

**Exploring the “Geographical Imaginations” of Maltese  
Students**

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A dissertation presented to the Faculty of Education in Partial  
Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Masters in Teaching and  
Learning in Geography at the University of Malta

June 2020



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## **Abstract**

“Geographic imaginations” are considered as very powerful tools that help us envision the world and our environments and may be used as ingredients in order to create new experiences, knowledge and communications (Daniels, 2010). The main aim of this study was to investigate how Maltese students are having their “geographic imaginations” influenced through their daily encounters in school with students coming from a different country. The study used a qualitative approach through the use of interviews with a cohort of seven randomly chosen Maltese students from two state schools. Analysis of the students’ response have found that local students are being influenced through their interactions with their peers that are coming from a different country. Other findings show that factors such as travel experience broaden the geographical imaginations of the students. Proximity of place and location also affect how the local students view and interact with their peers that are coming from another country. Factors such as having a different belief system does not hinder these interactions however different languages that cannot be spoken by one of the involved parties might cause barriers and development of negative “geographic imaginations”. Based on all of the evidence that was brought to light throughout this research, encouraging multicultural classrooms does not only contribute to create inclusive mind sets but also broaden the “geographic imaginations” of the students.

**Keywords:** Geographical Imaginations, Perceptions, Othering



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***Dedicated to all those innocent lives lost as a result of racism and hatred. To those who still suffer injustices based on their sexuality, gender, culture, race, ethnicity and skin colour. To those seeking asylum because of war and injustice in their homelands. To all Maltese residents that come from another country, thank you, for making the Maltese Islands more colourful and diverse.***

***To my late Great Aunt Grace, who through her simple ways taught me how to be resilient and take whatever life throws at you with a pinch of salt.***

## **Acknowledgements**

The completion of this dissertation would not have been possible without the help that I got from various people.

First of all, I would like to thank my supervisor, Dr Glorianne Borg Axisa, who served as a guide throughout the whole process, giving me advice, support and feedback which was invaluable. Haven't it been for her this dissertation would not have been possible to complete. For this I am deeply grateful.

I would also like to thank the schools that helped me choose the participants needed for the study, they were of great importance and of great help and for this I am very thankful.

Another thanks goes out to the seven participants that chose to help me by participating in the interviews that were required. Although young, their participation was invaluable and offered a lot of different views and insights that were needed for the completion of this study.

I am also greatly indebted towards my parents and my sister who were pillars of support during these two years of study. To the people that are closest and very dear to me I say thank you, if it was not for you to keep my spirits high and raise my morale, I do not know if I would have completed this phase in my academic life.

Last but not least, I would like to thank and show my appreciation to my fellow course mates Sara and Pamela. Both of you have been of continuous support throughout this two year journey, we laughed, stressed and studied together and through this we managed to pull through and support each other even when time got tough.

To all other people, that were in one way or another present during this journey and are not mentioned here I thank you and express my deepest gratitude!

**Thank You!**

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## List of Terminology

**Foreigner** – Refers to any individual, be it student or not, that is in Malta however does not have a Maltese nationality.

**Non-Maltese Student** – Refers to any individual that is frequenting an Educational Institution in Malta but does not have a Maltese Nationality.

**Local** – Refers to any individual who was born and lives in Malta and also has a Maltese Nationality.

**Developed Country** - A sovereign country with a developed economy and highly developed infrastructure and technologies as stipulated by the criteria put forward by the United Nations.

**Developing Country** - A country with less development in its industrial base and human development index.

# **Chapter 1 - Introduction**

## **1.1 - The “Geographic Imaginations”**

"Geographic Imaginations" can be considered as a very abstract concept that describes the individual's mental images and stereotypes that are heavily influenced by one's personal experiences and beliefs. The so called "imagination" are conceptualised in our thoughts and vary drastically from one person to another. Having said that, however, our “geographic imaginations” are deemed as very powerful tools that help us envision the world and our environments and may be used as ingredients in order to create new experiences, knowledge and communications (Daniels, 2010). These imaginations do not just pop up in our minds, however, we are constantly creating them through our personal experiences and also through what we see in the media and around us in our everyday life. A good example of how the media is influencing us is the fact that usually on commercials and TV programmes we see heavily stereotyped conceptualisations such as, the poor and hungry African child, an exotic person who looks like a model, and overpopulated and disease ridden countries in Asia. These images may not be completely true, but people still believe them, and therefore, build and develop their ideas and imaginations towards these countries on these bases. Our lives and personal experiences also heavily influence how we perceive things. A good example of how one limits his “geographic imaginations” can be seen when we describe deserts. Usually the “geographic imaginations” of the general public are limited to a desert with endless ergs, ignoring all the other desert geomorphological features, regs and vegetation that are found in deserts. Another powerful example are the picturesque Maldives beaches that for many conjure a scene of the perfect place on Earth, ignoring the huge negative impacts and consequences that tourism and over-development over there is having on the Islands themselves such as coral bleaching, dredging and destruction of wildlife (Karthikheyana, 2010).

The concept “geographic imaginations” refers to a way that the general public thinks about the world and the relation between “our” places and the “other” places (Gilley, 2010). This concept also refers to each individual's mental images and concepts that are influenced by their social class, level of education, personal experiences such as travelling and experiencing the "other" and also personal beliefs and thoughts (Gilley, 2010). Through these “geographic imaginations” people, as individuals and as a common collective, are

constantly forming barriers and boundaries that distinguish them from the "others". When making these "geographic imaginations" explicit, the individual is able to understand and make links with the stereotypes and certain expectations that are usually associated with space and place (Giesecking, 2017).

Due to globalisation and the influence of mainstream media, we are at a point in time, where encountering different people and cultures may either reinforce or challenge our "geographic imaginations". This gives a whole new dimension to the development of our "geographic imaginations" from the one presented to the "world" through the journals of the explorers in past centuries, or as conveyed by politicians and entrepreneurs.

One cannot ignore the fact that these "imaginings" can be strong factors that reflect and also create stereotypes, leading into the "othering" of societies, cultures and individuals that are different from the norm (Massey, 2005). Massey (2005), argues that such "imaginings" should be made explicit and the general public, especially the educators should learn how to question them instead of accepting them as they are or ignoring them completely. This should be done, irrespectively if they are true or not, reflecting the whole picture, or omitting part of it, or focusing on a particular aspect, blurring the rest. In her paper, 'The Geographical Mind', Massey (2005), gives a good example of how these "geographic imaginations" more or less control the world we live in since these determine and reflect the principle of power relations and geographical imaginations of what is our territory and what is not, what as individuals and the general public want to allow and what we do not want to allow within the territory. In relation to this, therefore, one becomes aware that "geographic imaginations" are not just simple "imaginings", but carry with them geometries of powers and a moral dimension that cannot be ignored.

## **1.2 - Research Question - An Explanation**

The underlying idea of this research is that since "geographic imaginations" are also heavily influenced by the culture and society that one is surrounded with, encounters with different opinions and people coming from different cultures might be a pivotal factor to challenge certain perceptions.

In view of the dynamic demographics of Malta, that is reflected also in the school population outlines hereunder, the research question leading this study is:

"Does the Maltese students' regular encounters with students coming from other countries influence their "geographical imagination" and their understanding of the world?"

In simpler terms, the objective behind this research is to see and understand better if the daily encounters between Maltese students and other students from various cultures and origins is influencing the "geographical imagination" of Maltese students.

### **1.3 - Demographics & Migration in Malta**

Migration is usually influenced by economic, political, environmental and social factors. These act as push and pull factors for immigrants worldwide. These regular patterns of migration lead to a more globalised world and bring many ripple effects with them, influencing a lot of social factors one of them being education. On a global scale, 272 million people therefore 3.5% of the world's population is made up of international migrants, with the single biggest majority of them being of Indian origin (Edmond, 2020). The main factors that lead these people to migrate are job security, internal conflict and wars and climate change (Edmond, 2020). When newcomers settle in a country, they are received by the locals with a set perception, usually one that is based on the experience of the individual or the community as a whole or as seen through the media regarding the particular culture or country that the migrants are arriving from.

The extent of the differences between the "geographic imaginations" of the foreigner with that of the local person, depends a lot on the place of origin of the newcomer, so for example, a migrant coming to Europe from South America, might have a total different "geographical imagination" than a migrant that is travelling from one European country to another, therefore, staying in more or less the same cultural bubble.

Malta sees a yearly influx of migrants, those that are asylum seekers and others that come here for work opportunities. Nowadays, expats have become of significant importance to the Maltese economy as the country has become extremely reliant on Non-Maltese workers to increase the economy (Malta Chamber, 2019). The number of Non-Maltese citizens living

in Malta pre-COVID Crisis was 67,000. 38,563 of them are expats coming from other EU Member States with another 28,582 coming from Non-EU Member States (Eurostat, 2020). This shows that around 17.5 % of the Maltese population is made up of expatriates. According to the National Statistics Office Report that was published on World Children's Day 2018, from all of the children in Malta, 12% of them are off a Non-Maltese nationality (NSO, 2019).

When it comes to asylum seekers, data from the UNHCR Malta, states that an average of 2000 asylum seekers per year are arriving in Malta. These immigrants are mainly coming from Somalia, Libya and Eritrea, with the majority of them receiving shelter and protection (UNHCR, 2018).

A total of 55,280 foreign nationals were working in Malta by the end of 2018, 61% of them being EU Nationals while the remaining 38% are Third Country Nationals. The Majority of these EU Nationals are Italians being at the top of the list followed by the UK, Bulgaria, Germany and Sweden (Jobsplus, 2018). Moreover according to the latest surveys by the National Statistics Office, it shows that in schools the largest share of foreign students are Italians, British and Libyans (NSO, 2019).

Due to this, we are having a lot of cross-cultural relations, especially between students within primary and secondary schools. Figures show that within a five year period, the number of foreign students frequenting pre-primary to secondary level schools have doubled, with more than 5,000 foreigners being registered by the end of the scholastic year 2016/17 in all licensed schools across the country (NSO, 2018). It is good to point out that, while the increase was shown from all countries, the number of foreigners that come from EU countries is still a bit higher than the number of non-Maltese students coming from a non EU-Nationality, with numbers being 3,499 students from EU states and 2,767 from non-EU states (NSO,2019). Due to this large increase, every one in ten students is Non-Maltese. The same study also highlights that the highest percentage of students is found in state schools followed by church schools, leaving private schools with the lowest percentage. Moreover, results show that there is a general decline in the number of Maltese students going to school, while one can see a steady increase in the number of foreigners (ToM, 2018).



A number of migrants that arrive in Malta, especially those that are asylum seekers, might be coming from a different education background or may have a language barrier are enrolled at the Migrant learners unit. This unit facilitates the induction of newly arrived learners, through an ongoing assessment process, the learner's progress slowly and keep on going until eventually they are ready to transition into mainstream education with other children (MLU, 2016).

### ***1.3.1 - Strategies for Migrant Learners - An Inclusive Approach to Education***

In order to reach out to all individuals coming from many different backgrounds, the Ministry for Education and Employment launched a strategic educational framework coming in action from 2014-2024. This framework incorporates other frameworks such as Literacy for All and Lifelong Learning (European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education, 2014). To provide the best education and facilitate the induction of migrant learners that do not have the knowledge of Maltese and English, the Ministry for Education and Employment set an induction programme. This induction programme lasts for one year and prepares the students in Mathematics, Arts and Crafts but the main focus is to make the students confident in both Maltese and English. Throughout the programme an ongoing assessment is carried out in order to see the students' progress. At the end of the programme a decision is taken depending on the students' assessment in order to help the student transition to a state school (MEDE, 2016).

## **1.4 - Conclusion**

Both the Maltese and the Non-Maltese student's "geographic imaginations" will start to become explicit and mixed, leading into influencing one another, which might end up in changing the perceptions of both. This can be hindered by many factors such as stereotypes, prejudices and "othering". Having said this, a student coming from a different country might be influencing the perception of a local student in either a positive or a negative way, if any.

Through my research I will be investigating this phenomenon in a more in-depth way and I will see how this intricate interaction is influencing the already set "geographic imaginations"

of the Maltese students that are frequenting school with students that are coming from other countries.

## **Chapter 2 - Literature Review**

In this chapter, I will be reviewing and writing about the literature that addresses 'geographical imagination'. The main themes that will be put forward are stereotyping, prejudice and knowledge as these have a deep connection with the "geographic imaginations" that students and children develop. Having said this, I will be discussing factors that influence these thoughts including the media. I will also be mentioning some difficulties and positive impacts that 'foreign' students interacting with locals might have.

### **2.1 - The 'Geographical Imagination'**

The geographical imagination is a powerful concept that goes beyond geography as an academic subject. It is the way that an individual envisions the world and experiences it based on his living experience and influences (Daniels, 2011). When we speak about "geographic imaginations" we are also speaking about geography not just as a fact file but as a subject that will question abstract things and let an individual be creative. With this, anybody can challenge the assumptions and stereotypes that we associate with space and place (Giesecking, 2017). A study by Giesecking (2013) provided proof that each individual has a very specific 'geographical imagination' and it is usually related to the person's experience, race, class, gender and sense of belonging.

Said (2002) also argues that the "geographic imaginations" of citizens is easily manipulated and exploited by others in order to portray something differently. This can also be seen in the ideas and stereotypes that people have about other races and classes which are usually built around fabricated travel accounts from the past and kept on going down from one individual through another throughout the years, manipulating the "geographic imaginations" of one another (Bernasconi, 2001).

This shows that the concept of 'geographic imagination' is very important for decision making and also for the conceptualisation of the world. Brown (2010) describes that enacting laws require proper "geographic imaginations" of the surrounding environment and place to work well. Having "geographic imaginations" also enables an individual to be critical about what he/she sees and experiences. Having said this there are many factors such as the media and social backgrounds that affect an individual's "geographic imaginations".

## **2.2 - Geographical Imagination, Stereotype and Prejudice**

As previously discussed in the introduction, the term “geographic imaginations” is a term that describes the prejudices, stereotypes and differences that a person privately makes in his own head (Massey, 2005). Of course, since these “imaginings” are usually based on the society that the individual is born and raised in, not all of them can be good and, obviously, not all bad. These “geographic imaginations”, are quite frankly a matter of perspective, but one might question what led to the formation of such ideas and also ask how these are influencing the community and society at large. In this first section of this chapter, I will be discussing what is influencing these 'imaginings' and where are they stemming from.

Sefa Dei (1999) argues that knowledge is heavily linked with our culture and identity, because ultimately, it is the experiences that we experience in our culture and societies that are affecting our knowledge. Lack of knowledge is called ignorance. Ignorance is when someone lacks or has no knowledge of something and believes facts that are not real. This results in creating stereotypes in our minds and societies. One can also say that an increase in ignorance leads to an increase in bad stereotypes which then bring about political and racial conflicts (Fiske & Neuberg, 1990). All of this leads to prejudice, which then leads to creating cultural hegemony and 'othering'. This shows us clearly the power of knowledge and its close links to our 'Geographical Imagination'. We can easily argue that an increase in knowledge will cause a drastic decrease in ignorance, leading into less stereotyping and more understanding of the 'other'. This will cause a more open-minded individual, and will lead to more open-minded children as their “geographic imaginations” would be based on proper facts and not on stereotypes.

### ***2.2.1 - Factors that lead to 'othering'***

'Othering' is one of the biggest problems that we are facing in the 21st century (Menendian, 2016). It can be said that nearly every global, national and regional conflict that has been going on recently revolves around a group-based difference dimension. Othering is bringing about disputes of territory, war, conflicts over resources, spread of infectious diseases and also climate change (Sassen, 2016). (Powell and Menendian, 2016) define the term

'othering' as a set of dynamics, processes and structures that engender marginality and persistent inequality across any of the full range of human differences based on group identities. Powell and Menendian (2016), argue that the dimensions of othering include many 'differences' such as sex, race, religion, skin tone, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status etc. However it is not just limited to this as it can then move on to other dimensions. An example of this is when one sees how 'othering' leads to many social problems and sometimes even crime. Another contemporary problem that is resulting from 'othering' is the rise of hate speech and violence towards asylum seekers and irregular immigrants. This is resulting in a lot of hate, protests and havoc that is leading to hate crime and violence (Walters & Brown, 2016).

### ***2.2.2 - The Role of Stereotyping to “Geographic Imaginations”***

Stereotyping plays a very significant role in the human society and psyche and people (usually minorities and those considered as 'different') that are targeted by stereotyping and prejudice are usually hurt by them (Ross, 2019). Moreover, people that are constantly being stereotyped and are under unfair bias and scrutiny can sometimes adopt these negative and false traits that are attributed to them (Seeber, 2001). When one starts categorizing people into groups, this immediately brings about group discrimination. Stereotyping comes into play when someone's perception on the other or on a country for example, is only category based, therefore, the person would be categorising something based on idea, rather than on a fact (Matusitz, 2012). One should also mention that through stereotyping you are stripping off an identity of an individual and just giving him/her the same identity that the group that he belongs to has (Mai, 2016). This happens because individuals that pertain to a certain group/socio-economic class and status are assumed to have the same traits, therefore, making them similar to each other, resulting in them being different from other groups that have different attributes than theirs. This then forms certain expectations from this particular individual, solely based on the group that he/she belongs in (Detweiler, 1986).

Stereotyping affects a lot of people, however, it is predominant within minorities and usually immigrants. I have managed to gather some different stereotypes that are mentioned in a paper written by Gamble and Gamble (2002).

In the United States a lot of predominant stereotypes are about Hispanic people, these include that they are uneducated, have a lot of children and cannot sustain them and do not speak English at all. Asians also have their share of stereotyping such as them being emotionless, disloyal and are owners of laundries and cheap dirty restaurants (Gamble & Gamble, 2002).

In Europe there are also a lot of predominant stereotypes mainly against Arabs, Greeks and Turks. For a lot of Europeans, Arabs are seen as jobless people, invaders of countries and criminals while on the other hand the Greeks, Turks and other people coming from the Mediterranean area are considered as lazy, fat and laid back (Semaan, 2014).

In these papers, we also see stereotypes on certain minorities and racial groups that are predominant across the world such as Africans who are usually stereotyped as poor. Unfortunately these stereotypes create a habit of rejection due to people being scared of being repelled by these beliefs. These lead to more conflicts and problems within an integrated society and also creates a lot of Prejudice within our minds and also within our children and the young generation that is still growing up.

