

The doctoral path in urban studies in Italy: between personal expectations and institutional goals

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ABSTRACT

In the hybrid working contemporary landscape, the purpose of a doctoral programme should be the scientific and methodological training of multi-skilled and versatile researchers, not strictly orienting the students toward a specific academic or not academic career. This assumption seems particularly relevant for Ph.D. programmes focused on cities. In order to corroborate this thesis and to understand the opinions among Ph.D. candidates in Italy, a direct survey among doctoral students in urban studies (and interrelated branches of knowledge such as planning, urban geography and sociology) has been conducted. The survey investigates the differences and similarities between personal expectations and institutional goals, and what is the general approach of Ph.D. schools in Italy. The results show an enduring predominant interest of Ph.D. students towards academic careers,

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even if a shift can be observed in how Ph.D. education is perceived.

INTRODUCTION

This research was born out of the personal experience and considerations of the Authors, both currently Ph.D. students in urban studies. The reflection concerns the doctoral education understood both as an advanced training course per se, both as a process to prepare students for professional opportunities that the title has to offer.

According to the authors, sharing Park (2005) ideas, the Ph.D. should not be a path addressed only to “knowledge production” – production of specific outputs such as publications and theses – but as a skill building process, that embodies more complex and broader purposes: a training period for future researches, moving from content to competence. Starting from this assumption, doctoral students should not be prematurely led in favour of a specific post-doctoral career, whether academic or not; on the contrary, the doctoral path should be directed to training well-qualified researchers, able to position themselves in a wider working landscape, inside and outside academia. The issue of how to make doctoral training effective for working success outside academia, overcoming the “fossilization” of Ph.D. programmes is internationally debated, both in U.S. and Europe (Fiske, 2013). As Goldstein (2012) remarks, this question seems to be particularly relevant for doctoral programmes devoted to the study of cities, because of the complexity of contemporary urban systems and the interdisciplinary nature of the disciplines involved,

belonging at the same time to professional and academic fields. These reflections are also aligned with the recent institutional and international debate, arisen from the “Bologna Process”¹ and led nowadays mostly by the European Commission and the European University Association, concerning the meaning and objectives of the doctoral programmes for the European knowledge society (EUA, 2015; European Commission, 2011).

To verify if colleagues share these thoughts and to understand the current directions of Italian Ph.D. schools, an interaction with Ph.D. students in urban studies (and interrelated branches of knowledge such as planning, urban geography and urban sociology) has been carried out. The survey was conducted by distributing an online questionnaire to students belonging to active cycles – 28th, 29th and 30th –, in order to investigate their view on the topic. In particular, the questionnaire focused on the motivations and expectations that led students to undertake a Ph.D., their satisfaction with the training programmes offered by schools in regard to the acquisition of knowledge and skills, and their future career aspirations. Especially with regard to the latter, the aim was also to understand if students are still influenced by an idea of the Ph.D. closely tied to the academic realm or if they are interested in more innovative forms of training, and if there are mismatches with the education received. Moreover, by the medium of this survey the Authors tried to understand how an analysis conducted on a specific cluster of Ph.D.

¹ Initiative born from the Conference of European Ministers of Higher Education held in Bologna in June 1999. http://www.processodibologna.it/index.php?id_cnt=

fields reflects or not the results of available national investigations, concerning Ph.D. education and related job opportunities.

After a short analysis of these investigations, the paper provides a description of the questionnaire and of the respondents' profiles, a summary of the received answers and an interpretation of the main findings.

BACKGROUND: NATIONAL INVESTIGATIONS ON PhDs

CNVSU², ISTAT³ and AlmaLaurea⁴ are among the main Italian institutions delivering open access national investigations on Italian Ph.D. programmes. The paper takes into consideration the most recent reports arranged by these institutions, which focus on the state of the university system and on the professional integration of Ph.D. graduates. These reports were prepared with the purpose of achieving a comprehensive understanding of the national scenario and trends (AlmaLaurea, 2015; Argentin, Ballarino, & Colombo, 2014; CNVSU, 2011; ISTAT, 2015).

