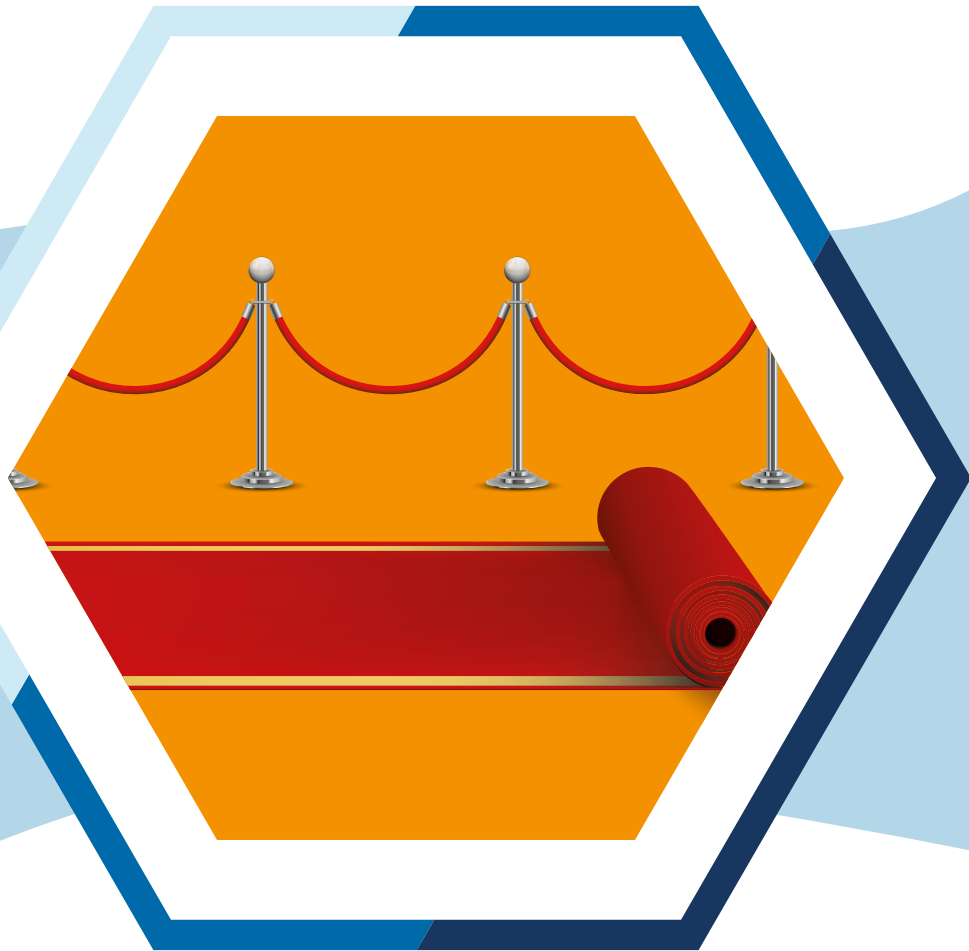




PERCEPTIONS



R.E.D.
(Reframing the European Dream)
Carpet



Location

The RED. Carpet has been and will be displayed in several public places in the city of Bologna starting from March 2022 (in transit and free-access places, where the carpet can be seen and consulted by many people). The carpet will be displayed during the day for approximately 14 days in each location. The activity will take place at a local level, in the city of Bologna, but since this is the regional capital, its visibility can be considered to be at a regional level and, if effectively corroborated with a thorough social media campaign, it also has the potential to reach national or international level. Moreover, the physical transferability of the carpet also allows us to think about the reproducibility of the activity in other cities and countries, as already stated—the double dimension, physical and virtual, of the RED. Carpet also allows a virtual experience. The videos and the illustrations within the platform are always available to the user.



Audience

The audience is composed of all people crossing the streets of Bologna. Thus, the entire community is targeted. Moreover, the R.E.D. Carpet is an interactive dispositive, so the physical part is flanked by virtual content, meaning the carpet will also be available to other users, including first-line practitioners, CSOs and migrant organisations.



Purpose/Aim

The activity aims to raise awareness on the different perceptions of Europe, allowing the audience to hear the precise words of migrant interviewees through the voice of international actors. The exhibition of the carpet in different public spaces and the autonomous interaction allows it to stimulate audience awareness through incidental learning conditions.

The R.E.D. Carpet illustrations and videos aim to promote a reflexive approach to perceptions of “self” and “others”, migrants and practitioners, thus highlighting the limits and opportunities of newcomers’ reception and integration in Italy and indirectly attracting the attention of local policymakers.