### ***2.2.3 - Prejudice and its effect on the “Geographic Imaginations”***

Generalisations bring about a lot of prejudice. As a matter of fact, Matusitz (2012) stated that Prejudice is a false belief based on faulty generalisations about members of selected racial and ethnic groups. Prejudice is closely knit with stereotyping as it is the stereotypes that are made up throughout time that result into prejudice, in other words, stereotypes are influencing the geographical minds of people and making them think of a different group as something which is not (Matusitz, 2012).

An interesting read is a paper by (Johnson et. al, 1984), in it the researchers investigated interactions between heterogeneous groups of students. It was observed that when the students saw each other for the first time in class, the students formed their first impressions on the basis of what they saw physically. Therefore, skin colour, facial features and certain clothing (such as the hijab on Muslim students). The researchers concluded that, unfortunately in schools a lot of prejudice exists and these 'stereotypical' thoughts are overshadowing the real character and personality of the child. This was also discussed in a

paper by Alesina et. al (2018), therefore, it shows that the statement made by Johnson et. al in 1984, is still somewhat relevant.

It is true, that these prejudices and stereotypes are prevailing, hence, the geographical imaginations of certain students are being conditioned by society and not by their own experiences. However, as I had mentioned back in Chapter 1, the “geographic imaginations” of students should be made explicit and challenged with the help of their educators and people that have a more open minded view of the world. When these 'imaginations' are then challenged by gaining proper knowledge and facts, they can be changed in a positive way making the students a more open minded individual. This shows the importance of knowledge and how it's critically related to stereotyping and prejudice. It can be used in both good and bad ways, however, if used properly it can be a very powerful tool. In the next topic I will be discussing and reviewing literature about knowledge and its relation with stereotypes and prejudice and how they affect the educational system.

### **2.3 - Factors Influencing the Students' Perceptions of the World**

Our culture and the way we live in our society are major factors on how we perceive the world around us. This includes our perception towards different countries, and people of different ethnicities. As we grow and experience new things in life, we are continuously developing, changing and creating different ways on how we perceive things around us. GENIP n.d. states that for example a child growing up in the Netherlands has a very different perception than another child that is growing up in the Sahara desert. For one, water might be taken for granted, while for the other water is a very precious resource. This, therefore, is affecting their global perspective towards this resource.

There are various different factors that are heavily influencing the perception of the student towards the world such as, language, religion, race, history, social class and politics (Strangor, 2014). Another good example that I met during reviewing literature is an example also given out by GENIP stating that, “For a person practicing Islam, the Mecca is a very religious and sacred place. However, for a person who is not a Muslim, Mecca is just a historical place and a tourist attraction.” This shows how a place which is physically the same for everyone, is totally different in the mind of the people depending on their belief system and culture.

A study done by the Australian Geography Teachers Association (ATGA) in 2013 shows how people coming from different places and cultures perceive different things. For example, a study done with children that were living in an urban city showed that what they wished for was more natural space, protection for the environment and traffic pollution mitigation. On the other hand, children living in a very rural environment wished for more entertaining spaces, buildings, roads and a better way to commute and live (Cunningham et. al, 2010). Another study shows how people look at different ethnicities. This study which was carried out in England shows that every one in three 16 to 24 year-old Asian and Afro-Caribbean males and females are unemployed. One should also note that the majority of Asians in this town are all coming from a Muslim, Pakistani background. A large group of these Asians live in a small part of town in terraced housing. The study shows that a number of young people do not feel safe there due to their prejudices towards Muslims which is mainly influenced by the media (Watt & Stensen, 1998). A very powerful tool that is influencing the students' perception of the world is the media.

### ***2.3.1 - The influence of Media on the Geographical Imagination of children***

In this day and age, media has a huge influence on the way people, especially children, are perceiving spaces and places and also other cultures (Boisen et. al, 2011). Media has always been a very powerful tool, however nowadays, with the increase in usage of social media platforms in the younger generations and with nearly everyone having access to the internet and television to watch news and current affairs, the media has become an unbeatable tool to spread news however it wants, especially with the rise in popularity of social media (Martens et al., 2018). Unfortunately, the media is continuously representing places in a way that it wants to advertise it, and not in the way it is in reality. Having said this, one can say that the media functions as one of the primary sources of creating stereotyping and prejudices in the mind of people (Gold, 1994) (Boisen et. al, 2011).

A very good example of how the media influences our minds is how certain crimes are reported, there have been many instances where media reports crime and do a lot of racial biases. For example a study in America states that, usually when a crime involves a person having African ethnicity, pictures of the person are shown and broadcast, on the other hand, a criminality that involves a white person, none of the criminals are shown (Entman,



1990). In this period, the situation has not changed and unfortunately this racial bias is still very prominent (Kulaszewicz, 2015).

### ***2.3.2 - Factors influencing the perception of children on a local level***

Unfortunately, this stereotyping and prejudices about people that come from a different nationality and are usually African is also at large locally. Prejudice towards Arabs assuming they are Muslims and African people has always been present in Malta, longer then we can imagine (The Malta Independent, 2019). In Malta religion was given huge importance as a result of this a lot of children were raised with the mentality that the catholic religion should not be taken over, therefore in some families there might still be this so-called, 'fear from other religions' going down through generations. Another thing that has definitely highly influenced our perception towards Africa and its people, is the fact that for a very long time, up till this day, institutions are sending leaflets portraying pictures of black children with Kwashiorkor disease, usually in abandoned buildings and in a very bad state. This is done to make the people donate money (Flores, 2019). I mentioned this, because, I do think that for many, this is the only image that they might have of Africa along with that of the African Savannah. This is resulting in building a very negative 'perception' towards this continent and such generalisations are not taking into account the differences in terms of climatic regimes, biomes, geomorphological landscapes, religions, culture, ways of life and contexts between the urban and rural parts.

Another factor influencing children is definitely hate speech that can be easily accessed and seen in the comment sections found in social media. These attacks on people of different races, ethnicities, orientation and religions do nothing but spread hatred and influence the minds of young people making way for more prejudice, stereotyping and othering (Simpson, 2018).

The “geographic imaginations” of students is influenced both on an international and local level. In her paper that was published in 2005, Massey stresses on the importance that every individual has when it comes to helping students make their “geographic imaginations” explicit. This was said in order to stress how important it is to help them question their “imagination” and if need be change them rather than just accepting them as they are. This

leads us to the importance that geography has in education, we refer this to the Global Dimension of Geography.

### ***2.3.3 - The interaction between local and 'foreign' students***

Encouraging the interaction and providing the space for 'foreign' and local students to mingle together has many benefits (Luo, 2013). A study carried out by Killick (2008), argues that there has been increased efforts in educational institutions worldwide to promote inclusive teaching in order to create a better environment for both local and international students. This effort is very important as through multicultural classrooms, one manages to create a more accepting social, moral and ethical dimension throughout the school and also within the students (Caruana & Spurling, 2007).

Research in the UK showed that many international students found it quite difficult to incorporate within the educational programmes of certain schools as the curricula is totally different (Fielden et. al, 2007). Along with this, some international students might find language barriers, unfamiliar cultural morals due to differences in ethnicity, belief systems and also some international students reported that they perceived a sense of fear coming from locals due to prejudices that they might have about their countries (Cotton, 2013). Such difficulties may hinder the interaction of the students with the risk that these cluster in ethnic groups and hence reinforce rather than challenge the other students' perception, stereotypes and "geographical imagination" about the place of origin of the 'foreign' students.

### ***2.3.4 - The effects of stereotyping and prejudice on children and the education system***

Stereotyping and prejudice could have a very negative effect on children. When children go under the spotlight of stereotyping and are seen through the lens of prejudice, they might develop feelings of inadequacy and self-defeat. These feelings are very common throughout minorities in society that face a lot of stereotyping such as people from African descent, Muslims, low income families, children with disabilities and also people identifying as LGBTIQ+. When children develop these feelings, a lot of negative consequences build up and these not only impact their education and sense of achievement but also their future.

Usually stereotypes threaten children as sometimes they take the stereotype messages as real and believe so much in them that they let these messages define them, resulting into them losing their self-confidence and sometimes also developing fears such as fear of speaking in public due to them feeling different than others, fear of speaking up in class and answering teacher's questions and also fear of success in school and achievement. Furthermore, stereotypes are not only spread by word, but also through what children do and see in their daily lives. These actions have an effect on their “geographic imaginations” and how they see other people and also how they perceive different things.

### ***2.3.5 - Positive Impacts on both International and Local Students***

Studies have shown that students that have studied and worked with international peers, developed a wider sense of achievement and also a more positive attitude towards the world (Cotton, 2013). Apart from that, one must also include that more awareness towards certain issues is created and the global dimension of students is increased, making it easier for the students to break prejudice and stereotypes that they have developed prior to meeting these international students (Hegarty, 2014).

## **2.4 - Knowledge as a tool that changes the “Geographic Imaginations” of Children**

An interesting fact about knowledge was pointed out by Cortes (1995). He says that having knowledgeable individuals does not necessarily mean that they will be less prejudiced than ignorant ones, as this depends a lot on what type of knowledge they have. He continues to argue that, usually the individuals that are knowledgeable but less prejudiced are those that have had experiences and relations with others that are viewed as 'different'. On the other hand, those who have a lot of academic knowledge but no experience with 'different' individuals tend to still be quite prejudiced. This argument shows that, yes, knowledge is a powerful tool, however it depends on how it is shared and used.

When we talk about the global dimension in geography we are usually speaking about the fact that we learn about places and themes not just on a local level but on a more widespread and global scale. However, this is not the case. The global dimension of geography should enable us to explore the interconnectedness between people and places, it should also make us aware of similarities and differences that are present all around us. When we are aware of all of these, then, it is up to us to make a connection and relate them to our own

lives (Geographic Association, 2010). Ultimately, the end goal should always be to stimulate students into thinking that they are not just themselves, but, they are global citizens, hence, their actions would be in a way affecting others.

This however was not always the case as Geography as a school subject was responsible for stereotyping. This was due to the 'whiteness' in Geography, known as “white geography” because of the colonially-induced institutional racism (Esson, 2018). This then started to change with the cultural turn in geography education. Geography should not be presented as a subject where children just learn fact files about different places that reinforces stereotyping. It should be the subject where students learn to understand the connectivity and complex relationships of the world and challenge the stereotypes, prejudices that would allow students to change their perceptions towards different cultures, ethnicities, religions, places and all other things that make up the global world that they might see as 'different' (Geographic Association, 2005).

## **2.5 - How are things that children do every day affected by their “Geographic Imaginations”**

Children are affected and influenced a lot by what they see in their daily lives. As I mentioned in the beginning of this chapter there is a tight knit relation between what children see and do in their everyday environments and their “geographic imaginations”. In a study done by Bezzina (2018) it is shown that children who prefer to play outside and walk to their schools, football clubs, catechism and other places that they frequent daily have developed a higher awareness to their spatial environment when compared to those that prefer to use motorised vehicles and play inside. The study by Bezzina (2018) also shows how children are also influenced based on their gender as girls are not allowed outside as much as boys when they are young, this might result in a different spatial influence.

Children's perception and way of interaction also heavily depends on the culture around them. A study conducted on children coming from different countries by Huang (2018) showed that children raised in Asia and Africa are more community oriented and tend to develop more sense of obedience and selflessness as they grow up in a community where society and community is very important. On the other hand, children growing in the Americas and Europe tend to be more selfish, and self-oriented when compared to the

others. This is mainly due to the fact that they are raised in a community where being yourself and taking care of yourself is the primary importance, and community comes second. This might result in Europeans and Americans being more prejudiced than Asians and Africans.

## **2.6 - Conclusion**

Throughout this chapter, the concept of “geographic imaginations”, what influences it and how it is closely related to prejudice and stereotypes were discussed. As Daniels (2011) stated, the “geographic imaginations” help us understand the known world and the horizons of possible worlds. This shows how these “geographic imaginations” broaden our ways of how we look at the world on a global scale. In the next Chapter - Methodology, I will be describing the methods used in order to gather and analyse the data required.

## **Chapter 3 - Methodology**

Throughout this chapter I will be describing and explaining the methods that will be used to gather data and answer the research question. The section is divided into six parts. The first part outlines the epistemology of the research, the second part explains the methods used to gather the data, giving an outline of all the questions that were asked to the participants during the interview. In the last three sections, the participants chosen, ethics, procedures and the limitations that were encountered throughout the study are discussed.

### **3.1 - Dissertation Design and Data**

The gathered data will involve qualitative research. A qualitative approach is being used as it will help the researcher understand and explore the social interactions that occur between students at school. The data that will be gathered varies from one person to another and it is constructed and analysed by interpreting the knowledge generated.

All the data for this dissertation will be primary data and everything will be organized by setting codes for the analysis, this approach will make the process faster and the results can be easily analysed and compared to one another. Qualitative research interviews help a lot with dissertations because through interviewing someone you can see and get the story behind a participants' experience (McNamara, 1999). They are also more personal, therefore, the researcher has the benefit of getting to know the feelings, opinions and also the background that formed certain beliefs that the participant might have. This is a very important and useful factor for this study, as it is primarily focusing on the experience of the participants with non-Maltese students.

When working with Interviews, it is a move towards an interaction and interchanging of views between one person and another. These ideas arise from a topic that is of mutual interest for the interviewer and the participant (Dilley, 2004). Interviews let the participant describe and interpret his ideas in his own way and depending on his experiences, due to this, the data collected in an interview is very unique as it is coming from the particular participants' point of view.

It is also important to say that the interview is a very flexible tool for data gathering as it lets the data gatherer (interviewee) experience the participants' emotions, thoughts and views on certain subjects at the same time. This feature therefore enables spontaneous thought, honest answers and also sometimes diving deep into certain beliefs and issues, hence, the interview entails a high level of consent and confidentiality (Cohen et al., 2007). Whereas a conversation in an interview is usually structured by a series of questions, with the responses being very explicit and straight to the point (Cohen et al., 2007).

### **3.2 - Sampling and Participants Chosen**

This dissertation is focused on the experience of Maltese students with 'foreign' peers. Four state schools were chosen, these schools are spread across the island and cover large catchment areas both from rural and urban settlements. However, due to the school closures in light of the Covid 19 pandemic, the interviews were only carried out in two schools. A total of seven participants chosen randomly from both schools were interviewed. The classes from where the students were contacted were Year 9 and Year 10 therefore, the participants are all in the age range of 12-15 years old. I chose this particular age group as they might have had more chances to experience some type of relation with 'foreigners' and apart from that, at this age, the children would have already started to form some type of "geographic imaginations" (Brillante & Mankiw, 2015) and stereotyping towards other countries and nationalities. The participants were chosen and recruited randomly with the assistance of their teachers and the schools' administration. Fifteen minutes were allocated to an interview with every student, and the interviews were carried out during their break and in one instance during a free lesson, this was done so that the students would not be interrupted during their lessons. The interviews were then carried out with them individually so as to prevent one student influencing the other.

### **3.3 - Instrumentation for Data Gathering**

The participants were interviewed and asked about their experiences with non-Maltese peers so as to see if their "geographic imaginations" were affected by this interaction. The questions will be focusing around five different themes. These themes are as follows:

- The travel experience of the student
- Their friendships with other peers that are not Maltese
- Their cultural and geographical influence
- Their prefabricated ideas of certain nationalities
- Their geographical prejudice.

### **3.4 - Interview Layout**

The interview was sectioned into five different parts. The first section was mainly about the students travelling experience. through this section, I wanted to see which countries the student had visited and how much experience they have when it comes to travelling in foreign places as this might change the way that they used to think that the particular country looked like, with regards to culture, location and also its people. The second question was about friends and classmates that are coming from different countries. This was obviously asked so that then the imagination of students that have classmates coming from different countries, would be compared with that of those who have none at all. The third section is closely linked to the second part as it involves the countries that foreigners are coming from and also the perception of the interview participants towards these countries. The fourth and fifth part then involved the participants describing how people from certain nationalities would look in their opinion and seeing pictures and trying to guess where it was taken. These last two exercises will highlight the stereotyping that the participants have, and one can also see how these change after being influenced by foreign peers.

Table 3.1 gives an outline of how the interview was structured and how each section corresponds to the aims and research question put forward:



<p>Section A:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Where do you live?</li> <li>2. Have you ever travelled?</li> <li>3. If yes, where did you go?</li> <li>4. Was the travel planned (with a tour), with family, friends, school exchange?</li> <li>5. Did you get the chance to meet with local people?</li> </ol>	<p>This section as the questions show, was mainly asked for demographic purposes. It was also used to see the travel experiences that the participant had and also in what ways, if any, he was exposed to the locals of the country visited. These travel experiences have an influence on the "imaginations geographic" and also can effect the locational and cultural knowledge of the said person. These terms are explained in more detail in Chapter 4 - Results and Discussion.</p>
<p>Section B:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Do you have foreign students in your class?</li> <li>2. Do you have foreign friends?</li> <li>3. Where are they from?</li> <li>4. What is their belief (Religion)?</li> <li>5. What type of friendship do you have (Do you meet often, share a lot of experiences together, you are in the same group of close friends)?</li> <li>6. Where do you meet (Football, Scouts, Music school, MUSEUM, School etc.)?</li> <li>7. How did you get to know each other?</li> <li>8. How many times do you meet and what do you usually talk about?</li> <li>9. What was it that made you become good friends?</li> </ol>	<p>This section is a very important step to answer the research question, as while asking these the interviewee will be seeing the friendships and/or contact that the participants have with students who come from another country. From the answers provided for these questions, the researcher can deduct whether the "geographic imaginations" the students have been effected or not by their relations with students that are not coming from Malta.</p> <p>In this section, religion can also be seen if it is acting as a barrier or not, therefore, seeing if it is a factor that effects friendships.</p>

<p>Section C:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What did you learn on the countries that your friends/classmates come from?</li> <li>2. Did you learn something new? Did your perception of this country change from before? If yes, can you give me some examples?</li> <li>3. If you had to go to one of the countries that we mentioned, which one would you choose and why?</li> <li>4. Did your attitude towards this country, its culture and its people change after you got to know your friend/s?</li> <li>5. Why do you think that these foreign kids are coming to live in Malta?</li> <li>6. From which countries do you think that the most foreigners are coming to live in Malta?</li> </ol>	<p>This section is closely related to the section above as it explores the ideas that the participants had or have about the countries that their friends come from and how they had changed if it is the case.</p> <p>This section also explores the participants ' ideas and thoughts about the foreigners that come to live in Malta therefore, why, how and from where according to them.</p>
<p>Section D &amp; E:</p> <p>Description of People and Photos</p>	<p>These last two sections, were created in order to make the stereotypes and the existing "geographic imaginations" of the participants explicit. This was mainly seen in the section where the participants were asked to describe the people. Moreover, in the section where participants were asked to describe the images and also say where they think the place is, their locational knowledge and also their stereotypes and cultural influence was very evidently seen.</p>

After all the raw interview data was collected, it was transcribed in order to reduce the complexity and facilitate the data analysis process. This also made it look presentable and easier to identify the codes for analysis. These transcriptions are available in appendix 7.