A key question addressed in various reports is the motivations that drive students to attend a Ph.D. programme. According to Argentin,

² *Comitato Nazionale di Valutazione del Sistema Universitario (National Committee for the Evaluation of the University System), body of the MIUR Ministero dell'Istruzione, dell'Università e della Ricerca (Ministry of Education, University and Research)*

³ *Italian national institute of statistics*

⁴ *Italian public interuniversity consortium, devoted to the collection of data, information and assessments to investigate university courses and employment conditions inquiring directly undergraduate and graduate students. <http://www.almalaurea.it/>*

Ballarino & Colombo (2014) the increasing number of application in Ph.D. programmes is a direct consequence of the gradual but constant decrease in job opportunities Italy has been experiencing in the past decade. Although the increase in applications is observed in all the fields, the greatest increase happened in humanities and social sciences. In contrast with this thesis, the AlmaLaurea report (2015) highlights the interest in research activities and personal cultural education as the main motivations in starting a Ph.D.

A second important issue is how doctoral students value their learning experience. From ISTAT report (2015) emerges that Ph.D. graduates are not fully satisfied by their own doctoral experience, in particular for what concerns the educational activities delivered by the programmes. Moreover there is a wide dissatisfaction about job opportunities emerging after completion of the degree⁵. Nevertheless according to the same study, the employment rate is still high: four years after the completion of Ph.D., 90% of Ph.D. graduates is engaged in working activities they consider appropriate to their education.

By observing the typology of working activities in which they are engaged, contrasting results arise among ISTAT (2015, p. 6), CNVSU (2011, p. 138) and AlmaLaurea (2015, p. 7). According to the first one, 70% of Ph.D. graduates are involved in research and development activities, while according to the second and the third ones this percentage decreases to less than 50%.

All the reports show that universities record a not sufficient capacity on employing researchers, compared to the number of Ph.D.

⁵ Only the 20% of Ph.D. graduates already employed before starting their Ph.D. declare to have achieved a better working condition thanks to the doctoral degree.

graduates⁶; for this reason many Ph.D. schools are starting offering educational programmes not strictly oriented to academic career, even if the link between Ph.D. schools and academic career is still the strongest one (AlmaLaurea, 2015; Argentin, Ballarino, & Colombo, 2014; CNVSU, 2011; ISTAT, 2015).

THE SURVEY

Design, administration, profile of respondents

a. About the survey

The identification of Italian doctoral schools has been carried out via the website of MIUR⁷, selecting firstly courses that started in the past three years (cycles 28th, 29th and 30th). The second criterion was the main subject matter of the programme: we selected only the doctoral programmes focused on cities – whatever the thematic or disciplinary perspective of analysis⁸. With these criteria 19 doctoral programmes were selected (see Table 1). Students enrolled in these programmes were invited by email to participate in the survey.

⁶ For instance, in 2010 the number of Ph.D. graduates was around 12000 (growing tendency) (Argentin Ballarino, & Colombo, 2014, p. 2) while the number of researchers already employed was around 24.000 (CNVSU, 2011 p. 149). For further reading, see Falco & Rinaldi (2015) in this issue.

⁷ <http://cercauniversita.cineca.it/php5/dottorati/cerca.php>, accessed on June and July 2015

⁸ Programmes referred to areas no.8 "civil engineering and architecture", no.14 "political and social sciences", scientific sectors M-GGR/01 "geography", M-GGR/02 "economic and political geography", SECS-P/06 "applied economics".

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City	University	Ph.D. Program	Respondents
Ferrara	University of Ferrara	Architecture and urban planning	7
Florence	University of Florence	Progettazione della città, del territorio e del paesaggio	5
L'Aquila	Gran Sasso Science Institute	Urban studies	21
Milan	Bicocca University	URBEUR-QUA.SI. Città e Società dell'Informazione	12
	Politecnico	Governo e progettazione del territorio	3
		Spatial planning and urban development	1
		Urban planning, design and policy	4
Naples	Federico II University	Architettura – curriculum “Pianificazione, urbanistica e valutazione	6
Palermo	University of Palermo	Architettura, arti e pianificazione	2
Reggio Calabria	Mediterranea University	Urban regeneration and economic development	0
		Urbanistica	0
Rome	Roma Tre University	Paesaggi della città contemporanea. Politiche, tecniche e studi visuali	2
		Politiche territoriali e progetto locale	0
	Sapienza University	Pianificazione, design e tecnologia dell'architettura	4
		Pianificazione territoriale e urbana	7
Sassari	University of Sassari	Architettura e Ambiente	10
Turin	Politecnico	Urban and regional development	3
Venice	IUAV	Architettura, Città e Design – curriculum: “Pianificazione territoriale e politiche pubbliche del territorio”	8
		Architettura, Città e Design – curriculum: “Urbanistica”	0