Description of the Activity

The activity consists of constructing and exhibiting an interactive carpet, made of plasticised material, approximately 13 x 1.30 m long.

The carpet, which is walkable, has printed on its surface illustrations created by the artist Sara Pour (inspired by the interviews conducted in Italy) and stuck-on QR codes that link to videos hosted within PERCEPTIONS' web platform (<https://www.perceptions.eu/red-carpet/>). Each QR code refers to a short video clip (30 - 90 seconds) in which actors from Cantieri Meticci, who come from different countries of the world and who have migratory experience, interpret quotes extracted from the interviews conducted in Italy within PERCEPTIONS fieldwork (which are provided as well in their textual shape within the web platform). The actors recite extracts from the interviews in the language in which the interviews were conducted (Italian or English), and subtitles were inserted accordingly (Italian/English). Within the PERCEPTIONS' web platform, some short texts explain the scientific work behind the R.E.D. Carpet and 12 videos re-interpret and re-read the illustrations.





Techniques

Contents creation: The R.E.D. Carpet elaborates some of the key findings of PERCEPTIONS Italian fieldwork, which collected the refugee and migrant (arrived since 2015) perceptions of Europe (before and after their arrival) and first-line practitioners and law enforcement agents working in the field of migration management.

A total of twenty-one semi-structured interviews were conducted by the researchers of the University of Bologna and the University of Rome La Sapienza, between February 1st and March 15th 2021, in the cities of Bologna, Rome, Naples, Palermo and Viterbo, including nine with first-line practitioners, two with law enforcement agents, six with asylum-seekers/refugees from Armenia, Afghanistan, Ivory Coast, Gambia, Nigeria and Senegal, and four with migrants from Brazil, Gambia, Ghana and Senegal.

The researchers extrapolated some sentences from the interviews in Italian and English. Actors from different countries recited these sentences. The artist Sara Pour re-elaborated the sentences with a graphical apparatus to let the interviews' content be comprehensible through non-verbal code. Cantieri Meticci conducted a workshop with newcomers, who are also the actors of the company, to let more perceptions about Europe and the topics highlighted by the interviews emerge; they integrated these new insights in other videos, distinguishing the material collected differently from fieldwork interviews through the final frames of the video. Videos and illustrations based on interviews address the main 12 topics emerging from the Italian fieldwork, namely: Europe through screens, the European dream, border crossings, integrations, relations with community of origin, security, human rights, bureaucracy, training, home, job and prospects.

A landing page on the PERCEPTIONS web platform hosts the materials to which the QR codes stuck on the R.E.D. Carpet link to, thus, a digital version of the R.E.D. Carpet is available.

The R.E.D. Carpet itself is an interactive (digital and physical) dispositif.

Overall, thirty-three short video clips were produced, showing actors interpreting interview quotes, with an additional twelve videos that provide the artistic explanation of the carpet's illustrations and a further nine videos showing actors' testimonies were collected during the workshop conducted by Cantieri Meticci.



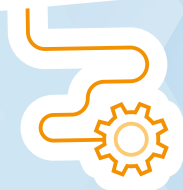
Audience reach: The audience was reached through several means. First of all, Unibo aims to conduct a social media campaign to launch the R.E.D. Carpet activity and to involve Cantieri Meticci. Moreover, the outreach will leverage the official media and press channels of the PERCEPTIONS project, University of Bologna, Cantieri Meticci, and local press. Digital and printed advertising materials were produced to communicate the activity. Visual fragments of the carpet (flyers and digital images) were scattered around the city and online (via Instagram and Facebook, through Perceptions pages on social media): on one side, there is an image of the illustration "Europe through screens", on the other a link to the online landing page, a very brief description of the project and an indication of the time and place where the carpet will be visible in its entirety in Bologna.

We spread the information about the activity and its multiple inaugurations by reaching out to local NGOs, cooperatives and institutions working in the migration field by taking advantage of the already established mailing list and personal contacts.

Planning the dates: Locations and dates have been scheduled to cover the months of March through the end of June. After that moment, the R.E.D. Carpet could be exhibited in other Italian or European cities until - but even after - the end of the Project timeline. The objective is to show the R.E.D. Carpet also in festivals, at a national level, related to migrations, and in high schools. The R.E.D. Carpet will be placed both in outdoor spaces and in several public buildings such as the University headquarters, public libraries of Bologna, municipal palace, theatres, headquarters of NGOs and schools. People can freely get in touch with the R.E.D. Carpet while crossing the city, going to university or going to the Municipality hall. Other Italian cities, starting from Roma (where there are other partners of the Consortium), Palermo, Cesena, Forli and Rimini (where there are branch offices of the University of Bologna) can host the exhibition. Other European cities can easily do the same.