### **3.5 - Ethics and Procedures**

Due to the fact that students under the legal age of 18 are the participants of the interviews in this dissertation, the research had to go through ethical evaluation and approval before starting the data collection. Since my research was carried out within state schools, I needed permissions from the FREC and UREC, the Ministry of Education and Employment and the Heads of School. After obtaining ethical clearance, a copy of the interview questions, methodology, information letters, consent forms and also assent forms were sent for approval to the Ministry of Education and Employment and also to the Heads of School.

Since there had to be some changes due to the Covid 19 pandemic, a methodology restructuring proposal was sent to the dissertation board in order to work with the interviews gathered from two schools rather than four as was planned in the beginning of this study. This was approved and given the go-ahead to work with this data.

Before interviewing the students, consent forms and information letters were given to their parents/legal guardians and also assent forms where given to the students involved, these are available in Appendices two to five. It is also important to mention, that the students had the liberty to stop contributing to the study whenever they wanted and without giving any reason. Since the interviews were audio recorded, it was made sure that there are no names mentioned of the students participating and everything was coded by means of an alpha numerical label to safeguard their anonymity The recordings were saved in a password secure protected computer only heard by the researcher and the tutor due to confidentiality and anonymity. All recordings are to be destroyed when the study is carried out successfully.

### **3.6 - Limitations to the Study**

During the course of this study, some limitations were encountered that interfered with the progression of the dissertation.

### **3.6.1 - Time Frame**

All four state schools where contacted in early November following Ethical Clearance were obtained, unfortunately, only two schools, replied back in a favourable time, managing to carry out interviews in December and in February respectively. Communication from the remaining two schools arrived quite late and due to Teaching Practice I could not carry out the interviews resulting in not carrying out the interviews as school were then closed. The time frame for when to carry out the interviews was also a limitation in the sense that the only possible period was between November up till before the Christmas recess, then there was a small time frame between the end of January and second week of February due to University exams in January and secondary school exams in February. As mentioned in earlier only two schools had contacted me in early December and due to this the interviews were carried out successfully, the other two schools however contacted me in late February so I could only carry out the interviews after Easter Recess which was in Mid-April onwards. This meant that these interviews were no longer possible to be carried out as Schools were closed as of the 13th of March onwards.

### **3.6.2 - Covid-19**

Due to the extraordinary Covid-19 situation, arrangements had to be made on the data gathering sampling size. As mentioned in section 3.3, data was to be gathered from four state schools, however data was only gathered from two schools prior to school closures due to Covid-19. The number of students that participated in the interviews is seven, four from School A and three from School B. The participants were all boys as girls seemed reluctant to take part in these interviews. Although 12-20 interviews were being planned to be carried out, the seven that were successful were enough to answer the research question put forward for this study. Nevertheless, if more interviews could have been carried out, maybe more aspects and common themes would have been identified due to a larger pool of ideas and data.

### **3.7 - Conclusion**

In the next chapter Analysis and Discussion, the results that were gathered as per methodology discussed during this chapter will be analysed, presented and discussed. The results will be presented in forms of tables and writing. I will be also merging the discussion section with the result chapter as due to the nature of this study, it is more viable and coherent to put them as one rather than separate them.

## **Chapter 4 - Results**

The data gathered in the interviews will be analysed through thematic content analysis. Through this, common patterns and themes in the interviews gathered will be identified. They will be pooled together to analyse what is common and what is not and will then be presented in the results section. These major themes will then be discussed in the discussion section of the study, from these, the researcher will be able to answer the research question.

The aim of this chapter is to present the data and results gathered for this study. This chapter will serve as a prelude to Chapter 5 - Discussion, where I will then be analysing and discussing the results obtained in relation with the study's research question: 'Does the Maltese student's experience with students coming from other countries influence their 'geographical imagination' and their understanding of the world?'

This chapter will be divided into six sections, all of them will be focusing on different parts of the results obtained from interviewing seven secondary school students from two state schools. The results presented are all taken from the transcripts of the interviews which can be found in the Appendix section of this study. They will be subdivided as follows:

1. An overview of the Participants travel history and their experience with non-Maltese peers at school.
2. The Participants' "geographic imaginations" of people of different nationalities
3. The Participants' 'geographical imagination' of different scenes and images.

Through these three sections the influence on their "geographic imaginations", and their stereotyping towards the world came out very clear and gave out very clear results which are considered good to complete this study.

### **4.1 - An Overview of the Interviews**

As was highlighted in the Chapter Three; Methodology, the data was gathered through the use of interviews with Maltese students frequenting/attending secondary schools.

### **4.1.1 - Demography of Students Interviewed**

The students that were interviewed were all males, this is because girls who were approached by the school administration as potential participants in the study preferred not to participate. Whereas this fact was not expected, and may be considered as a limitation to the study, it indirectly leads this study to focus on the position and geographical imagination of boys. The age ranged between 12 to 14 years of age, therefore, the students were in the year 9 and year 10 year groups as originally planned. The students interviewed are all coming from the Southern Harbour District and the South Eastern District of Malta. It is also important to point out that in the two schools that the interviews were carried out the population of non-Maltese students is not the highest in Malta with school one having 6.3% that are foreigners and school two having only 3% (information provided by the schools). Nevertheless the interviews still provided clear patterns of behaviour that resulted in addressing the research question put forward for this study.

### **4.2 - Transcriptions and Identified Codes**

Ideas and concepts were looked for in the transcripts itself without any preexisting conceptualisations hence the type of coding here is data-driven as it was all constructed by seeing the main themes that emerged more than once in the transcripts (Saldana, 2013). I decided to opt for this type of data analysis because due to the nature of this study it will reflect the concepts and theories of the study.

The themes that were persistent throughout all the transcripts and where identified are as follows:

- Language Barriers
  - In the case of this study, language barriers will be seen in the perspective of the participants not being able to communicate with their peers that come from another country, therefore, resulting in 'othering' or also formation of groups.

- Locational Knowledge
  - In this study, this phrase will be mentioned as it is an important aspect to see how the participants look at the world. The locational knowledge of the participant is not defined only by how well he knows the world map and where countries are positioned, it also entails how well a person knows about the countries landscapes, norms, society and cultural traits. The notion of cultural knowledge and norms of society can be easily intertwined with this.
  
- Religion
  - Religion will be seen as either a social trait that brings students together or as a trait that creates social and cultural barriers between the participants.
  
- Cultural Knowledge
  - Cultural Knowledge closely relates to locational knowledge, however, this term focuses more on the social and cultural barriers that the students might encounter, due to different cultures.
  
- Influence of Media
  - As mentioned in Chapter Two - Literature Review, the media has a lot of influence on how we perceive and look at things. It also creates a lot of 'false stereotyping' which leads to more othering. This influence was evident in these interviews that were carried out, therefore, it will be a discussed theme in Chapter 5.
  
- Wars and Conflict
  - Places and countries that are known for ongoing war and conflict might be perceived as negative in the “geographic imaginations” of the participants, these links and thoughts were made explicit by some questions that were asked in this interview.
  
- The “geographic imaginations” of Developed and developing Countries
  - From the interviews it showed that the participants “geographic imaginations” were very different towards developed and underdeveloped countries. It seems that for them, developed countries have to have high rise buildings and rich people, however,



they also attribute developed countries to homelessness. This attribute showed a lot when America was first mentioned as a place with rich and patriotic people, but then when a picture of a homeless person was displayed in front of the participants, they all said it was in America.

### **4.3 - The Participants Experience with Non-Maltese Students**

The interviewees that participated all share their Maltese nationality as a common ground. These questions were asked in order to analyse possible experiences that these students had with non-Maltese people. Therefore, this is used as a tool to probe for the possible influences that might have influenced their current “geographic imaginations” This topic will be divided into further subtopics to present the results of the three main questions that were asked in the first part of the interview.

#### ***4.3.1 - Travelling Experiences***

The first question that the participants were asked was if they have ever travelled. As indicated in Table 4.1 the majority of participants had travelled for a holiday with the most common destination being different places in Italy as can be seen in Table 4.1 the places they visited in Italy are Rome and also the Island of Sicily, others did not specify and just mentioned Italy. Three of them did not travel but they did express their wish to visit Italy. This might be coming from a lot of different influences such as the media and the fact that Italy is one of the closest countries to Malta. Another factor that might be influencing this, is the tourism sector as there is a high availability of low-cost flights towards Italy. Another observation that was made is the fact that all of the participants’ travel destinations were European Countries, and as their reason to travel was mainly as a leisure activity, their only contact with local people was restricted to retail shops. The results can be seen in Table 4.1 below.

Student	“Have you ever travelled”	“If yes, did you have any contact with the locals?”	“If no, do you wish to travel?”
1A	Yes (Sicily and Wales)	Yes (In Shops)	N/A
1B	No	N/A	Yes (Italy)
1C	Yes (Rome)	Yes (In Shops)	N/A
1D	Yes (Italy, Croatia, England)	Yes (Shops and Restaurants)	N/A
2A	No	N/A	No Mentions
2B	Yes (Italy)	Yes (In Shops)	N/A
2C	No	N/A	Yes (Italy)

Table 4.1: Participant's Travel Experience

### 4.3.2 - Non-Maltese Friendships

Another question that was asked was regarding the friendships that the participants have with non-Maltese students.

The results clearly show that all of the interviewees know someone who is not originally from Malta. Whilst the majority of the participants refer to these students as their friends, three said that they do not really have a personal connection with them and think of them as acquaintances, in the sense that they just see them in class and greet them or offer help.

Student 1B: "As I said I do not talk a lot with them it's mainly a Good Morning and how are you."

Student 2C: "We do not talk a lot we just help each other if need be, I stay with my friends, he stays with his."

Although the population of foreigners in these two schools is not very big, all the students who were interviewed had some foreign acquaintances within the school. This observation might be a result of the increase in percentage of foreigners living in Malta in the past 10 years (NSO, 2019). Another interesting point that came out and was noticed during the analysis of this interview was the fact that some of these participants somehow feel that if a person is Non-Maltese then they are "helpless", in the sense that, they always felt the need to help and guide their non-Maltese peers.

Interestingly, the friends/acquaintances that were mentioned come from many different places such as countries in Africa (Ethiopia and Libya), Asia (China), Europe (Italy and Spain) and even America.

With this in mind, it is important to note that schools have become a place where students experience 'the other'. This shows the importance that in Malta we do not have segregation in schools as this is a very critical period where students start to form their ideas about the 'other'. Should segregation be put in place this will result in social isolation and formation of racial ideas that would result in racist behaviour (McArdle & Garcia, 2017). The results of their friends, how they met and from where they are coming are shown in Table 4.2.

Student	“Do you have any non-Maltese friends?”	“How did you meet?”	“Where do they come from?”
1A	Yes, both in Class and Personal	In Class and in football	Italy (Classmate) and Ethiopia (Best Friend in School and Football)
1B	Yes	At school (we are acquaintances rather than friends)	Italy
1C	Personal Friends no, however non-Maltese in Class yes.	At School	Italian and American
1D	Only Classmates	School	Syrian or Libyan (The student did not know exactly)
2A	Yes	At School	China
2B	Only Classmates	At School	China
2C	Yes	At School	Spain

Table 4.2: Results of Participant's Friendships

### 4.3.3 - Religious Influence

When the question about their friends' religion was put forward, all participants either replied by "I do not know" [S2C] or by saying that "it does not make a difference whether they follow the same religion as them or not." [S1C] This can be an indication that in today's society, the importance of religion is on the decline. Moreover, there is an ever growing attitude of scientific facts having a preference over facts that are solely based on faith and belief without

belonging (Podolinska, 2010). All of this leads to the decline and reduced importance of religion, which was highlighted by some of the interviewees, as religion is not a defining factor for them and therefore religion may not be one of those aspects that influence the relationship between the students.

#### ***4.3.4 - Perceptions of students towards country of origin of foreigners living in Malta***

When the students were asked from which country they think that most foreigners come to Malta, the most common answer was definitely Italy and Libya, with other European countries such as Germany and England also being mentioned by some. Student 1C also mentioned America, this might be due to the fact that he has an American student attending the same school as him, and therefore, this shows that this student has had an effect on his perceptions and his “geographical imagination”. Foreigners from African countries were also mentioned and most probably this can be attributed to the fact that the Maltese Islands have been experiencing an increase in the number of newcomers as asylum seekers coming from African countries.

Interestingly enough, no one mentioned Asian and Eastern European countries, even though Malta has also experienced an increase of foreign workers coming from these countries with around 4,000 workers being Indian and 3,800 being Serbian making them the top two when it comes to employed Third Party Nationals (Jobsplus, 2018). This could be due to various factors, such as either because in their schools they do not frequent a large number of foreigners coming from these countries or else due to the fact that in their localities they see more foreigners that are coming from Central Europe and Northern Africa rather than from Asia and Eastern Europe.

Related to this, the reasons that were given as to why these non-Maltese nationals came to Malta were various. Six of the participants said that most probably they come due to war and bad living conditions. Two participants also said that they come because Malta is beautiful, therefore, for aesthetic purposes. An observation that I made is the fact that all of them gave negative reasons for why one leaves his homeland, no one gave a more positive approach like for example, found a good job and wanted to experience another country or for study purposes.

#### **4.4 - Description of Certain Nationalities**

In order to assess the student's "geographic imaginations" and their pre-existing stereotype the second part of the interview was all about describing people of different origins or nationalities the students were asked to describe the person during the interview without being shown an image or being prepared from beforehand. This made it possible for the description to be given purely from their imagination, therefore, making their "geographic imaginations" explicit.

The nationalities that the participants were asked to describe are the following:

1. Italian man
2. Libyan man
3. Libyan woman
4. African woman
5. Serbian man
6. American man
7. German man

From these descriptions a lot of common themes emerged and also it was evident that there is a certain common stereotype towards certain nationalities as some of the answers, even between students that come from different schools were common. This was a very important point for the course of this study, as it gives an indication of how certain "geographic imaginations" and prejudices are very similar and common within a community. The results and descriptions that were given by every participant will be drawn in the form of a table, moreover, the most common themes that emerged will be then summarised above the respective tables.

##### **4.4.1 - Italian Man**

While analysing the descriptions of an Italian man, it clearly showed that there is a very common stereotypical imagination of a person coming from Italy. While acknowledging that there were different descriptions, the majority of them were very similar. The majority of the participants all described a person from Italy as a person with brown/dark hair, "normal skin"

and also fashionable, rich and clean. I made an emphasis on the word normal skin as this might show that for this particular student, other skin colours that are not Caucasian are not normal. Therefore, a question arises, is this a question of a lack in “geographical imagination” or is it a question of stereotyping? For this student, does having a different skin tone make you not “normal”?

Student	Description
1A	Tall, Deep voice, Black hair and a very nice character.
1B	White skinned, Hair colour would be blackish/brownish.
1C	Tall, Brown hair, if they come from the North of Italy they are more posh and pretentious, but from the South they are more Maltese-like.
1D	Very friendly and look very similar to Maltese people.
2A	Loves to cook, Interested in food, Nice, Dressed well.
2B	Fashionable, wearing shirts, organised, normal skin, brown hair, very clean.
2C	Wearing a hat, white skin, blue eyes, nice character.

Table 4.3: Participant's Descriptions of an Italian Man

#### 4.4.2 - African Woman

The response to describe an African woman was more or less the same from everyone. All participants described her as dark skinned, quiet, wearing a head scarf and very poor and helpless. As mentioned in the literature review because of the influence that the media has, Africa is connected to an image of black, poor, helpless people. Making reference to the head scarf comment, this might also be a sign of religious connotations, in this case Islam, to Africa. This is an indication that the students may not distinguish between different regions within the African continent and simply associates the massive landmass to North Africa with a prevalence of Islam. This could be due to the close proximity to the Maltese islands and the more direct contact and experience with people from North Africa. Another interesting comment is the one that states that she wears a lot of clothes due to cold temperatures. This comment can be an indication of lack of locational knowledge, meaning the student is not aware how temperature varies with latitudinal position.

<b>Student</b>	<b>Description</b>
1A	Short, nice and Dark Skinned
1B	Dark skin, poor and angry
1C	Dark skin, fat lips, quiet
1D	Dark skin, long hair, quiet
2A	Very poor and has nothing
2B	Very dark, poor and wears a veil.
2C	Lots of clothes for the cold and cover face.

*Table 4.4: Participant's Description of an African Woman*

#### **4.4.3 - Libyan Man and Woman**

Even though the nationality is the same, distinction is still made between a man and a woman from Libya. Interestingly enough, a number of participants described the man as aggressive, dominant and hostile while when it comes to the women she was described as timid, quiet and was also given the role of the one that takes care of her children by a particular participant. This shows how their “geographic imaginations” vary even on how they look at and perceived by genders. The table below shows how the participants described the Libyan man and woman.

<b>Student</b>	<b>Description (Man)</b>	<b>Description (Woman)</b>
1A	Big Beard and Curls, Aggressive or Calm	Wear long clothes to cover her, very nice and kind, quiet
1B	Dark Skin, Bad Condition, Not Nice	Similar to Man
1C	Dark Skin, Dominant and Angry	Covered in black, quiet and caring for children, reserved.
1D	Dark Skin, Long Beard, Wears a turban, Angry and Rude	Wearing black, only eyes exposed, quiet but pretentious
2A	Short Hair	A type of mask
2B	Dark Skin, Normal Clothes	Wearing a Veil, Skin colour like ours
2C	Dark Skin, Head Scarf	Dark Skin, Head Scarf, Nice Character

*Table 4.5: Participant's Descriptions of a Libyan Man and Woman*

#### 4.4.4 - American Man

From the two schools that I carried out the interviews in, one of them had an American student that used to attend the same school. This is being said in order to highlight that most probably, the “geographical imagination” that these kids have on a person with an American nationality stems from the general media and what they hear in their daily lives. The majority of descriptions that were communicated were of a positive nature. An American man was described as “patriotic” [S2A], “high class” [S1D] and as a person who is of high consideration. This indicates that for these students someone who comes from America is rich, patriotic, has one of the best possible lives and is “very intelligent” [S1A]. Something that was also very commonly mentioned is the fact that for the majority of these students an American is blonde. This can be an indication that these students are not aware of the Hispanic community which makes up 18% of the American population and also the African-Americans which make up 12.7% of the American population making them the second largest racial group in the USA and also having within it some of the most iconic sports players such as Michael Jordan, Muhammed Ali and tiger Woods amongst many others (US Census Bureau, 2018). Ironically, in the final part of this interview, when the same participants were shown a picture depicting homeless people, nearly all of them said America which is quite contradictory to what their “geographic imaginations” on American people are. The image of the American Man as proposed by the students is particularly interesting and it was good to understand that compared to other nationalities, the percentage of American nationals living in Malta is quite low. Table 4.6 shows how every participant described an American man.

