventions, like the compass, had long been used by the Chinese and later the Arabs, any outer influence is completely dismissed by Mendöl, who concludes that "the ultimate explanation of the thirteenth century renaissance of geography lies in the inner development of European societies" [*A földrajz XIII. században kezdődő reneszánszának végső magyarázatát az európai társadalmak saját belső fejlődésében találjuk*] (Mendöl 1999[1952]: 88). Mendöl's rather vague summary of Arabian geography (81–87) also conceals actual non-European advances in science, technology, and reconnaissance (notably Arabian and Chinese). Thus, in Blaut's (1993, 2000) words, Mendöl's history is "tunnel history" from the colonizer's perspective, as it presents world history as the universalized march of a rather provincial European progress (Chakrabarty 2007). This discourse follows the "expansion of the Ecumene" bringing a rational aura of Enlightenment in a cosmopolitan connectivity to all, normatively read against the isolation from Europe, while driven by the diffusional interests of the imperial European center. Also, the often dramatic tone of the diary-like story-telling narrative of explorations with the heroic depiction of explorers' adventurous achievements mediates to us a restless imperial subject, reinforcing a psychological urge for discovery in the reader. Through the careful catalogue-like account of accumulating European discoveries, local people are almost totally absent from history (see Wolf 2010). For example, Europeans are said not to have approached inner Africa until the end of the nineteenth century due to its harsh natural environment and physical barriers (an environmental determinist argument of the era), which is only partly true, since European sailors were a minor enterprise among many others, and had encountered much larger and more organized states both in Africa and Asia. But these "Others" (especially India, Japan, and China) are described in simplistic notions often completely concealed from the reader, adding to the triumphalist reading of the "rise of Europe" (Mendöl 1999[1952]: 106–109, 176; see also Pomeranz 2001, Hobson 2004, Wolf 2010). Orientalist and racist discourse, such as treating "static" Eastern rivals as following a backward "isolationist" politics leading to their "underdevelopment," or labeling Islamic Arabian cultures as inherently "despotic," "hostile" and "fanatic" (Mendöl 1999[1952]: 81), indicates that the narrative of the text is ordered along a Western gaze of modernity (see Said 2003[1978]).

A second point of critical departure could be from the history and philosophy of science. Mendöl's account follows an unilinear development of science and technology with a steady accumulation of "objective" scientific facts. Although the role of the development of society is emphasized in the development of knowledge, the exact connection is seldom embraced in depth

(directions of development follow a negative "limited feudalism" versus a positive "developed bourgeoisie"). The development of science is presented in a secularized Enlightenment narrative of rational individuals' struggle against authority, either towards out-moded ancient philosophy or "reactionary" religious beliefs (here Marxism-Leninism surfaces again). For example, he notes that Galileo "dares to attack the physics of Aristotle then praised it almost as dogma. And did it, as Copernicus and Kepler, questioning all statements of authority before, by his own observations and own workings of mind [*Meg meri támadni Arisztotelésznek ekkor szinte dogmaként tisztelt fizikáját. Teszi pedig ezt úgy, hogy amiként Kopernikusz és Kepler, függetlenül minden korábbi tekintély állításától, saját megfigyeléseiből saját agymunkájukkal...*] (Mendöl 1999[1952]: 134). He adds to this that sixteenth century cosmographies were "entangled in the authority of dogma, not only of the Church, but of the praised dogmas of ancient views" [...*köti őket a dogmák tekintélye, nemcsak az egyháziaké, hanem a dogmaként tisztelt antik nézeteké is*] (142). This highly unhistorical presentation of the development of modern science has been long recalled (see Biagioli 1994, Henry 1997, Numbers 2010), but to be sure, Marxist-Leninist anti-clericalism—requested by Markos in his critical review of the 1951 text (ELTE Archive 420/b. 4., May 12, 1952)—is here in marriage with unilinear rationalist narratives of ever-accumulating neutral-objective knowledge during the "discoveries project."