Launch event: On the occasion of each public unveiling in a new location, there will be a presentation of the PERCEPTIONS project and the R.E.D. Carpet by the researchers and a reading performance of the artists (Cantieri Meticci), whose date and time have been/ will be communicated in the flyers that have been/will be spread around the city and through social media. Finally, on the occasions of the public unveiling of the R.E.D. Carpet in a new location, migrants, NGOs and policymakers at a local level (with whom UNIBO and Cantieri Meticci are already in contact) can be involved for a brief public talk.

Transferability: The R.E.D. Carpet can be disseminated physically in different cities at both national and international levels. Its constitutive materials (videos and illustrations) can also be spread digitally through the PERCEPTIONS' web platform and social media. Its structure allows Consortium partners to create and periodically insert new videos or materials by applying new QR codes on the carpet's surface. Indeed, the QR codes are designed to be stickers, meaning they can be easily replaced at any time.





Key Concepts

The R.E.D. Carpet recalls the object/gesture of welcome. When seen from afar, it looks like a passage and warm invitation to a desirable place. On the contrary, when walked, it shows "under the carpet" other far more disturbing and unpleasant visions. The R.E.D. Carpet brings forth the idea of welcome. It is laid out to welcome dignitaries such as heads of state or film stars. It evokes the idea of a triumphal catwalk and a passage towards the consecration of success. This is why it seems to us to be a symbolic object well-suited to represent the halo of fantasies and imaginings which, from afar, before leaving, are associated with Europe, the land of dreams.

Its value as a phantasmal object is essential, as it is impregnated with the desires of the onlooker, fed by the gazes of those who admire, envy, and dream of being in the place of "those who have made it".

For different reasons, and following established psychological processes, it also happens that migrants themselves, once in Europe, do not tell their friends or relatives in their countries of origin the truth about their actual living conditions, thus risking feeding false myths.

Iranian artist Sara Pour also increases the symbolic value of the R.E.D. Carpet by recovering particular original meanings derived from its Persian heritage. In Persian culture, the carpet originated as a symbol of the garden, which is the incarnation of paradise on earth. For this reason, in the R.E.D. Carpet, there are decorations of buds and branches full of fruit and flowers (many of which, on closer inspection, resemble eyes, signalling the importance of perception). For many, before leaving, Europe is seen as a paradise, where access to the "fruits" will be at their fingertips: just stretch out an arm and work, home, and school will be easily grasped. Thanks to its bright red colour, the carpet appears as an attractive object. However, when visitors start to walk along it, they discover another reality. The images are complex and polysemous because they combine the perception of an idealised "before" and the perception of a disappointing "after", or at least one with substantial negative aspects. The spectators are thus invited to play a game of deciphering and interpreting that problematises the theme.





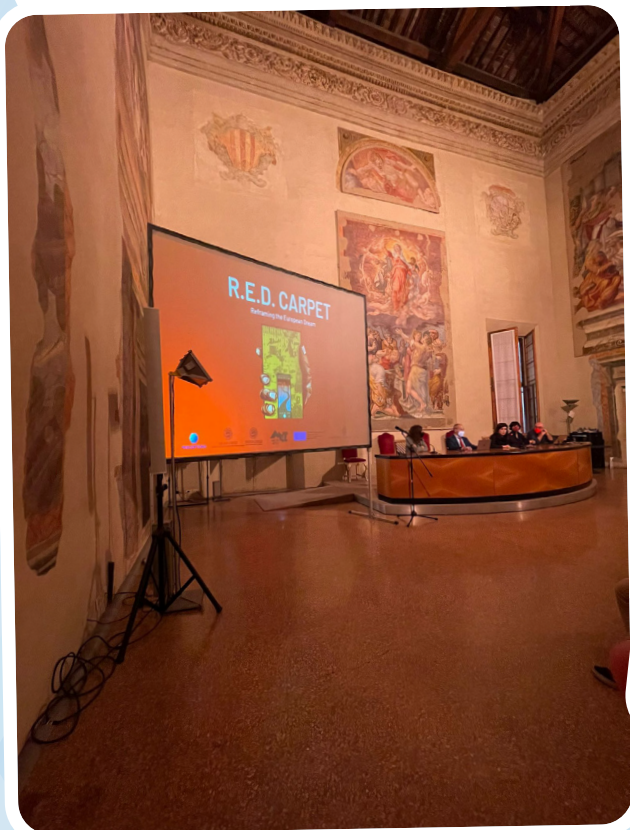
Outcomes

Creative community engagement: the use of a creative dissemination activity contributes to communicating research findings in forms that are more accessible to a broader audience. In addition, this methodology contributes to the co-construction of non-linear, critical and complex knowledge about Europe and migration. The R.E.D. Carpet can be influential in highlighting an agenda for local policymakers and thus inform policy and legislation.