Student	Description
1A	Very Tall, Black Hair, Speaks good english, heavy American accent.
1B	Blonde, Big thinkers, very nice people.
1C	Outgoing, rich and blonde.
1D	Very blonde, blue eyes, friendly and rich.
2A	Wearing an American flag on a t-shirt and disorganised.
2B	Blonde, nicely dressed and rich.
2C	Branded clothes, nice features and clever.

Table 4.6: Participants Description of an American Man



#### 4.4.5 - Serbian Man

The descriptions of a Serbian person ranged from "quiet" to "aggressive", many of the participants described them as tall and blonde, while one described them as brunettes. When it comes to their character some described them as aggressive and can commit crime and others described them as quiet, one of the participants also said that "they do not talk much", this might be due to a language barrier as the same participant also mentioned before that when he was young he had some Serbians with him in class. A very interesting observation was the participant that said that Serbians have a covered face and are aggressive.

Student	Descriptions
1A	Very Tall, Energetic, Love Sports and Crazy
1B	Agitated, Do not care about anyone, chavy and Arrogant
1C	White Skin, Blonde, Blue Eyes and Quiet
1D	Tall, White, Blonde, Savage and Commit Crime
2A	Poor, Covered face
2B	Tall, Thin and Brunette
2C	Do not know

Table 4.7: Participants Description of a Serbian Man

#### 4.4.6 - German Man

Another nationality that the participants were questioned about is Germany. While everyone answered, some of them with ease, it came out that the participants lack the "geographical Imagination" of Germany. The results obtained can be found in table 4.8 below.

Student	Description
1A	Medium Height, Rich, Blonde and Kind
1B	Tall, Blonde, Blue eyes, Drink beer
1C	Punctual, Blonde, Strict, Tall, Football and Beer
1D	Mediterranean Skin, Brown Hair, Blue Eyes and Strict
2A	Scarves, Educated, Brunettes with Short hair
2B	Do not know
2C	Similar to American

Table 4.8: Participants Description of a German Man

## 4.5 - Picture Description

The final part of the interview consisted of six pictures all showing a different landscape or person. These pictures were shown to the participants and they were asked to answer with where or who they think is the picture showing. This was done in order to test the “geographic imaginations” of the participants by seeing their “geographic imaginations” and also their prejudice and stereotyping. This exercise proved to be very helpful as it highlighted the ideas and thoughts of the participants. Figure 4.1 below shows the six pictures used for this exercise. The answers of the participants are listed in Table 4.9.



Figure 4.1: Pictures used during the Interview

<b>Student</b>	<b>Picture A</b>	<b>Picture B</b>	<b>Picture C</b>	<b>Picture D</b>	<b>Picture E</b>	<b>Picture F</b>
1A	Sweden	Mayor of a City in Africa	America	Washington D.C	Korea	Russia
1B	Alps in Italy	Mayor of London	America	Dubai (Because of High Rise)	China	France or Barcelona
1C	Alps or Pyrenees	Mayor of an Arabic Country	Rome	Saudi Arabia or African (Associating Green with Arabs)	Serbia	France
1D	Slovenia or Italy	Mayor of a City in Africa	Rome	New York	Greece or Rome	Libya
2A	Germany	Mayor of a Serbian Village	America	America	India	America
2B	Alps in Italy	Mayor of a place in Libya	America	Japan	China	Serbia
2C	Italy	Mayor of a place in Libya	America	China	Germany	Libya

*Table 4.9: Participants Image Results*

Pictures above are showing the following images as explained in Chapter Three (Methodology):

- A - Atlas Mountains in Africa
- B - The Mayor of London
- C - Homeless People in America
- D - City of Cairo, Egypt
- E - Slums in Naples, Italy
- F - Yellow Vest Riots in Paris, France

The pictures will be referred to by using the letter that they have been given in the table above for ex. When there is reference to the Atlas Mountains the letter A will be used.

Picture A which depicts the Atlas Mountains in Morocco was perceived as a picture depicting the Alpine region by every student, this must be due to the fact that the Alps are a very prominent and popular mountain range in Europe. It might also be due to the fact that a lot of participants went to Italy, therefore were influenced by this even though they did not go close to the Alps.

When it comes to Picture B, the veils that are worn by the women standing behind the Mayor, his skin colour and facial features are most probably the factors why five of the participants thought this was the mayor of Africa/Libya. These participants might be making a connotation between the African continent and the presence of Islam (due to the veils). Another participant mentioned a Mayor from a Serbian country, it is interesting to note that this is the same student that when asked to describe a Serbian person he described him as wearing a mask. This might show that this student is either thinking that Serbia is an African country with Muslim as its main religion, or else he has the “geographical imagination” that these head scarves are worn during war.

In Picture C, the participants were shown some homeless people sleeping in the streets of New York City, five out of seven students said that it is in America, while two said it is in Rome. The two that thought it was Rome had previously mentioned that they have seen a lot of homeless people in Rome, “I have seen many homeless people in Rome, so I think it is Rome.” This confirms that for these two students the fact that they have travelled to Rome and seen homeless people affected their “geographic imaginations”. Apart from this it is good to also note that while everyone described Americans as rich and prideful, the results also showed that the same participants think that there are a lot of homeless people in America, this might relate to their “geographic imaginations” of developed and developing countries.

In Picture D there were a lot of mixed answers and results, all of the participants mentioned big cities. Notable occurrences were the facts that no one mentioned a city in Europe, this could be because Europe is associated with historical cities, rather than high rise cities, as

a matter of fact, if one google searches images of a city in Europe the first results usually show a cultural/historical landmark. Another point that came out is that one particular student associated the green lights with Arabic countries, this most probably comes from the past usage of green in Libya.

Picture E depicts a slum area in Naples, Italy. This area was perceived as a country in Asia (India, China, Korea) by four participants. Another student mentioned Serbia, interestingly, this student showed that he had a negative image towards Serbia and Eastern Europe. Another two mentioned Greece, Rome and Germany. The idea that this place is in Greece and Rome might come from the recent strikes that Greece had and also from the idea of seeing a lot of homeless people in Rome, while the one that mentioned Germany was very unsure for giving this answer, therefore, this might be just a wild guess.

In Picture F which depicts the famous yellow vest riots in France, there were also a lot of mixed answers. Two participants said Libya, this might come from the ongoing political turmoil in Libya, which might have influenced the participants. Two other participants mentioned France and Barcelona this was due to them listening on the news; quoting them: "Because I have heard on the news that there were a lot of protests going on." The same student that is associating Serbia with wars also said that he thinks these riots are in Serbia.

These images will be discussed and elaborated further in Chapter 5 - Discussion.

#### **4.6 - Concluding Remarks**

The analysis of these interviews showed very positive and interesting results. The participant pool, although seven, turned out to be very promising as a lot of their answers showed indications of how their "geographical imaginations" are being shaped. When it comes to the description of nationalities and also picture identification, there were a lot of mixed results, showing the diversity of the "geographical imaginations" of these participants. These remarks reflect a lot of the influence that the media has on these participants. As per subtopic 4.2, a lot of common themes had been identified mainly from these two exercises. These are all the results of many factors and influences that the participants face in their daily routines. In the next Chapter (Discussion), these themes will be discussed in depth, they will be

analysed and compared to other literatures, this will lead in answering the research question that was put forward for this study.

## **Chapter 5 - Discussion**

Throughout this chapter, the results that were analysed and presented in the previous Chapter will be discussed in more detail so as to answer the research question of the dissertation: 'Does the Maltese student's experience with students coming from other countries influence their 'geographical imagination" and their understanding of the world?"

The points that will be discussed are in line with the themes that were identified:

- Language Barriers
- Religion
- Locational & Cultural Knowledge
- The 'geographical imaginations" of Developing and Developed Countries

### **5.1 - Language Barriers**

As discussed in Chapter 1 and 2, multiculturalism has been growing in quite a number of countries as a result of an increase in migration from one country to another. These migration flows are mostly due to international job opportunities, environmental problems and forced migration due to political turmoil (Castles and Miller, 2009). Malta is no exception and with this wave of immigration, schools and educational institutions experienced a rise in numbers of students who are coming from a different country. It is also important to mention that one of the problems faced in a multicultural society is the language barrier.

An interesting theme that emerged during the interviews with the students is how language barrier limits their interaction with the other students of foreign origin. As Debono (2018) stated, one major challenge related to the relations between locals and foreigners in school was the fact that they could not understand each other due to lack of knowledge in both Maltese and English, the two official languages of Malta. This resulted in a stronger relation between Maltese students and those who have or are coming from a country that has good command of English, but, resulted in a less positive experience between those who have good command of English and those who do not understand or speak English or any other language that the others can understand (Debono, 2018).

### **5.1.1 - Perceptions arising from the Language Barrier**

Within the sample of seven participants, there were some comments that came up, that show that the language barrier could have stopped them from communicating with the non-Maltese learners that have difficulty expressing themselves in either Maltese or English.

Student 1B said, "I never learnt anything from the students that are not Maltese, they do not love speaking to us and they would rather stay with their friends that come from the same country instead of talking and becoming friends with us." For Student 1B, these foreign students are not talking to them because they do not like speaking with them, however, this might be due to a language barrier or nervousness that arises due to them being from different cultures. Karabenick & Newman (2006) stated that there might be three patterns that stop foreigners from speaking with locals, resulting in a negative experience. These three factors are a language barrier, low familiarity with educational practices and also different cultures. Another interesting point that was put forward by the same authors is that there seem to be a more positive interaction between foreigners and locals who have a more open mindset, rather than with locals who are monocultural and with monolingual backgrounds this can also be seen in the paper written by Holicza & Chircop (2018) where they state that certain Maltese people that are highly driven by nationalistic pride have a very 'selective and utilitarian' approach towards foreigners.

In this case scenario, the problem of this particular group of foreigners that are not interacting with the local students might possibly be arising from the fact that in this school foreigners are in the minority, this might result in foreigners coming from the same backgrounds and countries to huddle up together as it might produce a sense of comfort and belonging. Lack of command in English might also make them feel uncomfortable to interact with the locals.

Student 1C also made some remarks that indicate the relation between language barriers and lack of interaction with students coming from a different country. The student first mentioned that in primary school he had foreign friends but in a separate class but they used to play together, however he said, "During primary, we used to play, but no one talked to each other, we could not communicate because they did not know any English, however, we used to communicate a bit with Arabs as they understood some Maltese". He also added to this by saying, "I do not feel comfortable speaking to Eastern Europeans because with



Arabs I can say a word or two, my American friend knew Maltese because of his mother so it was okay, Italians are our neighbours so somehow we manage to understand each other, but Eastern Europeans, I do not know, I can never communicate with them." The way that this student puts it, gives the impression that the barrier is not only related to language but also the perception of the 'other', more specifically the Eastern Europeans. This will be discussed further in Section 5.5.2.

Student 1D who also comes from the same school said that he never found any difficulty speaking to the foreigners in his classroom as there were no barriers. "The ones we have in my classroom always integrated with us Maltese and they knew how to speak very well, we never had any language barrier issues."

These statements are showing many different emotions relating to how these local students are interacting with the foreign students. Student 1C, for example is feeling comfortable interacting with people who can speak Maltese or English, but also, the fact that he still feels comfortable with Italians because geographically they are close to us cannot be ignored. This again highlights that language is creating a feel of 'othering' towards certain nationalities, in this case towards Eastern Europeans and some African countries, however as mentioned in the other comment by the same student, this is also indicating that language is not the only barrier.

Interestingly, students 2A and 2B, both of which did not have a problem with communicating, both made friends with a student coming from a different country, one from China and the other from Spain, since they interact and talk a lot they both said that they learned new things, with one of them even changing his perspective towards Spain and its people. Student 2C, also has a friend from China, however, he does not speak a lot and admits that they never spoke or exchanged knowledge about each other's country.

### ***5.1.2 - How is this effecting the 'Geographical Imaginations' of these students?***

As mentioned in the paragraph above, this barrier is creating a sense of 'othering' towards Eastern Europeans to this student. This lack of interaction, might be having a negative influence on his 'geographical imaginations' of an Eastern European country and its citizens and this approach might even be the result of his prior 'geographical imagination' of Eastern

Europe due to the way this is represented in the media. Duncan & Craig (2009) argue that 'Western Europe' invented the term 'Eastern Europe' creating a notion of the West as the 'pinnacle' of civilisation and European culture whilst putting 'Eastern Europe' in a very ambiguous position mainly characterised on their low economic profiles and low social development. This created the idea of 'Eastern Europe' being a part of Europe but not fully European hence resulting in the idea of 'othering'. This can be seen in the descriptions section where Student 1C described a Serbian person as, "Quiet but would not talk to us." In the student's mind if a person is from Serbia most probably then he would not talk to him. This language barrier can result in a sense of exclusion and detachment towards the ones that do not speak the local languages (Pred, 2000).

On the other hand, when it comes to countries that the students feel more 'comfortable' with, they are not finding any problem with speaking to their peers that come from these mentioned countries, therefore allowing the local students to interact, learn and challenge their "geographic imaginations" on these students. As a matter of fact, enforcing this argument, are the descriptions of the people, where all of these particular students, described the Italians as "nice personality, helpful/ might be rude, friendly and similar to Maltese", they did also use certain negative connotations towards them, however a big difference can be seen in the way that they described the Italians and those coming from Eastern European countries. These were described as, "agitated [S1B], do not speak to us [S1C], do not care about anyone, crazy, savage and can commit crime [S1A]." These descriptions clearly show that these students' have a set 'geographical imagination' towards these people, most probably arising from various influencing media as mentioned in Chapter 2. Due to this language barrier, therefore, a barrier in experiencing each other they are not allowing themselves to challenge these "geographic imaginations" and stereotypes that pre-existed before they met these people. In fact this was clearly stated by student 1B as he said that, "I never learnt anything from students who do not speak to us."

Moreover, the students I interviewed feel more comfortable speaking with those coming from Italy, America and also Northern Africa. They feel comfortable because they can hold a conversation with them even if it is very limited. In fact, from the interviews, this showed as the participants felt much more comfortable describing these three nationalities and the descriptions were more balanced and various rather than just portraying similar ideas. This might be indicating that because they spent time together, the students challenged there

“geographic imaginations” and started to look at these people in a different way than they used to do before.

## **5.2 - Different Religious Beliefs**

In this sub-topic the effect of religion on the interaction of students will be discussed, there will be an analysis to see if it is acting as a barrier or as a medium that is helping the students to change their perceptions and “geographic imaginations”. Furthermore, I will then be discussing the “geographic imaginations” of religions of the students and how it is being affected by their day to day interactions with the students that are coming from a different country.

### ***5.2.1 - Overview of Religion in the Maltese Islands***

By the year 2011, the population in Malta was estimated to be around 91% catholic with the remaining 8% being other religions (IRFR, 2012). Of these, Islam and Judaism come in second and third, however most of those who embrace a different religion to Catholicism are people coming from other countries (International Religious Freedom Report, 2012). Surveys carried out by the European Commission in 2010 also showed that the religious identity made Maltese people feel Maltese, showing that Religion is still in some way or another part of Malta's Identity. The census carried out by the Church in Malta in 2017, found out that the number of regular attendees to Sunday Mass have dropped drastically, in fact only 22% of teens that at 16 years or younger attend Mass, with the majority of Church attendees being people aged 50+. This shows that attendance to church and maybe even religion is no longer important for the younger generation.

The shift from the National Minimum Curriculum to the National Curriculum Framework (2012) has paved the way for the introduction of Ethics to be taught in state and independent schools to students who do not wish to be educated in Roman Catholic faith. The number of students who are showing interest in studying Ethics as a subject is increasing, with the majority of them being in independent schools where 54% of the students have chosen to study Ethics (ToM, 2019). While in Secondary State Schools 12.9% have opted to study it although there is an increase in the trend from year to year. This might be indicative that in

the growing cohort of parents and students opting for ethics pass on the message that religion is no longer associated with identity as it was in the National Minimum Curriculum.

### ***5.2.2 - Different Beliefs and its effect on the “Geographic Imaginations” of Students***

During the interview one question that was asked about the participants' friends that are coming from a different country was: "Did you ever speak about each other's religions and does it affect you?" The answers to these questions were all somehow similar in a positive way.

Below are the replies of the participants to this question.

Student 1A: "Yes, he is Protestant, but we do not speak much about it, it is not important for us."

Student 1B: "No, I never spoke to them about their religion, but since they are from Italy, I think they might be Catholic."

Student 1C: "Both of them were Christian, although it does not affect me."

Student 1D: "They are Muslims, but we do not care about this as in our school we always learned to respect each other, when we say a catholic prayer they say one from their religion. We are against racism and bullying."

Student 2A: "We never mentioned this, the person is very quiet."

Student 2B: "No, I do know that he is Catholic, but I do not care."

All of the replies are clearly showing that religion per se does not affect the participants' interaction with their foreign peers. What is most interesting is the reply by student 1D, this reply reflects the inclusive practices and multi-faith approach that are being encouraged in schools. All of the other replies are similar in the sense that everyone said that it is not important for them, showing that for this cohort different religious beliefs is not stopping them from interacting with their 'foreign' peers.

The reply that Student 1B gave gives indications that his 'geographical imagination' is linked to the geographical distribution of religions, in the sense that, he is assuming that since the other student is coming from Italy then he is Catholic. Student 1D also did this link as he is assuming that since the students are Libyans then automatically in his "imagination" they are labelled as Muslims. This shows the geographical distribution of religion is affecting the students' "geographical imagination" but this may not be leading to prejudice towards people of different religions.