Table 1. Ph.D. programmes and number of respondents. Elaboration by the authors.

The administration of the questionnaire was conducted anonymously, via the website Qualtrics⁹. The questionnaire was bilingual (Italian and English), divided into four parts (General Data, Before the Ph.D., During the Ph.D., After the Ph.D.) and composed of 35 questions (mainly multiple-choice questions). It was handed out during July-August 2015.

b. About the population

The survey was sent to a population of about 250¹⁰ Ph.D. students. The total amount of completed surveys is 111, but not every respondent answered all the questions. 64% of the respondents have a background in the field of architecture, planning, and engineering, followed by students coming from the field of social sciences 20%. The remaining population is composed of student with a background in geography (6%), economics (3%) and 2% from political science¹¹. Around 60% of the respondents have not started their Ph.D. immediately upon completion of their university studies.

⁹ www.qualtrics.com

¹⁰ The total population is estimated because in some cases students' mail addresses were not public and Ph.D. schools' delegates consequently spread the survey. The authors could contact directly 200 people.

¹¹ Students coming from different background, such as philosophy and legal sciences, compose the remaining 5%.

The results show that more than 80% of those interviewed obtained the MSc in Italy and receive a grant¹². Out of 95 students, 23% belongs to the cycle 28th, 32% to the 29th and 45% to the cycle 30th.

Main findings

The collected results were analysed as aggregate data in the first phase. The most interesting issues were then analysed in detail crossing key variables from the research perspective. Five main topics emerge from the analyses: a) the backgrounds of the respondents and their engagement before Ph.D. study; b) personal motivations when applying for a Ph.D. course; c) the role of the educational offer and career opportunities in influencing decision-making process; d) the educational path; e) personal expectations and ambitions of Ph.D. students.

a. Background and previous engagement

As already noted, data related to the disciplinary background of the respondents reveal a high prevalence of students from the fields of engineering, architecture and planning (64% of 111 respondents) (Q1). This is a consequence of the large number of doctoral programme focusing on cities from this disciplinary perspective and of general correlation between students' background and the type of doctoral program to which they apply.

59% of students did not start their Ph.D. immediately after completing university studies, and this is particularly true for

¹² For further reading about the experience of foreign Ph.D. students in Italy, see Ahern, Gogishvili & Kizildere (2015) in this issue.

students in fields of engineering, architecture and planning. The time lag between the two phases is of 1-2 years for the 47% of the respondents, and more than five years for 19% (Q2, Q3). 60% of students that responded to the survey devoted this intermediate period to professional activities; 22% were engaged only in research or educational activities, while 18% of respondents were involved both in professional and research activities (Q4)¹³.

b. Motivation

A section of the survey was oriented to evaluate the motivational processes of Ph.D. students in choosing their educational path. More than half of the 77 respondents declare the desire to continue personal studies as the main purpose in undertaking a doctorate, followed by their need for the Ph.D. title for employment opportunities. All students share the same trend, regardless of whether or not they receive a scholarship. Undertaking a doctoral path as a temporary or alternative employment in the absence of other opportunities does not seem to be a relevant reason (Q10).

c. Role of educational offer and career opportunities

Starting from the interest in understanding the decision-making processes of Ph.D. students in urban studies in approaching this educational path, the survey investigated the relevance and role of the educational offer and career opportunities proposed by Ph.D. schools. Concerning the role of the educational offer, the population seems divided equally between students that describe this aspect as

¹³ For further details see table 2 in the discussion section

relevant in their decision-making process (55% of 89 respondents) and students that have an opposite opinion (45%), mainly because the available information was too general. For the first category of students, such relevance of the educational offer was derived from correspondence between the training program (themes, disciplines involved, etc.) and personal previous interests (Q12-15). However, 63% of 84 students find only partial consistency among the proposals of the training program (themes, teaching methodologies, tools, etc.) and its implementation (Q26).