Finally, my view as a critical geographer is that we not only need to unravel and contextualize our imperialist and nationalist heritage in geography more critically, but also have to contest the postsocialist habit of a one-sided counter-damnation of Marxism, to provide a more differentiated view on possible applications of the Marxist conceptual heritage in critical theory (Timár 2003). In Hungary, the "narrow, state-sponsored version of Marxism" (Timár 2003: 26) was conducted under a totalitarian system as the puppet language of authority serving a cadre elite, often reflecting only a very reduced understanding of Marxist ideas. Being itself peculiar to Marxist-Leninist narratives of this period (i.e., the 1950s), Mendöl's narrative of the progress of society was based on a reductive, technocratic concept of ever-advancing forces of production (technological determinism, economism), empty of any differentiated analysis of class struggle. A Marxist analysis could have meant a useful critique if turned towards the capitalist and colonial system as a working theoretical concept (see Wolf 2010), but instead the two narratives were only formally connected. Thus Mendöl's skeletal idea of trying to historically connect the production of geographical knowledge to different modes of production could have been a promising endeavor, but was basically doomed to failure because it continued along an unilinear historical narrative without reflexivity, and was subjected to the Eurocentric gaze of an expansionist white empire.

Conclusions: Rehabilitation vs. Reinterpretation

My initial question was: could Mendöl's case be considered a successful rehabilitation? As we have seen, there were many tensions in this. Probáld's noble argument was that, although he agreed there should have been a contextual analysis, the text at least came into our vision with its republishing, even through teaching. But the intention of doing justice by saving pre-socialist knowledge and rehabilitating some previously disrespected or even lost geographers has eventually led to the postsocialist rewriting of the past in a self-proclaimed objectivist way. Mendöl's own views were mediated to us uncritically only to be embedded in a complex web of particular and local postsocialist interests. Because the original was still out of our vision, its mode of republishing—not to say teaching from it—*ironically added to concealing Mendöl's story by his own work*. Concerning the question of "reediting" or "translating" the text, due to its

complex dual narrative, it cannot be encountered without plunging into the entangling and contradictory layers of meanings, by which, in my view, Mendöl has set up a "hermeneutic trap" for later interpreters. Although I am not trying to suggest any deliberateness from Mendöl in setting a "trap," this metaphor does represent his conscious passive resistance that resulted in producing a composite text, of which a simple republishing was rendered impossible, compared to other republished works of geographers. This is indicated quite clearly in all the efforts of its rehabilitators to escape from it. The disarming of the "trap" would have been to give an historical answer to an *historical problem*. To make any use of the text would obviously oblige one to settle its origins, and a failure to notice this entangling circumstance is to fall into a "trap" of historical sensibility: the eagerness of rehabilitation drew them into concealing its origins and forging the original. The text in this respect was thus not rehabilitated, as it was used uncritically out of context for very pragmatic reasons and even self-legitimation.

As I have hinted by the "big historical gap" of Hungarian geography, Mendöl's case is part of a much wider question of how to make use of or even engage historical texts of geographers in our "postsocialist condition"? As I have argued in Mendöl's case, rehabilitation should have meant a contextualized historical study, a dense hermeneutical and rhetorical analysis of the text to locate and position Mendöl's own evolving ideas and struggles wrapped within, and coexisting with, Marxist-Leninist jargon, together with a comparison to his other texts. There is also the broader question of Mendöl's other manuscripts: the untouched, faint sleep of these materials point to the biased nature of resorting only to the *Introduction to Geography*—which, in Probáld's opinion, should not be considered as one of Mendöl's most important works (Interview with Ferenc Probáld, July 4, 2013). But inverting Mendöl's case, highly provocative questions could emerge if we were to raise the issue of rehabilitating or republishing other "forgotten works" of "conservative-nationalist" geographers, sometimes written in a harshly political tone, often resorting to the various nationalist, imperialist, environmental determinist, or racist ideas of the times. A good case example would be Fodor's "almost published" *A magyar lét földrajza* ['The Geography of Hungarian Existence'], as even Probáld's fairly objectivist and ideologically supportive reading discredits it from future republishing, accepting that "its concrete geographical content is long outdated, its strongly determinist and teleological perspective was even in its times considered conservative" [*Konkrét földrajzi tartalma természetesen rég elavult, erősen determinista és teleologikus szemlélete pedig már elkészültekor is konzervatívnak számított.*] (Probáld 2012: 457; on this unpublished manuscript by Fodor see Jobbitt 2011).