### **5.2.3 - Religious Stereotyping**

When the participants were asked to describe certain nationalities, some religious stereotyping came out, mainly when describing the African and Libyan person. The participants, mentioned that they think that a Libyan woman is always wearing a veil, which stems from the fact that Libya has 97% of its population practicing Islam as their main religion (Religious Freedom Report, 2012). However, Student 2B said that for him an African woman, "wears a veil". A similar comment was also made by Student 2C where he mentioned that an African woman, "covers her face".

These references towards the headscarf where most probably made due to the close proximity that the Maltese Islands have with North Africa, therefore, Maltese people might have more contact and influence with people coming from North Africa particularly from Libya in fact 15% of asylum seekers between 2018 and 2019 were coming from Libya (NSO, 2019). Moreover, this might also be a sign of religious connotations, in this case Islam, to Africa. This is an indication that the particular student may not be distinguishing between different regions within the African continent and simply associates the massive landmass to North Africa with a prevalence of Islam. there might also be the fact that students might not distinguish between different head scarves that are worn for different purposes and not just religious practices and traditions.

This is showing that even though at school, the students do not care about each other's religion, they still have stereotypes instilled in them, and their "geographic imaginations" of Africa in the case of religion is not being challenged as in their mind someone coming from Africa, is generally associated with North Africa and then automatically assumed to be a

Muslim and wears a veil, therefore, ignoring the regional geographical difference of Africa and its cultural and religious diversity.

### **5.3 - Locational Knowledge & Cultural Knowledge**

Locational knowledge is not just knowing where a country is on the map. It is a skill that helps the individual understand the relation between countries within a global dimension. Reynolds & Vinterek (2015), state that locational knowledge is many times used by children to understand the world they live in. This knowledge is influenced by a lot of factors including what they see in the media and what they experience. Cultural knowledge is also closely related to locational knowledge. This is the knowledge that an individual has on different ethnic groups, cultures and societies that are different from his/her own. The “geographic imaginations” of the participants of various locations and cultures came out very clearly during the interviews and there was also indications that these “geographic imaginations” were challenged and changed after interacting with peers that are coming from a different country.

#### ***5.3.1 - Challenging the “geographic imaginations” on locations and cultures***

Out of the seven participants, five of them expressed that they have changed their attitude and perception towards a country or a culture because of their close friends that come from another country.

Student 1A, who has a close friend coming from Ethiopia, expressed that since he became friends with him, he learnt a lot of new things that he thought differently prior to meeting him. He mentions two main things, "I became aware of the huge poverty that this country has, resulting in forced immigration of the country's people." He also mentioned, "I thought that these people lived in houses that are built from mud and soil, but in reality they live in houses like ours."

This shows that, from this close friendship, this student not only changed his 'geographical imagination' to the country but also towards its problems. Had student 1A never met this friend from Ethiopia, then his “geographic imaginations” towards this country would have remained the same and would not have been challenged. This relationship did not only challenge the geographical imagination of Student 1A but even lead him to understand the

push factors of migration and did not see this flow of people as a statistical figure but as a need for survival

Student 1C's 'geographical imagination' was also challenged when he started interacting with Syrian people, as before he used to think that people from Syria are dark skinned, due to the influence of the media, this was in fact also stated in Chapter 2 as one of the possible factors influencing the "geographic imaginations" of people. Moreover, the student challenged this stereotype and learned that Syrians are not necessarily dark but are similar to the majority of the Maltese population of Caucasian origin. "On TV we see them differently, this is totally different from what I used to see on the media." This interaction might have also helped him grow critical of the influence of the media. The same student also expressed his wish to visit an Eastern European country as he thinks that since the economy of these countries is quite weak then it means that there is less construction and urban development, resulting in nicer nature. This shows that this student is associating development with the ruin of nature. This statement was repeated by the same student when he said that, "People from Eastern Europe and from the Middle East are forced to leave due to them being poor." This shows a very negative 'geographic imagination' towards these countries. Unfortunately, his imagination was not challenged as he said: "His attitude towards these countries stayed the same." This can be linked with the language barrier mentioned in Section 5.1, where the same student found a difficulty in communicating with students from Eastern Europe, therefore, he had no opportunity to challenge his thoughts.

Student 1D, had mentioned that in his class he had Syrians and Libyans. This student was also challenged and changed his "geographic imaginations" towards the attitude and culture of people coming from Syria and Libya. He said; "I used to think that all Syrians and Libyans were up to no good and commit crime, however, now I learned that this is not true and they are very different from what I believed." These conceptualisations that this student had on these nationalities might have been influenced from the media. Riduoani (2011) states that in Western civilisation, people coming from Northern Africa, the Middle East and those practicing Islam have always been portrayed and mentioned in the media as bad, and in the minds of people that are usually represented as the people behind the 9/11 attacks, bombings and terrorism. Obviously, these views are very distorted to what is real, however, this resulted in people having a very deep rooted negative image towards people coming

from these countries. Student 1D, however, managed to challenge this 'imagination' and now he looks at Syrians and Libyans from a different perspective.

Students 2A and 2B also, had a similar experience as one changed his view towards Spanish people and the other towards Chinese people. The student who changed his view towards Chinese people, now seeing them as very nice and kind people, however did not change his attitude towards China as a country as he said that, "I cannot change my attitude towards a whole country based on one single person." At the same time he said that, "He never knew Chinese people could be this friendly." This shows that this student is separating the people from the country, as for him all people are friendly, but he cannot change his attitude towards the country. By the country, he might be meaning the landscapes, attractions and geographical features. While by the people he is meaning the social dynamics in China. On the same note, the other student used to think that Spanish people are dirty and disorganised, however now he changed his attitude and through his encounter with his classmate he perceived that Spaniards have a laid back culture however does not mean that they are dirty or disorganised.

## **5.4 - The Geographical Imaginations about 'Developed' and 'Developing' Countries**

### **5.4.1 - "Geographic Imaginations" towards America**

The picture description task made it evident that there is a big distinction in the geographical imaginations of the participants towards developed and developing countries. Interestingly, when the participants were shown the picture of a homeless person, it was immediately attributed to America which is considered a developed country, however, when shown the slums in Naples, Italy this image was attributed to many countries that are perceived as developing such as China and India.

Attributing homelessness to America might be coming from the influence of the media and what the students see on TV, two students however mentioned Rome, this is because they have seen homeless people when they travelled to Rome themselves, therefore, their "geographic imaginations" is based on their direct experience of the geographic location. This brings out the fact that the geographical imagination is related to a specific geographical place at a determined small scale of the whole space.



## 5.4.2 - “Geographic Imaginations” towards Europe

Travelling has become very popular, and Europe remains to date a magnet for any kind of travel due to the versatile landscape and culture aspects that it has. As a matter of fact, Europe welcomes half of the world tourists every year, making it the most sought after continent for travelling (Bandoi et al., 2020). It is also good to mention that out of seven participants, four of them have had travel experiences all of them being in Europe (Italy, England and Croatia). This phenomena has an effect on the “geographic imaginations” of the participants. It was noticed that no country in Europe per se, was mentioned when the picture of Cairo, depicting high-rise buildings was shown to the participants. This might be due to the fact that Europe has close links to culture and historic landmarks, in fact as can be seen in figure 5.1, a Google search for major cities and countries in Europe results in images showing historical landmarks rather than high-rise cities and buildings.

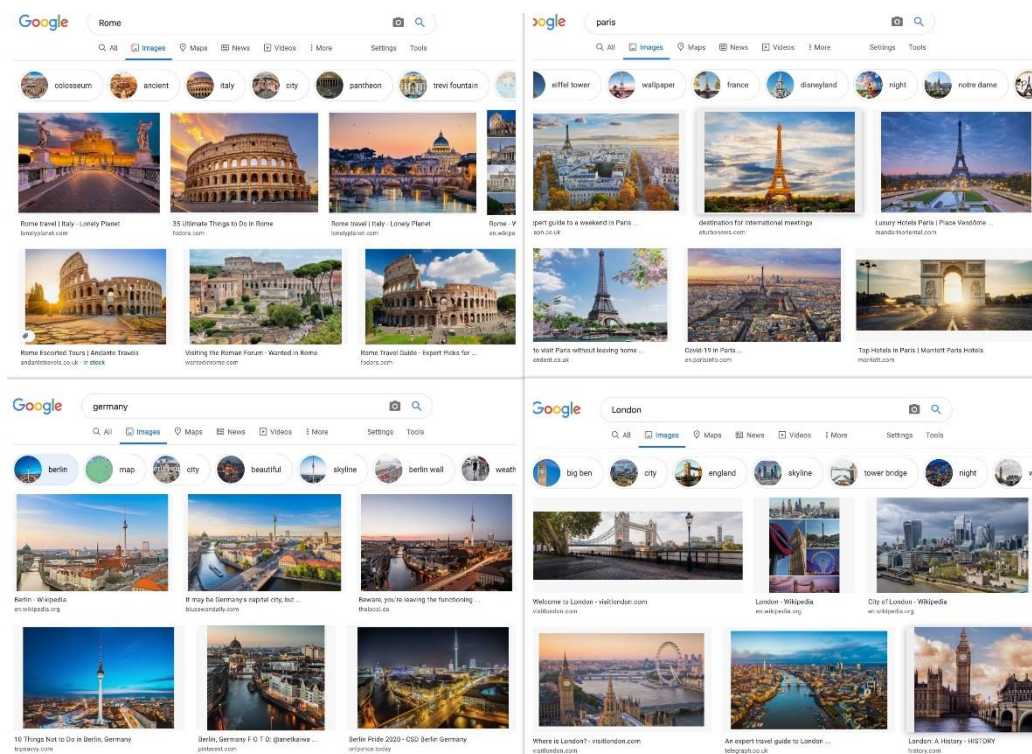


Figure 5.1: Google Search of well-known European Cities (Source: Google, 2020)

When the Atlas Mountains were shown, the students mentioned Germany and Italy referring to the famous Alpine mountain range, as for them the picture of the Atlas Mountains covered in snow and surrounded by pine trees brings about images of the Alps. This 'geographic imagination' is probably influenced by the fact that certain students have travelled to Italy,

therefore from personal experience and also by the fact that mountainous regions in Italy and Germany remain as popular tourist destinations for Maltese people (NSO, 2019). The heavy influence of Italian media may also be a contributing factor to this.

The pictures showing the Mayor of London and the Yellow Vest Riots, were recognised by two participants. One student said; "That is the Mayor of London, I had seen him on Facebook." While another student made a remark about the Yellow Vest Riots saying; "This is either the protests in Paris or Madrid as I was following on the News." This is showing the influence that the media has on these students "geographic imaginations". Continuing on the same image the one depicting the Riots, one student said that it is Serbia. The source of this influence might be a bit blurred as the Balkan Wars had already ended when these students were born, however, he might have read about it or saw them in a movie and in his mind he has this 'imagination' of Serbia as a place of riots. In fact he also mentioned that a Serbian person has a covered face, in the descriptions, this might be linked to this train of thought.

#### **5.4.3 - The "Geographic Imaginations" towards Asia**

Asia is imagined by the participants as a poor continent, but also as having rich cities. In fact this was seen through the picture descriptions of the Slums in Naples where there were answers such as India and China. When shown the picture of the City of Cairo, Japan and China were also mentioned so in their 'imagination' Asia is considered as a place with slums but also with big thriving cities. The students "geographic imaginations" actually reflect the regional disparity that exists in some Asian countries.

#### **5.4.4 - The "Geographic Imaginations" towards Africa**

The participants associated Africa with war, poverty, conflict and Islamic traditions. This was seen in the comments that they made when describing people coming from these countries as "poor", "have nothing", "wearing veils", "angry". Somehow, it feels that the participants' "geographic imaginations" of Africa are based on and linked solely to North Africa, as for example student 1A, as mentioned in 5.3.1 was not aware of the poverty that there is in some parts of Ethiopia.

When asked about why they think that people from Africa leave their countries a common theme that emerged was war, poverty and conflict. It was also noted that they do not make the link that people who leave the shores of Africa from Libya might be coming from elsewhere such as Somalia. "I think from Libya they come to Malta because of war and poverty and instability." Another student also made a remark to people hailing from Syria; "Our Syrian classmate came to Malta because of war in their country, they had to walk all the way to Turkey and then took a plane to Malta, poor them." This statement not only made the student aware of forced immigration but also instilled empathy in him, changing the way he looks at asylum seekers.

## **5.5 - The Influence on the Participants' "Geographic Imaginations" by their Peers Coming from a Different Country**

Throughout Chapter 4 and this discussion various points from the interviews were highlighted. While, it is evident that a lot of the answers given by the students, during the conversation were influenced by their travelling experiences, the media and their day to day lives, one can conclude that their relationships with students coming from another country has had an impact on their "geographic imaginations" in this study's case, the impact was a positive one, but this may not always be the case.

### ***5.5.1 - Direct Influence from their Peers coming from a Different Country***

This was seen in many instances throughout the interviews, for example, student 2A had a negative 'Geographic Imagination' towards Chinese people prior to meeting his Chinese friend, after this interaction, his 'imaginings' were challenged and changed his perception. Another example where this was seen was during the Interview with Student 2B where he thought that Spanish people were disorganised and dirty, but his interaction with this student taught him otherwise. Student 1A also experienced a change in his perception thanks to his Ethiopian friend. In this particular case, the student not only changed his "geographic imaginations" towards the people but also towards the country's norms as he learned that no, Ethiopians do not have houses built from mud, but they are built from, "stone like ours." This gave him another perspective towards Ethiopia and also helped him understand in what state the country is in. Another direct influence that these students coming from a different country had on the participants happened to Student 1C where he became aware of the

difficult and heartbreaking process that asylum seekers go through when they have to flee their country, changing his perception and view towards irregular migration.

### ***5.5.2 - Indirect Influence from their Peers coming from a Different Country***

Indirect influence on the participants' "geographical imaginations" was also noted. As mentioned in the Language Barrier section, the fact that the Eastern Europeans prefer to not talk to the locals, it might have instilled a certain element of 'othering' resulting in a negative effect on the "geographic imaginations" of the local students. Another indirect influence is the fact that many of the participants have had students with them that are coming from Italy, Northern African countries and also from the Middle East. This influenced their view towards the mentioned places and their people, in fact, they all were comfortable describing the people coming from these countries. Contrarily, they were not so comfortable describing a German man as they had little to no experience with Germans. This is also in view that the German Population in Malta is around 4,500 with the majority of them being young people that came alone to work (German Embassy, 2020). Another indirect influence that was noted is the way they are exclusively thinking that Italians only immigrate to Malta due to unemployment, this is because they are experiencing a lot of Italian students with them and they also see a lot of Italian workers in shops, in fact one student said; "There are certain shops that make you think you are in Italy because all the workers are Italian."

### **5.6 - Concluding Remarks**

Throughout this chapter, various themes that emerged from the interviews were explored and discussed. From this discussion it is evident that the research question has been answered and that the "geographical imaginations" of Maltese students is being influenced and challenged by their non-Maltese peers. This is being done both in a direct and indirect way as was discussed in subtopics 5.5.1 and 5.5.2. In the coming chapter which is the conclusion, I will be listing the main findings of this study and some recommendation for future studies that came out while writing this dissertation.

## **Chapter 6 - Conclusion**

The aim of this study was to find out if the “geographic imaginations” of the Maltese students are being challenged and changed by other students coming from different countries. The chapter will be including the main conclusions of this study that were drawn up in relation to the research question, and some possibilities of further studies. The hindrances that limited this study will be listed along with a personal note in relation to the study and its findings.

### **6.1 - Main Findings of the Study**

The participants showed that the students that are coming from different countries are in fact influencing their “geographic imaginations” and perceptions towards other nationalities, societies and the world beyond their own. Most of the students have friendships with students from other nationalities and expressed that after spending time with them they started looking at other countries differently in a more positive way. They also stated that after meeting their ‘foreign’ friends they learned new things that they thought were different in terms of culture, society and people's behavior.

Another finding is with regards to how they view the world in general. Throughout the study it was made very clear that the participants have a very broad 'geographic imagination' and perception towards Italy and North African countries, this is because that these students are meeting a lot of peers coming from these countries in their schools. These interactions are resulting in challenging their “geographic imaginations” and perceptions. It was also found out that their 'imaginings' of certain countries such as Germany are lacking due to lack of interaction to German students and the media. Moreover, the study also shows that since the participants are only meeting with students from Eastern Europe in class and are not mingling with them, the majority of them have developed quite a negative 'geographic imagination' and perception towards these countries.

The study also showed that social aspects like having a different belief system, does not concern or bother the students when it comes to making new friends, however, having a different language limited communication resulted in segregation, therefore acting as a boundary between the local and the foreigner, resulting in wrong perceptions and 'othering'.

The study indicates that the students still have stereotypes instilled in them towards certain skin colour, styles of clothing and landscapes. This is an indicator that their “geographic imaginations” are only limited to certain countries where for example the Atlas Mountains were perceived as the Alps by everyone, showing that their “geographical imagination” of mountains is only limited to the Alpine Region in Europe.

To sum it all up, it can be concluded that, yes, the “geographic imaginations” of the local students are being influenced and challenged by students that are coming from different countries, however, these 'imaginings' are still somehow limited to a certain number of countries mainly those in Europe and Northern Africa.

Having said this, this main finding gives rise to quite some possibilities for further studies which I will be discussing below.

## **6.2 - Recommendations for Further Studies**

While this study focused on the “geographic imaginations” of Maltese students with reference to their interactions with foreign peers and their travelling experiences, stereotyping and perceptions, the results show that many other recommended studies can build on this.

A recommended study would be one that focuses on the students' understanding of Europe within a broader context. This means that not only their understanding of the countries found within Europe, but their understanding of the different societies and cultures found within Europe; in relation also to the European Union as a political and economic block and the distinction of its geo-physical dimension. One may see how the dynamic recent history of Europe as the fall of the Berlin wall, the partitioning of the Balkan state and the growth of the European Union, contributed to the intergenerational geographical imagination of the continent.

Another possible study would be to focus on the Mediterranean “geographic imaginations”, how is this shaped by the tourist industry? Is the Mediterranean presented and considered as one geographical and political region? What is it for the students?

### **6.3 - Limitations to the Study**

As was pointed out in Chapter 3, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the planned number of interviews had to be reduced due to the closure of schools, limiting the research to only seven participants, nevertheless these interviews provided clear insights and trends to reach general conclusions and answer the research question. Nevertheless, this was definitely a limiting factor to this study, had I managed to carry out more interviews certain patterns related to the students' experience might have been more defined.

The schools where I managed to hold the interviews in were also limited to two, therefore it was not possible to see if a higher percentage of foreigners in a school is having a different effect on the “geographic imaginations” of the students or not.