Asking students' opinions about the training objectives of a Ph.D. in urban studies, providing basic training on research methods (both theoretical and applied) is considered the most important one, followed by specific preparation on methodologies and tools (Q25). Instead, not many respondents show interest for training devoted to enhance and reinforce their personal generic skills, communication and presentation abilities, working in hostile conditions or under pressure, time management, team working, etc.¹⁴.

For what concerns the career opportunities proposed by the Ph.D. schools, they did not play a critical role during the decisional process of undergoing a Ph.D. for approximately 70% of 89 respondents, regardless of disciplinary background (Q16). Open answers (7) suggest that career opportunities that follow Ph.D. period could be considered "implicitly" oriented to academic research (Q19). For the remaining 30% of students, career opportunities were considered

¹⁴ *Differently from what expressed in the answers, in literature and in "Bologna process" to train generic skills is recognized as an important part of the learning path of Ph.D. students in their transition experience in becoming novice researchers (Park, 2005; Christensen, 2005).*

relevant, above all for the resulting possibilities of employment congruent with personal ambitions and interests (Q18).

d. The educational path

Despite the previous findings, asking what should be the main focus of a doctoral programme in urban studies, only 8% out of 86 respondents affirmed that it should be only a personal experience of study and research; 17% considers the doctoral experience as a path to develop professional skills; the remaining 75% of students agree on a broader vision of the Ph.D. experience embracing all these aspects (Q20). To deepen this topic, the survey asked which professional profiles a Ph.D. programme should train: the majority of answers (64%) demonstrate the core role of doctoral schools in training researchers – both engaged in academia both in institutions and organizations – and future professors. The remaining 36% of answers imagine the Ph.D. path as moment of training consultants (Q21) (See chart 1).

Asking which activities should better prepare for these careers, the majority of answers 70% show a preference for workshops dedicated to specialised tools, special topics, and methodologies; followed by internships (44%) and simulations (19%)¹⁵. Furthermore, the open answers suggest that application on empirical research or cooperation between universities and public/private sector should be better implemented and fostered (Q22). The survey investigated also if, and how, Ph.D. programmes are orienting students towards specific career choices: the answers can be interpreted as equally distributed

¹⁵ *Multiple choices were available.*

among research, teaching and consultancy (Q24). Concerning this issue, the same percentage of students (around 43 out of 87 respondents) feel pushed towards a choice in line with their personal ambitions, or do not feel oriented at all towards any direction; 12% of students think to be addressed towards careers that do not reflect their desires (Q23).

e. Personal expectations

Being engaged in research¹⁶ activities seems to be the main ambition of Ph.D. students, followed by achieving a role in the consultancy realm, a trend coherent along the entire survey (Q32) (See chart 1).

¹⁶ *Researcher in academia: 42 answers; researcher in institutions and organizations, etc.: 32% (out of 82 answers)*

