

Visual communication and migration governance at the age of social media

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Abstract

This paper offers a reflection on the relationship between migrant governance and visual communication. The paper starts by discussing the main features of migration governance today: as multi-level (different levels of governance), multi-sector (different types of actors) and multi-scalar (different networks); its temporal nature (periodical or linear?) and its spatial character (local, transnational and remote); and its complexity (encompassing different forms of migration and mobility). It then discusses how migration governance relates to visibility or the use of visual representations in communication about migration and migration governance. The paper discusses how the current communication context (affordable access to related technologies, a networked public sphere largely dominated by social media, a constant possibility to connect, be updated and also express one's opinions; echo chambers) relates to migration governance with a focus on the role of visual elements as a nodal point where communication and governance dynamics intersect. The specificity of visibility is that it needs no translation (it is a universal language) but also that a big part of the meaning is in the eye of the beholder – it is in the ways in which the audience interprets a given image. The paper concludes with some reflections on a research agenda on visibility in migration governance.

Biography

Anna Triandafyllidou is an internationally recognized sociologist and migration policy expert whose interdisciplinary research focuses on the governance of migration and asylum; the management of cultural diversity, nationalism and identity issues; and, overall, the contemporary challenges of migration and integration across different world regions. Prior to her CERC at Toronto Metropolitan University, Anna was based in Florence, Italy, where she held a Robert Schuman Chair at the European University Institute and directed the Cultural Pluralism Research Area as part of the European University Institute's Global Governance Programme. Since receiving her PhD from the European University Institute in 1995, she has held teaching and research positions around the world, including the London School of Economics, the College of Europe in Bruges, and the Consiglio Nazionale delle Ricerche in Rome. She was a Fulbright Scholar in Residence at New York University in 2001. In 2021, the University of Liège awarded Triandafyllidou an honorary doctorate in recognition of her contribution to migration scholarship. Anna served as a member of the Network of International Migration Experts of the OECD (2010-2018) representing Greece, and has provided expert policy advice for the

Government of Canada (Immigration Refugees and Citizenship Canada, and the Canadian Senate), the European Parliament, the European Commission's Directorate General for Migration and Home Affairs as well as the International Organisation of Migration (she co-edited the World Migration Report, 2022), the International Labour Organisation (ILO) and other inter-governmental organizations.