In spite of these limitations, the study indicates clear trends regarding the “geographical imagination” of the students. I do hope that in the future, this study would be used as a basis for other researchers in this field.

### **6.4 - Final Remarks**

The children of expats are mixing with local students resulting in wider “geographic imaginations”, more open-mindedness and also creating accepting and inclusive citizens. There was also a big positive approach towards foreign students from all the participants which I was not really expecting as this may not be reflecting the attitudes of a cohort of the Maltese who have no problem writing hate speech on social media. This attitude was further highlighted by the COVID-19 crisis.

It is very noticeable that an overwhelming sense of 'othering' and nationalistic pride has emerged during this pandemic. A lot of egocentric hate speech has increased especially towards Asian people. A thing that I personally noticed is the hate towards foreign nationals, especially third country nationals who were working in Malta and had to leave due to the situation. The comments that are seen in Figure 6.1 below have been taken from a recent news report stating that Over 6,200 foreign nationals working in Malta have already left.



Figure 6.1: Racial Comments directed towards foreigners leaving Malta (Source: Times of Malta, 2020)

These comments are very racial and can indicate that these people have a very limited “geographical imagination” resulting in not seeing the benefits that these foreign workers are bringing to this country such as being an important part to the contribution of the nation's economy, boosting certain sectors and also bringing with them experiences that can be shared with others.

I am saying this not only because it came to my attention but as I feel that it is very linked to my study. Having seen that these foreign students are having a very positive impact on the local students “geographic imaginations”, I do hope that in the future this generation will be more able to think critically and see the whole situation. This interaction with foreign students does not only challenge their “geographical imagination” but also enables them to think geographically and link things on a global scale rather than just on a local scale.

Students are getting the opportunity to share their cultures and experiences, to express their perceptions and “geographic imaginations” explicitly with their peers and educators but even to be able to challenge these by growing more aware of things on a global scale rather than keeping it to a local dimension so that they grow into more critical, accepting and inclusive citizens. This study indicates the importance that students meet in schools and are not segregated so they challenge their “geographical imagination” and stereotypes to other people of different nationalities, hopefully in a way that contribute to intercultural dialogue.



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## **Appendices**

## Appendix 1

### Permission Letter – Head of School

Dear Head of School,

I am Ezekiel Xuereb, a student reading for a Masters in Teaching and Learning (Geography) at the University of Malta. As part of this course I will be carrying out research in order to write a dissertation. My dissertation supervisor is Dr. Glorianne Borg Axisa.

The title of my dissertation is: 'Exploring the 'Geographical Imagination' of Maltese Students. For this study, I will be investigating if the Maltese student's experience with students coming from other countries is influencing their 'geographical imagination' and their understanding of the world. I would be grateful if you would give me permission to conduct my research study at your school.

Should permission be granted, I would like to hold a one to one interview at school with 3 to 5 students that are currently in Year 9, 10 and 11. This will contain questions regarding their interaction with foreign students, travel experience and also questions on how they perceive people from different nationalities (stereotyping). Each interview will take approximately 30 to 45 minutes to complete.

Participation in the study is voluntary and participants will suffer no negative consequence should they choose not to take part in the interview. Interviews will be audio recorded and will only be carried out with students whose parents give consent. Students may choose to withdraw from this interview at any given time without giving a reason. The interviews will be coded, so that even the identity of the school will be anonymised. All raw data will be securely stored and the data obtained will be solely used for the compilation of my dissertation. It will also be highly appreciated, if you act as an intermediary between the students and myself.

Should you require further information, please do not hesitate to contact me or my supervisor.

Thank you for your kind consideration.  
Sincerely,

Ezekiel Xuereb  
Mobile number: 99951019  
Email address: [ezekiel.xuereb.13@um.edu.mt](mailto:ezekiel.xuereb.13@um.edu.mt)

Supervisor's Details:  
Name: Dr. Glorianne Borg Axisa  
Email address: [glorianne.borg-axisa@um.edu.mt](mailto:glorianne.borg-axisa@um.edu.mt)  
Telephone: 2590 7282

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Researcher's signature

## Ittra ta' Permess – Kap tal-Iskola

Lill-Kap tal-Iskola

Jien, Ezekiel Xuereb, student universitarju qed nagħmel kors ta' Masters in Teaching and Learning (Geography). Bħala parti minn dan il-kors irrid nikteb teži u flimkien mat-tutor tiegħi Dr Glorainne Borg Axisa għażilt it-titlu ta' "Exploring the 'Geographical Imagination' of Maltese Students". Għal dan l-istudju se nkun qed nirriċerka jekk l-esperjenza ta' studenti Maltin ma' dawk barranin hijiex qed tinfluwenza l-immaginazzjoni ġeografika tagħhom u kif iħarsu lejha id-dinja hemm barra. Għalhekk nixtieq nitlob il-permess tiegħek biex nagħmel din ir-riċerka fl-iskola mmexxija minnek.

Jekk ittini l-permess, nixtieq nagħmel intervista ma' xi tliet jew ħames studenti li qegħdin fid-9, fl-10 u l-11-il sena skolastika. L-intervista ma' kull student/a se tkun rigward l-interazzjoni ma' studenti barranin, esperjenzi ta' vjaġġar, kif ukoll mistoqsijiet dwar kif jipperċepixxu nies ta' nazzjonalità differenti (stereotyping). L-intervista tiegħi madwar 30 jew 45 minuta.

Il-partecipazzjoni hija volontarja u ma hemm l-ebda riperkussjonijiet negattivi jekk xi partecipant/a t/jiddeċiedi li ma t/jridx t/jieħu sehem. L-intervista ser tkun qed tiġi rrekordjata u ssir biss bil-kunsens tal-ġenituri. L-istudenti jistgħu jirtiraw milli jippartecipaw xhin iridu mingħajr ma jagħtu raġuni. Dawn l-intervisti se jingħataw kodiċi biex anke l-iskola tibqa' anonima. Id-data miġbura se tkun sikura u tiġi użata biss għall-fini ta' dan l-istudju. Napprezza ħafna jekk tagħtini l-għajjnuna tiegħek bħala intermedjarju bejni u bejn l-istudenti.

Jekk tixtieq aktar informazzjoni tista' tikkuntatja lili jew lit-tutor tiegħi.

Grazzi tal-konsiderazzjoni tiegħek.

Ezekiel Xuereb

Mowbajl: 99951019

Imejl: [ezekiel.xuereb.13@um.edu.mt](mailto:ezekiel.xuereb.13@um.edu.mt)

Detalji tat-tutor:

Dr Glorianne Borg Axisa

Imejl: [glorianne.borg-axisa@um.edu.mt](mailto:glorianne.borg-axisa@um.edu.mt)

Telefon: 2590 7282

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Firma tar-Riċerkatur

## Appendix 2

### Information Letter – Parents/Gaurdians

Dear Parent/Guardian,

I am Ezekiel Xuereb, a student reading for a Masters in Teaching and Learning (Geography) at the University of Malta. As part of this course I will be carrying out research in order to write a dissertation. My dissertation supervisor is Dr. Glorianne Borg Axisa.

The title of my dissertation is: 'Exploring the 'Geographical Imagination' of Maltese Students. For this study, I will be investigating if the Maltese student's experience with students coming from other countries is influencing their 'geographical imagination' and their understanding of the world.

In order to collect the data I require, I would like to carry out interviews in your son/daughter's school. During the interview, I will be asking the student some questions about his/her experiences with foreign students, travel experiences and his/her knowledge about different cultures. This interview will be audio recorded and should take between 30 to 45 minutes. The notes and data taken will be stored securely and accessed only by myself in my dissertation, and in any future write-ups, I will use fictitious names so that the school, and the identity of the students will be anonymised.

Participation is voluntary. If you would like your son/daughter to be part of this study please sign the letter below and return it to their teacher who will then give it to me. Should you not wish your son/daughter to be part of my study, he/she can withdraw whenever they want without giving any reason. You and your child may change your minds with regard to his/her participation in the study without there being any negative consequence.

Please note that your son/daughter has also been given an information sheet.

If you require any further information please do not hesitate to contact me or my supervisor (see contact details below).

Thank you for your kind attention.

Yours sincerely,

Ezekiel Xuereb

Email address: [ezekiel.xuereb.13@um.edu.mt](mailto:ezekiel.xuereb.13@um.edu.mt)

Supervisor's Details:

Name: Dr. Glorianne Borg Axisa

Email address: [glorianne.borg-axisa@um.edu.mt](mailto:glorianne.borg-axisa@um.edu.mt)

Telephone: 2590 7282

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Parent's/Guardian's Signature

## Ittra ta' Informazzjoni – Ġenitur/Guardian

Għażiż ġenitur/guardian

Jien, Ezekiel Xuereb, student universitarju qed nagħmel kors ta' Masters in Teaching and Learning (Geography). Bħala parti minn dan il-kors irrid nikteb teži u flimkien mat-tutor tiegħi Dr Glorainne Borg Axisa għażilt it-titlu ta' "Exploring the 'Geographical Imagination' of Maltese Students". Għal dan l-istudju se nkun qed nirriċerka jekk l-esperjenza ta' studenti Maltin ma' dawk barranin hijiex qed tinfluwenza l-immaginazzjoni ġeografika tagħhom u kif iħarsu lejha id-dinja hemm barra.

Għal dan l-istudju, jeħtieġ li niġbor data mingħand l-istudenti, għalhekk nixtieq nagħmel intervisti fl-iskola tat-tifel/la tiegħek. Il-mistoqsijiet ikunu dwar l-esperjenza tal-istudent/a ma' ħbieb ta' nazzjonalità barranija, esperjenzi ta' vjaġġar u xi mistoqsijiet oħra fuq persuni li ġejjin minn pajjiżi differenti bħal kulturi tagħom. L-intervista ser tkun qed tiġi rrekordjata u ser tiegħu bejn 30 u 45 minuta fl-iskola fejn t/jattendi. In-noti u data li niġbor ikunu sikuri u aċċessibbli minni biss għall-għan tat-teži li qed nagħmel. Ismijiet li jintużaw ikunu fittizzji biex kemm l-identità tal-istudent/a u anke dik tal-iskola jkunu anonimi.

Il-partecipazzjoni hija volontarja. Jekk tixtieq li t-tifel/tifla tiegħek tkun parti minn dan l-istudju, jekk jogħġbok iffirma din l-ittra u rritornaha lura lill-għalliem/a. Jekk ma tixtieqx li it-tifel/la tiegħek ma j/tkunx parti mill-istudju tiegħi mhux se jkun hemm konsegwenzi negattivi. Kemm int kif ukoll it-tifel/a tistgħu tiddeċiedu li ma tippartecipawx mingħajr ma tagħtu raġuni, anke wara li tkunu tajtu l-kunsens tagħkom.

Ta' min jinnota li lit-tifel/tifla tiegħek ukoll tajthom ittra ta' informazzjoni f'dan ir-rigward.

Jekk tixtieq aktar informazzjoni tista' tikkuntatja lili jew lit-tutor tiegħi fuq l-imejl li hawn hawn taht.

Grazzi tal-ħin u l-attenzjoni tiegħek

Ezekiel Xuereb

imejl: [ezekiel.xuereb.13@um.edu.mt](mailto:ezekiel.xuereb.13@um.edu.mt)

Detalji tat-tutor:

Dr Glorianne Borg Axisa

Imejl: [glorianne.borg-axisa@um.edu.mt](mailto:glorianne.borg-axisa@um.edu.mt)

Telefon: 2590 7282

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Firma' tal-Ġenitur/Guardian

## Appendix 3

### Information Letter - Students

Dear Student,

My name is Mr Ezekiel Xuereb. I am a student at the University of Malta, and I am studying to become a teacher.

As part of my course, I am conducting a research study about the influence of non-Maltese students on Maltese students that are studying together. I would like a number of students to help me.

I am inviting you to take part in my study by taking part in an interview with me, where you will be asked about your experience with non-Maltese friends, travelling experiences and also some questions about people coming from different countries. The interview will be audio recorded. It will be carried out at your school and will only take between 30 to 45 minutes.

When I write about your experiences in my study, your name will not be used. I will use fictitious names!

You will take part in this interview only if you wish to. You do not have to take part if you don't feel comfortable. If you do decide to take part, you are free to stop whenever you want to, do not worry, there will be no negative consequences.

If you would like to help me in this study, please sign this form below and give it to your teacher who will then hand it back to me.

If you have any questions, please ask! You may e-mail me or speak to me in person when I am at your school. If you prefer, your parents can also reach me through e-mail.

Regards,

Ezekiel Xuereb

E-Mail: [ezekiel.xuereb.13@um.edu.mt](mailto:ezekiel.xuereb.13@um.edu.mt)

---

Student's Signature

## **Ittra ta' Informazzjoni – Student/a**

Għażiż/a Student/a

Jiena student universitarju, qiegħed nagħmel kors biex insir għalliem. Bħala parti mill-kors, qed nagħmel riċerka rigward l-Influenza ta' studenti barranin fuq daww Maltin li qiegħdin jistudjaw flimkien.

L-għan tiegħi hu li nsib numru sostanzjali ta' studenti biex jgħinuni, għalhekk qed nistiednek tkun parti minn dan l-istudju tiegħi billi nagħmillek intervista li ser tkun qed tiġi rrekordjata, ta' bejn 30 u 45 minuta fl-iskola fejn tattendi. Il-mistoqsijiet ikunu dwar l-esperjenza tiegħek ma' ħbieb ta' nazzjonalità barranija, esperjenzi ta' vjaġġar u xi mistoqsijiet oħra fuq persuni li ġejjin minn pajjiżi differenti.

Il-partecipazzjoni tiegħek hija volontarja u jekk f'xi ħin waqt l-intervista tħossok skomdu/a tista' tiddeċiedi li ma tirrispondix u anke tieqaf mingħajr ma tagħti raġuni. Mhux ser jkun hemm l-ebda konsegwenza negattiva. Ismek mhu ħa jissemma mkien u ħadd ma jista' jiġi identifikat għax fil-kitba ħa nuża ismijiet fittizji.

Jekk tixtieq aktar informazzjoni tista' tikkuntattjani fuq l-imejl jew tkellimni meta nkun l-iskola. Jekk tixtieq anke l-ġenituri tiegħek jistgħu jikkuntattjawni b-imejl.

Grazzi tal-ħin tiegħek

Ezekiel Xuereb

Imejl: [ezekiel.xuereb.13@um.edu.mt](mailto:ezekiel.xuereb.13@um.edu.mt)

---

Firma tal-iStudent/a

## Appendix 4

### Consent Form – Parent/Guardian, for Student's participation

Exploring the 'Geographical Imagination' of Maltese Students

I have read the attached Parent/Legal Guardian Information Sheet. I give consent for my Son/Daughter to participate in Mr Ezekiel Xuereb's study on condition that:

- I am free to withdraw my consent at any time in the course of the study.
- My son/daughter gives his/her assent to participate in the study.
- The audio-recordings and data will be stored securely and will only be accessible to Mr. Ezekiel Xuereb and his supervisor. The recordings will be destroyed when Mr. Ezekiel Xuereb finishes his study.
- The school and the identity of the students will be anonymised since Mr. Ezekiel Xuereb will use fictitious names in his write-up.

I give my consent to Mr Ezekiel Xuereb to audio-record the interview with my son/daughter.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Son/Daughter's name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Parent / Guardian's Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Parent/Guardian's Signature

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Researcher's Signature



## Formola ta' Parteċipazzjoni/ Kunsens mill-Ġenituri/ Guardian

“Exploring the “Geographical imagination” of Maltese Students”

Nikkonferma li qrajt u fhimt l-Ittra ta' informazzjoni dwar dan l-istudju għalhekk jien qed nagħti l-kunsens lit-tifel/tifla tiegħi biex tipparteċipa fl-istudju li qed isir mis-Sur Ezekiel Xuereb bil-kundizzjoni li:

- Nista' nirtira l-kunsens tiegħi f'kull waqt ta' dan l-istudju.
- It-tifel/tifla tiegħi j/tagħti l-kunsens biex tipparteċipa f'dan l-istudju
- Li dak kollu rrekordjat ikun sikur u aċċessibbli biss mis-Sur Ezekiel Xuereb u t-tutor tiegħu.
- Li d-data rrekordjata tiġi distrutta kollha hekk kif is-Sur Xuereb ilesti mill-istudju tiegħu.
- L-iskola u l-identità tal-istudenti jibqgħu anonimi u jintużaw biss ismijiet fittizji fil-kitba.

Jien qed nagħti l-kunsens tiegħi lis-Sur Ezekiel Xuereb biex jirrekordja l-intervista' li jagħmel mat-tifel/tifla tiegħi.

---

Isem it-tifel/tifla

---

Isem il-Ġenitur/Guardian

---

Firma tal-Ġenitur/Guardian

Data: \_\_\_\_\_

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Firma tar-riċerkatur

## Appendix 5

### Participant Assent Form (Secondary Student)

#### Exploring the 'Geographical Imagination' of Maltese Students

I confirm that I have read and understood the attached Participant Information Sheet for this study and that I have had the opportunity to ask questions and discuss the study. On the basis of the information given, I give my consent to Mr Ezekiel Xuereb to:

- Talk and discuss with me during the interview.
- Audio record our discussions during the interview.

I assent to participate on condition that:

- The audio recording will be stored safely and accessed only by Mr. Ezekiel Xuereb and his supervisor.
- I am free to withdraw at any time without having to explain why.
- My real name will not be used at any time in write-ups about the study.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Student's name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Student's signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Researcher's Signature

## **Formola ta' Partecipazzjoni (Student/a)**

Exploring the “Geographical imagination” of Maltese Students

Nikkonferma li qrajt u fhimt l-Ittra ta' informazzjoni dwar dan l-istudju u kelli l-opportunità li nistaqsi mistoqsijiet u niddiskuti l-istudju, għalhekk jien qed nagħti l-kunsens tiegħi lis-Sur Ezekiel Xuereb biex:

- Jitkellem u jiddiskuti miegħi waqt l-intervista;
- Jirrekordja d-diskussjoni waqt l-intervista.

Dan il-kunsens qed nagħtih bil-kundizzjoni li

- Dak kollu li jiġi rrekordjat ikun sikur u aċċessat biss minn Ezekiel Xuereb u t-tutor tiegħu;
- Li jiena nista' nirtira milli nippartecipa f'kull ħin mingħajr ma noqgħod nagħti raġuni għaliex;
- Li ismi ma jissemma qat fil-kitba ta' dan l-istudju.

