Perceptions of Europe
A Comparative Sociology of European Attitudes
Edited by Daniel Gaxie, Nicolas Hubé and Jay Rowell

After five decades, “Europe” as a political entity has become increasingly visible to ordinary citizens and an object of political debates. Much of what is known about citizen’s attitudes towards Europe is limited to quantitative surveys largely centered on identifying who is for or against the EU. This book goes further and presents the main findings of a comparative qualitative survey conducted in France, Germany, Italy, and Poland.

There have been few qualitative surveys on ordinary citizen’s views of European integration, and none on this scale and the resulting picture is very different from the self-evident assumptions of many current studies on European opinions.

The book stresses the great diversity, ambiguity, and complexity of European attitudes. It emphasizes the causal impact of formal education, political interest and involvement, individual everyday exposures to “European” realities, and the role of collective national experiences of European integration and national history.

This book:

• Is the first qualitative survey among ordinary citizens from all social strata across Europe that explores perceptions and judgments on “Europe” and the EU.
• Explains the underlying logic of why Europe and European integration are such a far reality to most citizens.
• Explores how most citizens are poorly - but unequally - informed about and interested in European subjects.
• Investigates how citizens are able to express perceptions of “Europe” by using a series of analogies and comparisons often linked to their daily experiences;
• Identifies the complex range of issues that influence our perceptions, and the irresolute, fragmentary, mixed, and sometimes contradictory nature of these opinions.

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