



Imagining Europe Identities, Geography, and Method

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Abstract

This study takes an interpretative approach to the question of European identity. Based on 95 mixed-type interviews in three country cases (Estonia, Italy, and the Netherlands), it aims to answer the question what 'Europe' means to different groups of people (in a maximum variation sample), and how those meanings relate to their identities, their imagined geographies, and to political institutions and political narrative.

The methodological approach centres around qualitative, semi-structured, and in-depth interviews of around two hours each. Within that, certain visual methods (photo elicitation and map drawing) are employed in order to develop a better understanding of meanings associated with Europe from the perspective of the interviewee. After that, a short questionnaire including a social network name generator was given to the interviewee. This study is presented as a methodological 'experiment' that attempts to explore alternative empirical avenues for approaching this subject, and what this means for its analysis and presentation.

The analysis centres around three core themes: (i) a typology of perspectives on Europe, (ii) the imagined geographies within Europe, and (iii) the interplay between meanings of Europe and meanings of the EU. The first empirical chapter employs a typology approach to distinguish between three main types of narratives on Europe: Nationals, Situational Europeans, and Cosmopolitan Europeans. These three main types are further disentangled to ultimately range from cisnational to the European cosmopolitan tribe. The second empirical chapter draws on the data that was gathered by having interviewees express their views visually on a blank map of Europe, and examines the various Euroscapes that result from that analysis. Finally, the third empirical chapter looks at the relationship between meanings of 'Europe' and the EU. In doing so, it examines what Euroscepticism means in that context, and how political discourse may affect these meanings. In addition, it considers some of the ways in which European identity is measured in large-scale surveys, and how interviewees interpret such questions.



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Bio

Jeroen Moes has a background in sociology, anthropology, and political science. He currently works as a lecturer at University College Maastricht (UCM), which is a department of Maastricht University. He teaches courses in research methods, research based learning, visual methods, and sociology.