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Isem tal-istudent/a

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Firma

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Data

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Firma tar-Riċerkatur

## Appendix 6

### Interview Questions

#### 1. Questions regarding travelling experience.

- Where do you live?
- Have you ever travelled?
- If yes, where did you go?
- Was the travel planned (with a tour), with family, friends, school exchange?
- Did you get the chance to meet with local people?

#### 2. Questions regarding friends that do not have a Maltese Nationality.

- Do you have foreign students in your class?
  - If yes, where are they from?
  - If no, did you ever have before and where did they come from?
- Do you have foreign friends?
- Where are they from?
- What is their belief (Religion)?
- What type of friendship do you have (Do you meet often, share a lot of experiences together, you are in the same group of close friends)?
- Where do you meet (Football, Scouts, Music school, MUSEUM, School etc.)?
- How did you get to know each other?
- How many times do you meet and what do you usually talk about?
- What was it that made you become good friends?

#### 3. Cultural and Geographical Influences

- What did you learn on the countries that your friends/classmates come from?
- Did you learn something new? Did your perception of this country change from before? If yes, can you give me some examples?
- If you had to go to one of the countries that we mentioned, which one would you choose and why?
- Did your attitude towards this country, its culture and its people change after you got to know your friend/s?
- Why do you think that these foreign kids are coming to live in Malta?
- From which countries do you think that the most foreigners are coming to live in Malta?

#### 4. Descriptions of Foreigners

- Describe an Italian man.
- Describe a Libyan man.
- Describe a Libyan woman.
- Describe a Serbian teenager.
- Describe a German man.
- Describe an African woman.

- Describe an American man.

## 5. Photos (Prejudices)

In this section, the participants will be shown a number of photos that depict landmarks and places and they have to indicate where they think the place is. Through this exercise, I will be seeing the students' prejudice.

## Appendix 7

### Student 1A

**Interviewer:** So, first question where do you live and how old are you?

**S1A** I am 14 years old and live in Kirkop.

**Interviewer:** Nice, now with regards to travelling, have you ever been abroad or not?

**S1A** Um, I went two times to Sicily and one time in Wales.

**Interviewer:** That sounds nice, was this travelling organised? As in was it with friends, family, a tour or maybe a school exchange?

**S1A** I went to Wales with the Maltese national Football team and I went to Sicily with my family on both occasions.

**Interviewer:** When you were there did you get a chance to meet locals?

**S1A** Umm, In Sicily, I interacted with them in shops to buy stuff. In Wales as well.

**Interviewer:** Ok, and did you see a difference in the way that you were treated in Sicily and in Wales? Did you see any differences?

**S1A** No, they were the same, no difference in attitude.

**Interviewer:** Okay so you did not really see a difference, that's good, do you have foreigners in your class with you?

**S1A** Yes, I do have.

**Interviewer:** Where are they from?

**S1A** They are from Italy.

**Interviewer:** Okay, and in the past years did you have any foreigner with you or was it only this year?

**S1A** Umm, yes I think so, however, they were not in the same class with me.

**Interviewer:** Ok and where did they come from?

**S1A** Italy, I also have a friend from Ethiopia.

**Interviewer:** Good, now you just mentioned that the guy from Ethiopia is your friend, I was going to ask you if some of them are your friends.

Interviewee nods.

**Interviewer:** Where do your foreign friends come from?

**S1A** My best friend is from Ethiopia.

**Interviewer:** And do you have others or is he your only close friend that is a foreigner?

**S1A** No, no, no one else, just him. The others are just people I see every day. But I do not consider myself as close friends with them.

**Interviewer:** Do you know what kind of religious belief he has?

**S1A** Yes, he is a Protestant.

**Interviewer:** Alright that is very nice and how would you describe your friendship? Do you meet a lot, do you have a close friend group?

**S1A** Yes we meet a lot, we play football together.

**Interviewer:** Thats nice, and do you meet at other places or just at football practice?

**S1A** Yes, definitely, we meet a lot, we sometimes meet up and go to Valletta.

**Interviewer:** Ok so you also meet up for leisure and fun, not just for football practice.

**S1A** Yes Definitely.

**Interviewer:** How did you get to know each other, as you seem like very close friends.

**S1A** We met through football!

**Interviewer:** And when you meet do you love talking about a specific subject or you talk about everything?

**S1A** We talk about everything.

**Interviewer:** And what resulted in you becoming friends?

**S1A** Well, we matched a lot because we have a lot of the same likes, and we used to play and work together so we ended up becoming very close friends.

**Interviewer:** Now I would like to ask you a bit on his country. First of all, you said that you have been friends for how long, because I do not think we have mentioned that....

**S1A** I think we have been friends for around 4 years now!

**Interviewer:** Ahh, ok, so you have been friends for quite a long time now! That is so nice! Since then, have you found out new things about his country and how?

**S1A** What exactly?

**Interviewer:** Anything, even if maybe there was something that really struck you as interesting.



**S1A** Hmm, I think I was not really aware of the problems they have such as huge poverty and a lot of people have to immigrate and leave the country.

**Interviewer:** And did you also imagine Ethiopia in a way and then you changed your perception after meeting him?

**S1A** I imagined the place in a very different way, for example I thought that people used to live in houses built from mud and soil, but now I know that in reality they live in normal houses like ours, yes, maybe not that rich and full of stuff but they are built like ours.

**Interviewer:** Ok, and apart from these perceptions, did you learn something new or just these?

**S1A** No just those.

**Interviewer:** OK, now from all the people that we mentioned, we mentioned that there are children coming from Italy for example and many other places such as Serbia and Libya. Is there a country that these people come from that you would love to visit or go to?

**S1A** I don't know, I think Italy.

**Interviewer:** Nice and why?

**S1A** Well I think it is a very nice country, nice nature and a lot of football clubs.

**Interviewer:** Ok so you would choose that because of football clubs.

**S1A** Yes and the country is very nice.

**Interviewer:** Hmm, okay so why do you think that these foreign children leave their countries and come to Malta?

**S1A** I think because they have problems in their country, and I think they come here because our country is better, and they cannot live in theirs due to wars.

**Interviewer:** And from which countries do you think we have the most foreigners in Malta?

**S1A** I think from African countries.

**Interviewer:** Okay thanks. Now we will move on to descriptions, I will be mentioning some ethnicities and I would like you to describe them as you think in your mind. Do not be afraid of saying what you think. This interview will only be heard by myself and the tutor and when I use the data it will be anonymous.

**S1A** Ok.

**Interviewer:** So let's start, I want you to describe for me an Italian man.

**S1A** I think he would be tall, deep voice, black hair and very nice character.

**Interviewer:** Now a Libyan man.

**S1A** Tall as well, big beard and curls in hair, some are very chill others are very aggressive.

**Interviewer:** Good, what about a Libyan woman?

**S1A** Hmm, I think a Libyan woman would have a veil on her head, and long clothing that covers her, I think character wise they are nice, usually I see them on the bus and they are very nice and kind.

**Interviewer:** Ok, what about a Serbian youth?

**S1A** Very tall, I think he would be very energetic, loves sports, um something like that and I think his character wise they are very crazy.

**Interviewer:** Now what about a German man?

**S1A** Hmm, I think medium height, I believe they are very rich, blonde hair and very kind characters.

**Interviewer:** Now the last two, an African Woman?

**S1A** I think they are short, character wise I think kind....

**Interviewer:** And what about her looks, what would make you think that a woman is from Africa if you see one?

**S1A** I think she would have a very dark skin.

**Interviewer:** Now one last description, an American man.

**S1A** hmm, very tall, black hair, a heavy American accent, speak very good English and very nice people.

**Interviewer:** OK good that's it with the descriptions, now let me show you some pictures and try to guess where they are.

**Interviewer:** 1st Photo (Atlas Mountains)

**S1A** I think it is in Sweden.

**Interviewer:** 2nd Photo (Cairo City Scape)

**S1A** I think this is America..... maybe Washington.

**Interviewer:** 3rd Photo (Homeless Person)

**S1A** hmmm, I think umm, in America as well.

**Interviewer:** 4th Photo (Mayor of London)

**S1A** I think that is in an African city.

**Interviewer:** 5th Photo (Naples)

**S1A** I think this is Korea.

**Interviewer:** 6th Photo (France Riots)

**S1A** I think this is Russia.

## **Student 1B**

**Interviewer:** How old are you and where are you from?

**S1B** I am 14 and I am from Hal Kirkop.

**Interviewer:** Did you ever travel or not?

**Interviewee** No, I wish to go to Italy eventually.

**Interviewer:** Do you have any foreign friends?

**S1B** Yes, but im not very close.

**Interviewer:** Okay and where are they from?

**Interviewee** From Italy

**Interviewer:** All right and what about their religion, do you ever talk about it?

**Interviewee** No, when it comes to their religion I have no idea, I think they are christian since theyre coming from Italy.

**Interviewer:** Ok and how would you describe your friendship?

**Interviewee** As I said, I do not really talk a lot with them so mainly we just say good morning and how are you and that is it.

**Interviewer:** And where do you meet them mainly, just at school or somewhere else?

**Interviewee** At School, during lessons yes.

**Interviewer:** So you only talk to them because they're in your classroom.

**Interviewee:** Yes, definitely.

**Interviewer:** From these foreigners that we mentioned, is there someone that thought you something about their country that you did not know about before?

**Interviewee** No, I do not think, I learnt anything new.

**Interviewer:** And maybe something new about some different countries, maybe even during cultural events at school.

**Interviewee** No, because these foreigners do not love speaking with us, they prefer staying with their peers usually that come from the same country.

**Interviewer:** Hmm, all right so they hang out together in groups.

**Interviewer:** Ok, did your attitude change towards a certain country since you started meeting foreigners in your school?

**Interviewee** I think, my attitude remained the same.

**Interviewer:** Ok, why do you think these foreign children come to live in Malta?

**Interviewee** I think because we have more opportunities such as work, better life and maybe because of some past traumas like wars.

**Interviewer:** And from which countries do you think we have the most?

**S1B** I think from neighbouring countries, such as Italy, Sicily, Libya etc.

**Interviewer:** Ok Now I will ask you to do some descriptions on some people coming from different nationalities. Feel free to say whatever you think.

**Interviewer:** So first I want you to describe an Italian man.

**S1B** Hmm, I think white skinned, hair colour would be blackish, brownish. They will obviously speak in Italian and I am sure that even though they are in Malta they will still speak in Italian and not in English. I think their personality would be nice if you know their language.

**Interviewer:** Now a Libyan Man

**S1B** I think they will be dark skinned, not in a good condition, sometimes they are nice and sometimes they will be up to no good.

**Interviewer:** What about a Libyan Woman?

**S1B** I think they will be very similar.

**Interviewer:** What about a Serbian person?

**S1B** I think they will be very agitated, they wear short sleeves, dont care about anyone, a bit chavvy.

**Interviewer:** A man from Germany?

**S1B** I think they are very tall, blonde hair and blue eyes, I think they drink a lot of beer, I think theyre quite friendly as well.

**Interviewer:** African Woman?

**S1B** dark skinned woman due to high heat and being African. I think she would wear normal clothes, however I think she might be angrier due to the fact that she lives in a lot of heat and poverty so they will be crankier.

**Interviewer:** What about someone from America?

**S1B** I think blonde for sure, they are very big thinkers but in general they are nice people I think!

**Interviewer:** Now I will show you some pictures and I would want you to tell me where you think they are found!



**Interviewer:** The first picture (Atlas Mountains)

**S1B** I think that's in Italy the Alps

**Interviewer:** The second picture (Cairo)

**S1B** I think that is Dubai, because there is a lot of high rise.

**Interviewer:** The third picture (Homeless Person)

**S1B** I think that's America

**Interviewer:** The fourth picture (Mayor of London)

**S1B** I think he is the Mayor of London!

**Interviewer:** The fifth picture (Slums in Naples)

**S1B** I think that's in China

**Interviewer:** The sixth picture (Yellow Vest Riots)

**S1B** I think that's either France or Barcelona, because they are having a lot of protests right now.

## **Student 1C**

**Interviewer:** So how old are you and where do you live?

**S1C** I live in Gudja and I am 13 years old.

**Interviewer:** Ok, have you ever travelled?

**S1C** Yes, I went to Rome.

**Interviewer:** Nice, and did you go with a particular group, for example, tour, family, friends?

**S1C** I went with the Parish Church, it was a tour that they organised.

**Interviewer:** Ok, now when you were in Rome, did you get the chance to interact with the locals?

**S1C** Yes, but mainly with shop vendors, such as waiters at the restaurants and people at the souvenir shops.

**Interviewer:** Ok, so your interaction was mainly with people at the stores, how would you describe them?

**S1C** Well, they want to sell obviously but their character was very similar to Maltese people, they are kind.

**Interviewer:** Now in your class, do you have some foreigners with you this year?

**S1C** This year, no, I do not.

**Interviewer:** What about in previous years?

**S1C** I had some in secondary yes, but I also had other friends during primary years. They used to be in a separated class, but I remember we used to play a lot together.

**Interviewer:** And what about in secondary.

**S1C** Yes, when I was in Year 7, I had an American and an Italian and in Year 8 just the American because the Italian went to Zejtun School Instead.

**Interviewer:** Do you know what their religion was?

**S1C** They where Christian both of them.

**Interviewer:** And in class how did interact with you or the others?

**S1C** Well, they used to speak in Maltese so we could communicate well with them. They used to live like us so no problems.

**Interviewer:** Ok so you had no problem to communicate with them?

**S1C** No, definitely not, but if I can add this, during primary no one knew how to speak in Maltese not even in English. But for example the Arabs, used to understand a bit.

**Interviewer:** Ok, and did these people used to play with you?

**S1C** All of them yes used to play football even though er could not communicate well, this was in primary however.

**Interviewer:** Ok, on a school level, are there any foreigners that do not talk to others?

**S1C** I do not know about this.

**Interviewer:** Ok, on a personal level, do you have any friends that you meet outside of school?

**S1C** hmm, in Gudja we do not have a lot of foreigners so, not really.

**Interviewer:** Ok, so you mainly meet them in school.

**S1C** Yes.

**Interviewer:** And how did you meet them?

**S1C** Mainly because they are with us in school in my class, and during the primary years, we did not see each other as different.

**Interviewer:** I see, since you mentioned that you did not see each other as different, do you think now that you are in secondary, you look at the differences of each other? Do you think these so called 'differences' interfere with who you speak etc?

**S1C** I think in Secondary we are more aware of these differences yes.

**Interviewer:** Ok, and maybe is there a particular group of foreigners that you do not feel comfortable speaking too?

**S1C** Hmm, I think those coming from Eastern Europe, I do not feel comfortable at all, because, let me tell you, with Arabs, I can manage to say a word or two, the American has a Maltese mother so we are comfortable talking to him, Italians are our neighbours so we communicate somehow, but with Eastern Europeans.... What can I say?

**Interviewer:** Apart from school, since in Gudja you don't frequent any foreigners, do you meet them somewhere else?

**S1C** No, just in school.

**Interviewer:** Ok, now I will ask you some questions about these countries and children, maybe what you learnt from them etc.

**Interviewer:** Did you learn something new about their countries?

**S1C** Geographically, no, but I learnt why they came to Malta for example.

**Interviewer:** Ok, so you did not learn about their cultures?

**S1C** No.

**Interviewer:** Ok, but did you learn something that before you used to think it was different?

**S1C** Yes, that for sure, for example one thing is that I once knew a Syrian boy, to be honest, I used to think that Syrians are dark skinned, however, their skin was exactly like our's (Maltese People). I thought this because on TV we see them differently, and also his hair was very yellowish. This is totally different from what I used to see on the media.

**Interviewer:** Ok, that is so very interesting, our perception really changes a lot sometimes. If you had to go to one of the countries from where these kids come, which one would you choose?

**S1C** Hmm, difficult question, well I have already been to Italy so not there, maybe in Eastern Europe.

**Interviewer:** Why this place?

**S1C** Because, I think there is more nature as economically these countries are not very strong, so development is low, therefore, I think they have nicer nature. We also learnt that there are a lot of rivers etc.

**Interviewer:** Ok, did your attitude towards these countries change when you met these children or did it remain the same?

**S1C** Hmm, I think it stayed the same to be honest with you.

**Interviewer:** Now why do you think these kids are coming to Malta?

**S1C** Well as I said before, I know why these specific kids came to Malta, the American came because he has a Maltese mother, the Italian because his parents did not find any job because of unemployment rates and the Syrian because of war. He also shared with us what he have been through during the war. Basically, they walked all the way to Turkey and then they took a plane to Malta from Turkey. Poor them.

**Interviewer:** Yes, unfortunately, a lot of people go through this. From which country do you think a lot of foreign kids come?

**S1C** I think right now Italy. We are packed with them, in fact even if you go to a certain shop, you only see Italians working there, sometimes you think you are no longer in Malta.

**Interviewer:** And apart from Italy do you think there are other countries?

**S1C** I think from Eastern Europe and Middle East they are forced to come because of their countries state.

**Interviewer:** Ok, very well, now I will ask you to describe some people for me, in the way that you imagine them.

**Interviewer:** First I want to describe an Italian man.

**S1C** Well, they are tall, brown hair, if they come from the North of Italy they are more posh and pretentious, but from the South they are more Maltese-like. Some of them are very helpful, others are very rude. That's all.

**Interviewer:** Ok, now I would like you to describe for me a man and woman from Libya.

**S1C** So the man would have Dark skin and he would be very dominant and angry while the woman would be quiet, dark skinned and long black hair. Once we where in the Gudja playground and an Arab family came to play with us, the kids where ok, however, the woman was covered in a black veil, quiet, looking at them, reserved and just taking care of her children. Her husband on the other hand was somewhere else.

**Interviewer:** Now, a Serbian person.

**S1C** White skinned, yellow hair, Blue eyes and quiet but would definitely not talk to us.

**Interviewer:** Now a man from Germany.

**S1C** Punctual, blonde, white skinned, very strict, tall, loves football and beer.

**Interviewer:** African Woman now.

**S1C** A skin which is much darker than the Libyan one, I think they dress normally, big, fat lips and reserved.

**Interviewer:** And now an American Man.

**S1C** I think similar to Germans but more outgoing and rich.

**Interviewer:** Ok, those where the descriptions, now I will show you some pictures and I would like you to tell me where you think they are.



**Interviewer:** First photo is the mountains.

**S1C** I think the Alps or Pyrenees

**Interviewer:** Second photo (City of Cairo)

**S1C** I think that's an African Country, I think maybe Saudi Arabia, I think it is African because the houses are flat and I see some green which I associate with Arabs.

