



**Europe's Geographical Challenges:**  
**Science Meets Policy**

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**Abstract:**

**What is being European to us?**

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This study analyses the perception of citizenships and urban spaces that new migrants have and the way it also has changed over the years. The few opportunities that some migrants see to become an equal part of the host society and their difficulty to adapt to foreign towns and to what they represent to the native people, is probably a consequence of the previous experience they have made in their own countries.

The research tries to reveal the various influences that migrants have in the urban spaces and how they form and influence their mental maps. Since migration has become a relevant part of the Italian demographic change, it is useful to study the differences or similarities of the new urban perception and utilization.



**What is Europe to us?**  
**Perception of territory, space and landscape, changes in cultural models, from migrants' point of view.**

The way individuals perceive and interrelate with territories has to do with their behaviours and cultures and, besides recalling to innate/acquired, nature/culture, inheritance/environment issues, creates and changes organization of spaces and mental maps.

Over decades positions regarding migrants (more or less focusing on their points of view) turned out to be antithetic and dichotomous, also due to inevitable effects of philosophical, political and social ideologies (sometimes exasperated up till exploitation meant to defend established or desired-wished situations, to be considered "natural" in order to strengthen privileges).

Aware that «the European Community sees its next years engaged in stating a common identity» (Valéry Giscard d'Estaing speech to the Italian Senate on March 23rd, during the commemoration of the 50th anniversary of the treaties of Rome), European citizens know that legal recognition of migrants do not necessarily imply an unambiguous correspondence in multiple aspects of citizenship or, to be more exact, citizenships that concern a batch of adjectives (economical, political, social, European, national, and so on). Although the debate concerning recognition of European, national and social citizenship, is at the core of institutional, political and everyday life, answers, feelings and perceptions that many migrants have about such a recognition is similar to that Paul of Tarsus might have had in Athens: «We will hear thee concerning this yet again».

Over the past two years I've carried out an operational research concerning "How the perception of Europe, citizenship and urban spaces, that new migrants have, has changed and/or is willing to change, influencing as well the European identity, of the next decades". The sample is composed of 213 migrants (54% female and 46% male, of age between 25 and 55), that have been interviewed in Italy (78%), Germany (15%) and France (7%).

Perception of Europe has changed over the years and the reliability of current perception is influenced by former lives of people who often feel they have 'lost their roots'. Some migrants see few opportunities to become an equal part of the host society and can hardly adapt to foreign landscapes and to what they represent to the native people. Foreigners use and form landscapes according to their needs and experiences. Even if there is an underlying sentiment that the wants of the "hosts" on the territory have precedence over those of the ones who arrive as strangers. This research tries to reveal the various influences that migrants have in present landscapes, and how they form and influence their mental maps. Perception of territories deals with utilization of them by migrants and, since migration is part of the demographic change all over the wealthy countries of Europe, there are many European citizens that do have migration-background. Thereby, differences or similarities of landscape perception and landscape utilization is what we studied.

The few opportunities that some migrants see to become an equal part of the host society and their difficulties to adapt to foreign towns and to what they represent to the native people, is probably a consequence of the previous experience they have made in their own countries. Furthermore the power of the new mass-media makes knowledge wider and metropolis closer for those who want to reach them and has also caused a mayor similarity in the previous much more different ways of life. Thanks to these easy ways of communications big towns are not anymore the only chance to find a job, since the same opportunity can be found in smaller ones and even villages. According to 76% of the sample the citizenship migrants try to reach is the legal one, and it's no accident if the idea and possibility to extend to many more individuals, of extra-European origins too, national and European citizenship is widespread, stretching the borders of economic and perhaps political Europe as well. This research tries to reveal the various influences that migrants have in the urban spaces and how they form and modify their own mental maps and the evolution of the "Europe" and "European" concepts. Since migration has become a relevant part of the European demographical changes, it is useful to study the differences or similarities of the new urban perception and utilization. It is as well interesting to analyse how the system of reference values that Europe has, as far as tolerance, respect of human rights and engagement for peace are concerned, meets other cultures and identities. How can the changes of society related to the changes and interferences of foreign languages, habits, and ways of life influence the European identity? Which elements are able to break or to change it and how do they relate to the system of European values that are historically common to all European countries?

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