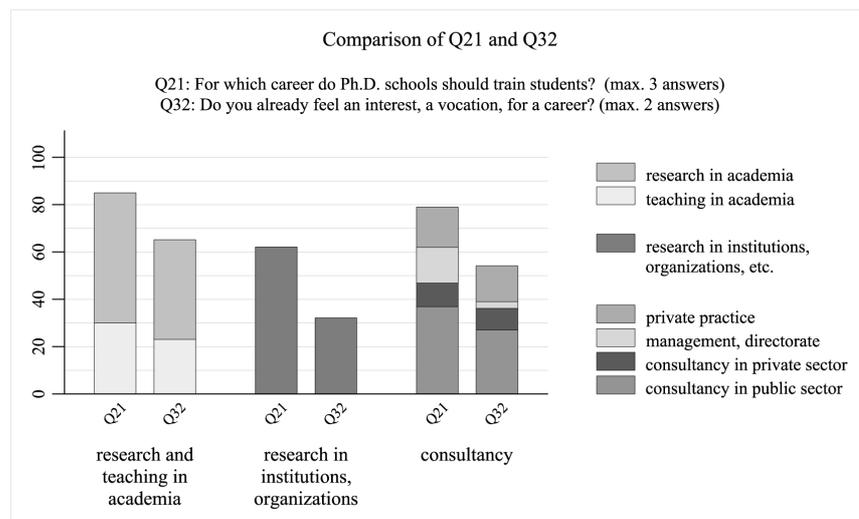


Chart 1. Comparison about Ph.D. schools' educational purposes and personal vocation (Q21, Q32). Elaboration by the authors. On vertical axis the number of answers.

In conclusion, the questionnaire reveals a general optimism among the students about their employment opportunities thanks to the doctoral training. Yet students attending the last year of their program seem less optimistic (Q33)¹⁷.

¹⁷ For further details see table 6.

DISCUSSION

From the results some interesting features about the profile of Ph.D. students analysed in the survey can be highlighted. We propose for the "discussion" section the same subdivision adopted in the "main finding" one.

a. Background and previous engagements

Students with a background in economics and social sciences begin their doctoral path immediately upon completion of their previous university studies, unlike students coming from more specialised courses, such as those promoted by the schools of architecture and engineering, that allow direct hiring in freelance working activities (See table 2).

Educational background	Number of respondents divided by the activities conducted in the period between university studies and the beginning of the Ph.D.			
	Working activities	Educational activities	Both	Total
Engineering and architecture	18	9	6	33
Social sciences	6	2	0	8
Political sciences	0	1	0	1
Economics	1	0	0	1
Geography	2	0	3	5
Other	4	2	1	7

Table 2. Number of respondents clustered by educational background and their pre-Ph.D. activities. (Q1, Q4). Elaboration by the authors.

b. Motivation

The desire of enhancing their education and being engaged in research activities emerge as the two main motivations in attending doctoral careers. The Ph.D. education is not considered a job opportunity per se, and also the future career paths seem to have a minor role in the decision-making processes of the candidates. This tendency confirms the investigation conducted by AlmaLaurea (2015), while the study by Argentin, Ballarino & Colombo (2014) shows a different perspective.

c. Role of educational offer and career opportunities

For most of the respondents, official programmes and related future job opportunities do not seem decisive in influencing their choice of starting a Ph.D. The words of some of them defining as "obvious" and "implicit" the post-doctoral employment opportunities seem particularly interesting. There is certain coherence among expectations of the students, their doctoral paths, and future personal ambitions. In fact, according to our respondents, doctorate programmes should be oriented to train future researchers; the activities promoted by Italian programmes seem to confirm this tendency, which indeed matches with the main personal ambitions of the interviewed students.

These findings show a cultural background still dependent on a traditional conception of the meaning of getting a Ph.D. title, mainly seen as the educational phase preparatory to academic careers; a tendency that has been defined as a "path of academic self-reproduction" (Argentin, Ballarino, & Colombo, 2014, p. 2) or as "a

form of academic apprenticeship" (Park, 2005, p. 193). In comparison, the European cultural horizon about higher education is quite different. One of the results of the "Bologna process", as the document provides by the European Commission (2011) remarks, is the request to universities to promote doctoral programmes functional to meet the needs of the employment market at large not to prepare only for an academic career. Equally, the Communiqué of the Conference of EHEA underlines:

"We urge universities to ensure that their doctoral programmes promote interdisciplinary training and the development of transferable skills, thus meeting the needs of the wider employment market" (EHEA, 2005, p. 4).

Ph.D. schools should prepare their students for careers beyond academia, also because of the limited employment opportunities offered by academia in present times (Fiske, 2013; Park, 2005). Moreover, research and teaching in academia are characterized by long periods to achieve contractual stability and professional advancement. Indeed as the investigation conducted by the Italian Ministry of Education illustrates the average age of admission in academia is quite high: 37 years for researchers, 43 years for associate professors, 51 years for full professors¹⁸ (CNVSU, 2011 p. 157), while according to the AlmaLaurea report (2015) the average age of Ph.D. graduates is 33 years.