**Interviewer:** Third Photo (Homeless)

**S1C** Well, I think it could be anywhere, but when I went to Rome there where a lot so I think it's in Rome.

**Interviewer:** Fourth Photo (Mayor of London)

**S1C** I think that's in an Arabic Country.

**Interviewer:** Fifth Photo (Slums in Naples)

**S1C** I think Eastern Europe, maybe Serbia.

**Interviewer:** Sixth Photo (Riots)

**S1C** I think that's in France right now, because they are protesting a lot.

## **Student 1D**

**Interviewer:** Where do you live, how old are you and did you ever travel?

**S1D** I am from Zurrieq, I am 13 and yes I have travelled to London, Manchester, Rome and also Croatia.

**Interviewer:** Ok nice, so you went to many places.

**S1D** Yes, I also went to Sicily.

**Interviewer:** Ok, was the travel organised in a certain way?

**S1D** When I went to Italy, I went with my family and when I went to Croatia we went with a tour not alone. To England I also went with my family.

**Interviewer:** Now when you were there did you interact with the locals.

**S1D** In London, the people were very helpful and bubbly, I found a lot of help from them and they are very down-to-earth. I always found help even due to my medical condition, they were first to help me.

**Interviewer:** What about Italy and Croatia, can you compare them.

**S1D** Hmm, when it comes to Croatia the people I met were kind of the same but definitely colder than those in London. But still, everyone helped me.

**Interviewer:** Now, from these three countries, from which one do you think the people where the most helpful and which one was the least helpful.

**S1D** Hmm, I think the most helpful where in England, then Italy and Croatia. I was very satisfied in London however.

**Interviewer:** Now, let's talk a bit about your classroom and school environment. Do you have foreigners with you in class?

**S1D** No.

**Interviewer:** But, did you ever have in previous years?

**S1D** Yes, however I am not sure if they were Arabs or Syrians, but they were from that area.

**Interviewer:** Did you have other nationalities?

**S1D** Yes, I had Italians as well.

**Interviewer:** Do you have foreign friends?

**S1D** No, my friends are all Maltese.

**Interviewer:** So the foreigners you know are only in class.

**S1D** Yes, but we are not close, just discussions, that's all.

**Interviewer:** Did you ever notice if maybe there is a particular nationality that do not integrate or try to integrate?

**S1D** The ones we had in class always integrated with us Maltese and they knew how to speak in Maltese, we never had Maltese Barriers always from my experience.

**Interviewer:** Do you know their religion?

**S1D** Yes they are Muslims.

**Interviewer:** Ok, and have you ever noticed if there is some religion related racism?

**S1D** Well, to be honest, we never cared about this as I believe that in school we always learned to respect each other and for example if we are saying a catholic prayer they say a Muslim prayer. We are against racism and we never bullied them, we like them like we like Maltese people.

**Interviewer:** Now, I am going to ask you some questions about their countries. Did you maybe learn something new about their countries?

**S1D** Geographically, I never learned anything new but for example when it comes to culture, I used to think that people from Syria and Libya are all bad people and very rude and commit crime, however, now I learned that these people are very different they are not all the same.

**Interviewer:** If you had to travel to one of these countries, which one would you choose and why?

**S1D** I think, I would choose either Italy or England, because I can communicate with them and people from these areas are very nice.

**Interviewer:** Why do you think these foreign children come to live in Malta of all countries?

**S1D** I think for example from Libya they come because of political instability in their country and wars, unemployment and poverty so they come to Malta for a better life. From Italy, I think they come because of unemployment.

**Interviewer:** All right, from which countries do you think the most foreigners come from?

**S1D** I think from Italy, Africa, Libya, America maybe.

**Interviewer:** Now I will ask you to describe some people, how you imagine them.

**Interviewer:** First an Italian man.

**S1D** I think character wise, they are very friendly and look very similar to Maltese people.

**Interviewer:** Now a Man from Libya.

**S1D** I think Dark skinned, long beards and wear a turban. I think their character would be very angry and rude.

**Interviewer:** A Woman from Libya

**S1D** Dark skinned, I think they will wear black clothes, only their eyes exposed and character wise I think they are very quiet and maybe sometimes a bit pretentious. For example, some come to Malta and they think we should adjust to them, which is not fair.

**Interviewer:** Now a Serbian person.

**S1D** Tall, Whitish, Blond, Blue Eyes, I think they are very savage and can commit crime.

**Interviewer:** Now a man from Germany.

**S1D** I think skin wise very similar to us, maybe brown hair and blue eyes and I think very serious and strict and to the point.

**Interviewer:** Now an African Woman.

**S1D** I think very dark skin, long hair and similar to a Libyan woman.

**Interviewer:** Now an American man.

**S1D** Very blonde, blue eyes, friendly and rich.

**Interviewer:** Now for the photos.

**Interviewer:** Mountains

**S1D** Slovenia or Italy I think.

**Interviewer:** Cairo City

**S1D** New York maybe?

**Interviewer:** Homeless Person

**S1D** Rome.

**Interviewer:** Mayor of London

**S1D** An African Mayor for sure.

**Interviewer:** Naples Slums

**S1D** I think that's in Greece or Rome

**Interviewer:** Riots in France

**S1D** I think that is in Libya due to wars.



## Student 2A

**Interviewer:** Where do you live and how old are you?

**S2A:** I am from Bormla and I am 13 years old.

**Interviewer:** Good, have you ever travelled?

**S2A:** Ummm, no.

**Interviewer:** Ok so, since you have never travelled I will ask you some more questions from another section. Do you have foreigners in your class?

**S2A:** Yes, I have one friend \*mentions name\*.

**Interviewer:** And where is the person from?

**S2A:** She is from Beijing, China.

**Interviewer:** Ok, do you know what religion the person practices or you have no idea?

**S2A:** Ummm, I do not think we ever mentioned this, the person is very quiet.

**Interviewer:** No problem, and what about your friendship?

**S2A:** Its very nice, we are very close!

**Interviewer:** That is nice, do you only meet at school though? Or also at other places.

**S2A:** No, no, not just at school! We do meet sometimes at other places.

**Interviewer:** Very nice, so you seem very close. How did you meet?

**S2A:** So basically, he arrived to school once and since he was new and a bit lost, I decided to show him around the school and we became friends.

**Interviewer:** Ah all right, so you met at school and developed a nice friendship.

**S2A:** Yes.

**Interviewer:** And do you go somewhere in particular together or just school?

**S2A:** We go out a lot, sometimes we also go play basketball together at Fgura.

**Interviewer:** Nice, do you go out and meet up a lot apart from school obviously?

**S2A:** Hmm, not that much we do not go out a lot because he does not like to go out a lot, its his character. However, we always try to meet at least once a week.

**Interviewer:** And I guess you meet every day at school right?

**S2A:** Yes, yes. We only don't see each other if someone is sick or at an outing.

**Interviewer:** That is very nice, you seem close. Do you love to talk about something in particular?

**S2A:** He usually helps me in Maths homework, but we mainly love to talk about basketball! We both like it!

**Interviewer:** So that's your hobby! Did you ever speak about his country, culture, and languages?

**S2A:** Yes, sometimes we do speak about these things, but not that much!

**Interviewer:** And did you maybe learn something new that you thought was different from what you knew already?

**S2A:** Hmm, not really, however I am interested in the language (Chinese).

**Interviewer:** And was there something that you imagined in a way on china but then you met him and learned it was different.

**S2A:** I never knew Chinese people where this friendly.

**Interviewer:** And did you change your attitude towards China and Chinese people?

**S2A:** No, I do not think I can change my attitude towards a whole country based on just one person.

**Interviewer:** Ok, now in Malta you know that we have a lot of Foreigners. Where do you think the majority come from?

**S2A:** Umm, I think England.

**Interviewer:** And why?

**S2A:** Because the majority of people I see are English.

**Interviewer:** Ok but do you think there are others or just English people?

**S2A:** No, I think only them. At least those are the ones I see.

**Interviewer:** Ok, why do you think they choose to live in Malta of all places?

**S2A:** I think because we have a nice culture.

**Interviewer:** Hmm and what other reasons you might think of?

**S2A:** I don't know I think they just love here.

**Interviewer:** Now it is time for the descriptions. I will mention some people and I want you to describe the image that comes to mind when I say it.

**S2A:** Ok, let's try.

**Interviewer:** So first person I want you to describe is an Italian Man.

**S2A:** Loves to cook, Interested in food, Nice, Dressed well.

**Interviewer:** Libyan Man, what comes to mind when you see one?

**S2A:** I cannot think of someone from Libya, but maybe with short hair?

**Interviewer:** Hmm ok, and what about a Libyan woman?

**S2A:** I do not know sir, I do not meet a lot of Libyan people, but maybe they wear some type of mask.

**Interviewer:** Now a Serbian person.

**S2A:** Poor for sure, maybe their face is covered.

**Interviewer:** German Man.

**S2A:** I think they wear scarves, they are very educated, brunettes and short hair.

**Interviewer:** African Woman.

**S2A:** Very poor, they have nothing.

**Interviewer:** American person.

**S2A:** Wearing some t-shirt with an American flag and disorganised.

**Interviewer:** Now I will show you some pictures and tell me where you think the place is.

**Interviewer:** First picture (Cairo City)

**S2A:** America

**Interviewer:** Second Picture (Homeless Person)

**S2A:** I think that's in America as well

**Interviewer:** Third Picture (Mayor of London)

**S2A:** I think that's a Serbian man.

**Interviewer:** Fourth Picture (Naples)

**S2A:** I think that's India maybe?

**Interviewer:** Fifth Picture (Yellow Vest Riots)

**S2A:** America I think.

**Interviewer:** Sixth Picture (Atlas Mountains)

**S2A:** I think that is in Germany.

## **Student 2B**

**Interviewer:** Where do you live? How old are you and did you ever travel?

**S2B:** So I live in Kalkara, I am 15 years and I went to Italy.

**Interviewer:** When you went to Italy, did you go with a tour? Or was it with your family or friends?

**S2B:** No, I did not go with a tour, we went as a family alone.

**Interviewer:** Nice and did you get the chance to meet up with locals or not?

**S2B:** Yes, definitely, we spoke to a lot of people who were locals.

**Interviewer:** Ahh thats great and how do you think they are? Like was the interaction good?

**S2B:** Hmmm, some of them where quite nice, like I imagined and they were very helpful, however, we met some who were not as nice.

**Interviewer:** Hmm, ok so the majority where nice and friendly....

**S2B:** Yes, yes.

**Interviewer:** Ok, in your class do you have foreigners?

**S2B:** No..

**Interviewer:** ok, did you ever have in previous years?

**S2B:** Nope, never had foreigners in my class.

**Interviewer:** All right, do you have foreign friends maybe from school or from other places?

**S2B:** Yes, I do have from school.

**Interviewer:** Ok, and where are they from?

**S2B:** From Spain.

**Interviewer:** Ahh okay good, is your friendship good?

**S2B:** It is very good, we also joke a lot.

**Interviewer:** Nice, and is it just a school based friendship or is it also outside of school?

**S2B:** No, no we only meet in school.

**Interviewer:** Ok, so it's just a school based friendship.... Did you ever speak about each others religion?

**S2B:** No, but I do know that he is also catholic.

**Interviewer:** Alright, does this thing effect you or not?

**S2B:** No, I do not really care.

**Interviewer:** Alright, what about other things that you maybe discuss together? Maybe something that made you become friends.

**S2B:** Well, we speak on many different things, sometimes we speak about our countries, he tells me a lot about Spain and I tell him about our culture. We also speak about the environment.

**Interviewer:** That is very nice, you seem to share a lot of things.

**S2B:** Yes we mainly speak and chat during our school breaks.

**Interviewer:** Ok, how many times do you meet every week at school?

**S2B:** We meet every day, during the breaks obviously, since we are no in the same class.

**Interviewer:** Makes sense, how did you become friends?

**S2B:** She came from Spain, she and her family came to live in Malta, she came to our school and we became friends.

**Interviewer:** Did you learn something new form Spain or maybe you had an idea about something in Spain but then after you met your friend you changed your idea about it?

**S2B:** Hmm, yes, mostly their culture. Before I used to think that they where more laidback and dirty. Now I learnt that they are more organised and clean and also very nice people.

**Interviewer:** Apart from this did you maybe learn something else? Maybe something that is portrayed in a certain way by the media, but is not like this in reality?

**S2B:** Hmm, no I do not think so.

**Interviewer:** Alright, now, apart from these things, did your view on Spain and its people change from before?

**S2B:** Yes, definitely, as I said before I used to think that they are disorganised, dirty and also rude. Now I know that they are the total opposite.

**Interviewer:** Alright, with regards to other foreigners, why do you think they come to live to malta?

**S2B:** I think problems in their countries such as war and poverty, familiar problems like loss of work. I think those.

**Interviewer:** Ok, and what do you think is the main problem faced by everyone who decides to leave their country and go live in another one?



**S2B:** hmm, I think poverty or very bad conditions of living.

**Interviewer:** Ok, and from which countries do you think Malta has the largest number of immigrants?

**S2B:** I think from Italy. Because it is very close to Malta so they dont have that long distance.

**Interviewer:** Now We will move on to the part of the descriptions.

**Interviewer:** First is an Italian Man:

**S2B:** So I think they are very fashionable, wearing shirts, organised, normal skin colour, brown hair set to the side and very clean.

**Interviewer:** Ok now a Libyan Man:

**S2B:** Dark skin, normal clothing... I don't know.

**Interviewer:** A Libyan Woman:

**S2B:** Wearing a veil, skin colour would be like ours, I think, umm I do not know anything else.

**Interviewer:** All right what about a German man?

**S2B:** Hmm I cannot think of what A German man would look like to be honest.... sorry I have no idea.

**Interviewer:** Ok, no problem, what about a Serbian person?

**S2B:** I think very tall and thin, Brunette maybe? That's how I imagine them.

**Interviewer:** Ok now an African woman.

**S2B:** I think very dark skin, sometimes very poor and clothes are like veils.

**Interviewer:** Ok and now a person from America.

**S2B:** Hmm, I think Blonde, nicely dressed and rich!

**Interviewer:** Ok now I will show you some pictures and I want you to tell me where do you think they are?

**S2B:** Ok.

**Interviewer:** So first picture is this (Atlas Mountains)

**S2B:** I think they are the Alps in Italy

**Interviewer:** Second Picture (Riots)

**S2B:** Serbia

**Interviewer:**(Naples)

**S2B:** China

**Interviewer:** Mayor of London

**S2B:** Libya

**Interviewer:** Homeless Person

**S2B:** America

**Interviewer:** City

**S2B:** Japan

## **Student 2C**

**Interviewer:** So where do you live, how old are you and have you ever travelled?

**S2C:** I am from Bormla, I am 12 and I never travelled.

**Interviewer:** Ahh, ok is there a place where you would like to travel to?

**S2C:** Yes, Italy.

**Interviewer:** Oh, how come?

**S2C:** Because its very nice, it has the sea and also mountains.

**Interviewer:** Ok, good! Lets talk about your school, friends etc... Do you have foreigners in your class?

**S2C:** Yes.

**Interviewer:** Ok and where are they from?

**S2C:** China.

**Interviewer:** Do you have more than one person?

**S2C:** Yes.

**Interviewer:** Do you have foreign friends? As in, is this person form china your friend or not?

**S2C:** I mean we talk, but not the best of friends.

**Interviewer:** Ok, and do you have some other friends from other countries?

**S2C:** No, my friends are all Maltese.

**Interviewer:** Ok, do you know the religion of this Chinese friend?

**S2C:** No.

**Interviewer:** Ok and how is your friendship? Do you meet a lot outside of school or not?

**S2C:** We meet at school and we talk at school.

**Interviewer:** Ok so you don't meet outside of school?

**S2C:** No.

**Interviewer:** How did you meet each other?

**S2C:** Well, he came to our school, we met him and we started helping him and guiding him to classes.

**Interviewer:** Ok, and you became friends.

**S2C:** Yes, yes.

**Interviewer:** Ok and what do you talk about during breaks?

**S2C:** We do not talk a lot because I usually stay with my friend and he with his, however we still help him if he needs something.

**Interviewer:** Have you ever spoken about your countries and you learnt something new about his country?

**S2C:** No.

**Interviewer:** Ok, have you ever watched something on tv about some country and found out that something is different than how you have thought it?

**S2C:** No.

**Interviewer:** Ok, I will ask something about foreign children who live in Malta now. Why do you think they come here?

**S2C:** Because of wars and problems, or because they see that Malta is better for work and they come here

**Interviewer:** From which countries do you think we have the most foreigners coming to Malta?

**S2C:** Italy, Germany and France

**Interviewer:** Why?

**S2C:** Because, when I am outside it's the most people I see.

**Interviewer:** Now you mentioned, wars, in which countries do you think there are the most wars and come to Malta from there.

**S2C:** Libya and Serbia I think.

**Interviewer:** Do you think they come to Malta from these countries?

**S2C:** No, I do not think so, only a few.

**Interviewer:** So, you mentioned Italy, Germany, France, Serbia and Libya. What do you think about these countries?

**S2C:** I think all of them have their own nice things, due to their different lifestyles so I don't know.

**Interviewer:** And if you had to go to one of them which one would you choose?

**S2C:** Italy, for sure.

**Interviewer:** Now I am going to ask you to describe some nationals. Let's start with a man and woman from Libya. How do you think they look like?

**S2C:** They have head scarves.... Dark skin and I think they would be ok?

**Interviewer:** Now an Italian man

**S2C:** I think wearing a hat, white skin, blue/green eyes, nice characters but some of them might be not nice.

**Interviewer:** A serbian person.

**S2C:** I don't know depends on. The person I think.

**Interviewer:** An African woman.

**S2C:** They wear a lot of clothes for cold and don't show their face.

**Interviewer:** American Man

**S2C:** I think branded clothes and very nice and clever.

**Interviewer:** German Man

**S2C:** I think very similar to the American.

**Interviewer:** Ok, now, I will show you some pictures of some places now and I want you to tell me where you think they are found!

**Interviewer:** Cairo Image

**S2C:** I think its China

**Interviewer:** The Mountains

**S2C:** I think Italy

**Interviewer:** Protestors

**S2C:** I Think Libya

**Interviewer:** Naples Slums

**S2C:** I think Germany

**Interviewer:** Mayor of London

**S2C:** Libya Mayor

**Interviewer:** Homeless Person

**S2C:** America