Republishing and reinterpretation thus remain a contested semantic territory of competing visions for geography, repeatedly recoding the past for present interests of legitimation and consumption (White 1978). Concerning education, we should not forget the immense importance of textbooks in reproducing our perspectives on geography, history, and society (Taylor 1976, Aay 1981), whether in the postsocialist context of the politicized remembering of our past (either "nationalist" or "socialist," see Silova 2010), or in the ethical context of challenging the grand-narratives and representations of our Eurocentric world history (colonization, imperialism, racism). Even if used as teaching material, Mendöl's text should be treated as an historical artifact (just as Fodor's more "essayistic" text, see Probáld 2012) and be subjected to critical historical revision, but definitely not as a "pre-made" textbook for contemporary geography. My conclusion is that against a homogeneous "nationalist" and "socialist" narrative dichotomy produced by knowledge regimes (a bipolar tension marked both in Mendöl's original text and its later postsocialist contestation), we should unravel the "situated messiness" of the past, with the

entangling particularities and intricacies of different actors, and the likewise messy play of interconnected continuities and ruptures (Livingstone 1992) in our "postsocialist condition." The republishing of Mendöl's study was a product of a reduced historical sensibility and a tenacious urge for some to rehabilitate a text, but *only to settle the contested past, and not to open it up for critique*. The rehabilitators thus fell into "Mendöl's trap."

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Appendices

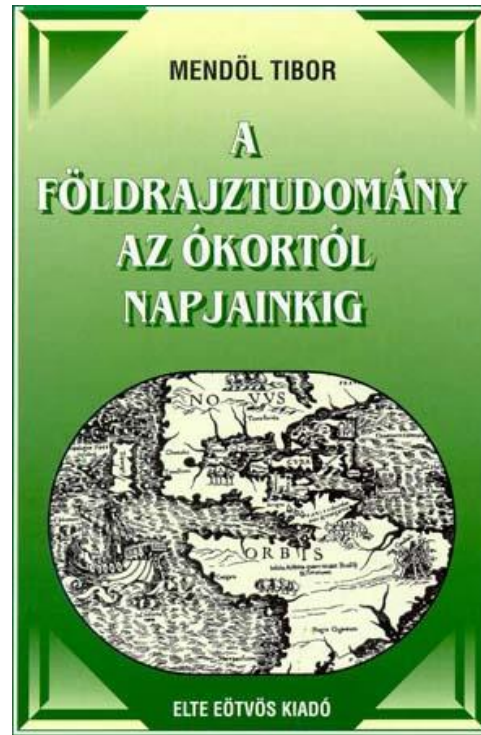
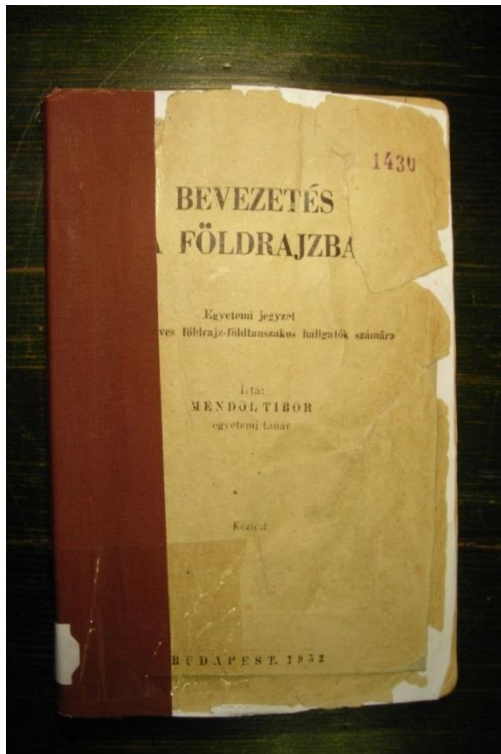


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