DETERMINANTS OF PAN-EUROPEAN IDENTITY AMONG YOUNG EU CITIZENS: EVIDENCE FROM 9 EU COUNTRIES

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Abstract

The issue of pan-European identity formation has gained much attention in social sciences in the last years, due to its relevant political implications in the context of EU integration. In human geography studies, such an issue is generally approached by investigating the impact of migration processes and ethnic differences on identity formation; in this context, a particular attention is paid to a specific subset of EU citizens, that is, young and mobile internal migrants. With regard to the analysis of identity evolution among young migrants, a complex and multidisciplinary approach has been advocated, in order to grasp, on the one hand, the role of both generational and ethno-cultural dynamics – at the boundary of migration and youth studies - and, on the other hand, the interplay of transnationalism and ethnic / geographical identities. However, quantitative studies based on such a complex framework are still few.

This study is aimed at investigating the socio-demographic and attitudinal-psychological factors affecting the development of pan-European identity among the European youth, on the basis of a quantitative methodological approach. The analysis is based on a survey of about 30.000 individuals aged 15-34 from nine EU member states, partly residents in their home country, partly migrants, and partly return migrants. Structural equation modeling has been carried out in order to understand the patterns connecting attitudinal factors, personal experience, and socio-demographic features with the development of a sense of continental identity, taking also into account how it correlates with other identity forms (local, geographical, cosmopolitan). Three models for the three categories of respondents are tested, and differences between national groups are also taken into account.

Keywords: Identity formation, youth mobility, EU internal mobility, structural equation modeling

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