¹⁸ Data referred to the period 2000 - 2010

d. The educational path

The results show that some Ph.D. schools are trying to propose educational programmes and professional opportunities alternative to the academic world; this tendency emerges also from the national reports here debated, that underline how doctoral training is more and more devoted to catch the working demand coming from extra-academic labour markets (Argentin, Ballarino, & Colombo, 2014; Orefice & Gobbo, 2012).

Starting from this observation, two interesting features emerge: as reported in the main findings, the majority of students consider "professional training" as an important purpose of a Ph.D. path, despite a small attention given to the educational program, in choosing their Ph.D.

Although schools are trying to re-shape their programmes in order to better catch the current job opportunities, it seems that students are involved mainly in individual works at the expense of group activities and collaboration, while the principal working activities of both researchers and consultants are nowadays widely non-individual ones.

e. Personal expectations

Academia still remains the primary ambition of students. This consideration is even more interesting if compared with the fact that a great part of students were involved in working activities in the intermediate period between the university studies and the Ph.D (see table 3-4). It could be interesting to understand the existence of correlation between the degree of satisfaction for the working experience and the decision of continuing with the educational path.

	Research and teaching in academia	Research in institutions, organizations	Consultancy
Working activities	20	10	23
Educational activities	7	4	8
Both	5	5	6

Table 3. Number of respondents clustered by personal job aspirations and activities pre-PhD (Q4, Q32). Elaboration by the authors.

	Research and teaching in academia	Research in institutions, organizations	Consultancy
Engineering and architecture	35	22	31
Social sciences	11	6	9
Political sciences	1	0	2
Economics	2	0	1
Geography	5	2	3
Other	11	2	8

Table 4. Number of respondents clustered by educational background and personal job aspirations (Q1, Q32). Elaboration by the authors.

The survey reveals a general optimism among students about the possibility that their professional profile, as built through the Ph.D. path, may find a place in the contemporary job market. Analysing

more in details these data (see table 5), such optimism varies according to the belonging cycle.

	Do you think your professional profile, as influenced by the PhD path, may find a place in the contemporary job market?					
	Yes widely	Probably yes	Probably not	No hardly	I do not know	Other
28th (22 respondents)	0	29%	35%	18%	18%	0
29th (30 respondents)	4%	68%	20%	4%	4%	0
30th (43 respondents)	6%	40%	28%	9%	11%	6%

Table 5. Respondents clustered by Ph.D. cycle and perception on employability (Q6, Q33). Elaboration by the authors.

On the contrary, ISTAT report shows that one third of Ph.D. graduates declare a large dissatisfaction about the career opportunities offered by the degree (ISTAT, 2015, p. 12).

CONCLUSIONS

Ph.D. students involved in this survey seem to share the initial considerations that gave birth to this research: the Ph.D. education should be a " skill building process path", oriented to train well-qualified and versatile researchers, inside and outside academia. Through their answers students show the desire of receiving basic strong training on research methods, not only devoted to theoretical research but also to empirical one. As affirmed by Innes:

“Programmes must give high priority to maintaining and improving the scholarly quality, rigor, and contribution of doctoral research. Students must have preparation in both quantitative/analytic and qualitative/field research methods as well as training in identifying research questions and designing research” (Innes, 1993, p. 169).

Moreover, the demand for be engaged as well with empirical and field research, and for partnership and networking with other institutions and stakeholders¹⁹, indicates the need for a stronger integration between theoretical and practical activities. This could be interpreted as a switch in the way in which Ph.D. education is perceived, closer to the international debate about the educational purpose of doctoral programmes. Furthermore, the results show that Ph.D. schools in Italy – possibly aware of the shrinking demand of researchers from the academic institutions – are trying to increase the learning activities dedicated to acquire basic skills, useful beyond the academic research. The general motivations in attending a Ph.D. programme then show clearly how the majority of students seem to attend the Ph.D. to follow their personal research interests and continue their educational path. In fact the doctoral degree is not considered a job opportunity per se, as demonstrated by the secondary role played by future career paths in the decision-making processes of the candidates.