Hybrid artefact: the R.E.D. Carpet's contents are available to heterogeneous social actors and easily shareable and accessible.

It also strengthens collaboration between artists, academics, first-line practitioners and migrants

R.E.D. Carpet events: The debates and public talks originating from the red carpet launch can introduce and let the public reflect on the issue of perceptions within schools, civil society organisations and NGOs.





Impact

The R.E.D. Carpet artefact has been presented and exhibited in different crucial places of Bologna to reach the whole community of the city, tourists and temporary passengers. The fact that it was an unobtrusive object, easily integrated into any interior or exterior environment - but at the same time eye-catching due to its size and colours - may have stimulated an incidental awareness in those who encountered it on their way but did not for example, attend the presentation events. At these events, academics and artists, including artists with migratory backgrounds, engaged with the public (including students and first-line practitioners in the field of migrant reception) to raise awareness of the different perceptions of Europe brought to light in the R.E.D. Carpet videos. In general, the fact that live actors, themselves migrants and refugees, played the interviewees' stories proved to be an effective tool for connecting with the audience in an empathetic way. This allowed participants to look from another perspective at the Europe we are all, every day, building and the possibilities we offer and deny to asylum seekers. This has resulted in questioning the ordinary vision we have of Europe and enriching it with voices and experiences that usually do not have the opportunity to find places of expression. During the public presentations, the actors of Cantieri Meticci read some poems written by themselves and linked to their migratory background or written by international poets in their original language, also providing the Italian translation. This moment provided a carnal intertwining of these voices and promoted a deep emotional understanding of the challenges faced by migrants during their journey to Europe, or once they arrived in Europe, and here narrated through the arts. Some participants from the R.E.D. Carpet's audience (who defined themselves as students and social workers) filled in an online questionnaire about their experience of the R.E.D. Carpet. 67% of them stated that they discovered something they were unaware of before interacting with the R.E.D. Carpet, in particular, "aspects concerning the interactions between social workers and migrants and elements concerning specific situations experienced by migrants in their countries of origin" and the many "vulnerabilities" of migrants and refugees. 83% of the participants stated that the R.E.D. Carpet made them want to find out more about the life stories of migrants to and in Europe. The R.E.D. Carpet was perceived by them as "an invitation to empathic reflection, which in my opinion is presented in a very intelligent way, rejecting pietism but bringing into focus a "denunciation"" and as a tool useful to "countering the mainstream communication on migration in Italy and Europe and the perception of civil society on the subject, opening up a legitimate space for communication from those who make these journeys themselves". Among the emotions most aroused by the R.E.D. Carpet, the desire to act stood out for 83%, curiosity for 50% and anger and hope for 33%. According to the participants, most striking were the illustrations and videos that recite in poetic form the themes that emerged from the interviews, confirming that the R.E.D. Carpet can bypass language barriers and communicate through other codes, especially artistic and visual ones.

Based on this feedback, the R.E.D. Carpet shows to be perceived as an effective means of developing new spaces and modes of collective expression that can facilitate the recognition of the needs and challenges faced by migrants and refugees and their inclusion within host countries' communities and motivate public action on their behalf. The availability of R.E.D. Carpet materials also in digital format, on the PERCEPTIONS web platform, have a high potential in terms of sharing and disseminating the videos vehiculating different perceptions of Europe outside the social actors most directly involved. The creation of the R.E.D. Carpet thus opened up a new space, both physical and digital, in which the stories of migrants and refugees could be disseminated and heard in more accessible forms than through the written text of a lengthy interview or scientific article, using the visual form of video and illustration. R.E.D. Carpet allowed the community to hear the original words spoken by the interviewees and reflexively compare their own experiences with them, learning new information, making new sense of their perceptions of Europe and its inhabitants, and developing their (inter)cultural competencies.





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This project has received funding from the European Union's H2020 Research & Innovation Programme under Grant Agreement No 833870.