¹⁹ For instance, Goldstein (2012), proposes to share method courses among different Ph.D. schools, a tendency experienced by some Italian Ph.D. schools by joint seminars and lectures, promoting networking between researchers and students. This form of networking among Ph.D. students can also facilitate employment opportunities.

Nevertheless, despite the current awareness about the needed involvement of Ph.D. schools in non-academic domains, and the interest of students in broader job positions, the academic realm still represents a relevant working ambition of Ph.D. students in planning and urban studies.

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SUPPLEMENT: THE SURVEY

General Data

Q1 - From which disciplinary area do you come from? (*Choose the predominant, or specific in "Other"*)

- Engineering and Architecture
- Political Science
- Social Sciences
- Economics
- Geography
- Other

Q2 - Have you started your PhD in temporal continuity with the completion of your university studies?

- Yes
- No

Q3 - How much time elapsed between the end of your studies and the beginning of the PhD?

- Less than one year
- 1-2 years
- 3-4 years
- 5 years
- more than 5 years

Q4 - How have you spent the period between your university studies and the beginning of the doctorate?

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Q5 - Which is your PhD Program? ²⁰

- Ferrara: Architettura e pianificazione urbana
- Firenze: Progettazione della città, del territorio e del paesaggio
- L'Aquila, Gran Sasso Science Institute (Scuola Superiore Sant'Anna): Urban studies
- Milano, Bicocca: Studi europei urbani e locali URBEUR
- Milano, Politecnico: Governo e progettazione del territorio
- Milano, Politecnico: Spatial planning and urban development
- Milano, Politecnico: Urban planning, design and policy
- Palermo: Architettura, arti e pianificazione
- Reggio Calabria: Urban regeneration and economic development
- Reggio Calabria: Urbanistica
- Roma, Roma Tre: Paesaggi della città contemporanea. Politiche, tecniche e studi visuali
- Roma, Roma Tre: Politiche territoriali e progetto locale
- Roma, Sapienza: Pianificazione territoriale e urbana
- Roma, Sapienza: Pianificazione, design e tecnologia dell'architettura
- Sassari: Architettura e pianificazione
- Torino: Urban and regional development
- Venezia, IUAV: curriculum "Urbanistica"
- Venezia, IUAV: curriculum "Pianificazione territoriale e politiche pubbliche del territorio"
- Altro / Other

Q6 - What cycle?

- XXVIII
- XXIX
- XXX

²⁰ *During the construction of the online questionnaire the doctorate in Architecture of the University of Naples Federico II has been not included in the options by mistake. Students belonging to the curriculum "Urban design and planning" were contacted and actively participated in the survey*

Q7 - Do you receive a scholarship?

- Yes
- No
- I prefer not to answer

Q8 - Did you obtain your MSc in Italy?

- Yes
- No

Q9 - In which country did you graduate?

Before the PhD

Q10 - Why did you choose to attend a Ph.D.? (*Order options from the most relevant to the least significant*)

- Interest for further education
- Licence requirement of PhD for employment reasons (eg: academic career, management career, etc.)
- Temporary employment (eg: possibility of employment emerged among other possibilities)
- Interesting alternative in the absence of other employment opportunities (eg: occasion to gain a salary in a period of unemployment or for lack of other job opportunities, etc.)
- Other

Q11 - Why did you choose to attend a doctorate in Italy? (*maximum 2 options*)

- For the possibility to access scholarships
- Because application procedures were not conditioning (eg: to have already a research project or supervisors wasn't compulsory, etc.)
- For personal reasons (eg: I live in Italy permanently)
- For continuity with my previous studies
- For the reputation of the institution chosen

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- For clarity of objectives and funds available for doctoral students
- Other

Q12 - The didactic offer proposed by the doctoral program (available via websites, dedicated events, etc.) was significant during your decision-making process?

- Yes
- No
- Other

Q13 - How was the didactic offer relevant to you?

- Irrelevant
- Little relevant
- Neither relevant nor irrelevant
- Very important
- Extremely important

Q14 - Why was it important? (eg: pertinence of the didactic program with your university career, with topics of interest, for the quality of the academic board, etc.)

Q15 - Why wasn't it relevant?

- I have not consulted the available information
- No information was available about
- Available information was too general
- The didactic offer wasn't a decisive factor
- Other

Q16 - Career opportunities indicated by the doctoral program (*available via websites, dedicated events, etc.*) were important during your decision-making process?

- Yes
- No
- Other

Q17 - How were the career opportunities relevant to you?

- Irrelevant
- Little relevant
- Neither relevant nor irrelevant
- Very important
- Extremely important

Q18 - Why were they relevant? (*eg. relevance of the possible employment with personal ambitions and interests, with specific job opportunities, etc.*)

Q19 - Why weren't they relevant?

- I have not consulted the available information
- No information was available about
- Available information was too general
- The possible job opportunities were not discriminating factors in my choice
- Other

During the PhD

Q20 - In your opinion, what should be the main goal of a PhD in urban studies (and related disciplines)?

- It's personal experience of studying and researching
- It's a path towards professionalization
- Both
- I do not know
- Other

Q21 - If the PhD is also a vocational learning pathway, should be oriented towards the formation of: (*maximum 3 answers*)

- Professors
- Public consultants
- Private consultants
- Leading roles

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- Researchers in academia
- Researchers in institutions, organizations, etc.
- Professionals (oriented on starting their own business)
- Other

Q22 - Through which instruments should it be made "professionalizing"?

- Internships
- Learning activities (eg. workshops dedicated to specific topics, tools, methodologies, etc.).
- Simulations
- Other

Q23 - In your experience, your PhD is already orienting you to a career choice? And is it a choice consistent with your desires and ambitions?

- Yes, in line with my ambitions
- Yes, but to a choice that does not answer my main ambitions
- No, it isn't
- Other

Q24 - If it is orienting you, the trend is toward (*maximum two answers*):

- Academia
- Consultancy (public and private sector)
- Scientific research
- Business creation
- Leadership roles
- Other

Q25 - In your opinion, how important are the following goals in a PhD in urban studies (and related disciplines) (Not important, Important, Very important)?

- Basic training on methods of theoretical research
- Basic training on methods of applied research
- Specific preparation on methods and/or tools (eg. writing methodologies, software learning, etc.).

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- Psychological training (eg. collaborative working, working in hostile conditions, etc.)
- Other

Q26 - Do you find consistency among the proposals of the training program (themes, teaching methodologies, tools, business proposals, etc.) at the time of application and the implementation of the program?

- Lack of consistency
- The program implemented is partly consistent with the statements
- Great consistency
- I do not know or I do not remember the training program

Q27 - Does your doctoral learning path promote the active participation in activities other than teaching? (Ex. conferences, workshops, visiting, etc.)

- Yes
- No
- I do not know
- Other

Q28 - What activities are promoted?

- Conferences
- Visiting
- Applied research
- Confrontation with local actors and stakeholders
- Workshop
- Field research
- Working groups
- Internships
- Other

Q29 - Is it important to you the international dimension of education and employment opportunities?

- Yes
- Enough

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- No
- Other

Q30 - Does your doctoral path promote the internationalization of students training? (Eg. through specific activities, through the bilingualism of the course, etc.)

- Yes
- No
- I do not know
- Other

Q31 - If so, how?

- The activities are in English
- Guests from non-Italian institutions participate in our activities (readers, lecturers, etc.)
- Promoting participation in activities abroad (visiting, participation in conferences, etc.)
- Promoting international networks among PhD students
- Other

After the PhD

Q32 - Do you already feel clearly an interest, a vocation, for one or more of the following roles? (*maximum 2 answers*)

- Professor
- Consultant in the public sector
- Consultant in the private sector
- Director, Manager
- Researcher in academia
- Researcher in institutions, associations
- Professional with his own business
- Professional with his own business dedicated to research
- Other

Q33 - Do you think your professional profile, as influenced by the PhD path, may find a place in the contemporary job market?

- Yes, widely
- Probably yes
- Probably not
- No, hardly
- I do not know
- Other

Q34 - Are you planning to stay in Italy?

- Yes
- No
- I do not know
- Other

Q35 - Do you want to add comments on the questionnaire or reflections on the theme investigated?