



Scholars of Excellence Workshop

Talking about migration – words, data, images

Co-convended by CERC Scholar of Excellence **Daniel Hiebert**, Professor Emeritus University of British Columbia, **Steven Vertovec**, Director, Max Planck Institute for the Study of Religious and Ethnic Diversity, and **Anna Triandafyllidou**, Chair, CERC Migration, Toronto Metropolitan University.

Date: 1st October 2024

Time: 9:30 AM–4 PM EST

Location: Hybrid (In person at CERC Migration office / online via Zoom)

Public discourse on migration can best be described as polarized and even toxic in a number of countries. Italy, the Netherlands, the UK, and of course the US come quickly to mind. Even in Canada, where public attitudes about immigration have been highly supportive over a long period of time, we have recently seen concerns raised about the scale of temporary migration programs (international students) and permanent immigration.

In this workshop, we will explore two aspects related to public opinion on migration. First, how do people acquire and process information about migration, and how does this shape their understanding and views about it? Our world is saturated in information as well as misinformation. How do people choose which mis/information to trust and absorb? Why do some people form strong opinions about migration while others consider it a minor issue in their lives? To what extent is this an individual vs. collective process?

Second, what are the most effective ways of presenting information about migration to the public? Are there strategies to 'cut through the noise' and capture peoples' attention? What kinds of messages resonate? This part of the workshop will explore the potential to affect public understanding of migration through the presentation of factual information, particularly as visualized data that may enable viewers to reach deeper understandings of how migration is affecting society by 'seeing' and interacting with information/data. The workshop is designed to inform efforts to mobilize research toward greater public understanding, and should appeal to scholars, policy officials, and media representatives.

PROGRAM

9:30 AM–10 AM EDT	Welcome coffee
10 AM EDT	Opening remarks, Anna Triandafyllidou, Dan Hiebert, Steven Vertovec
MORNING PANEL	
10:00 AM–12:45 PM EDT	How do we understand and process information on migration? Chair: Anna Triandafyllidou, Co-chair: Irina Isaakyan, Toronto Metropolitan University How should we interpret survey data? Andrew Parkin, Environics Institute How do people form their judgements on migration related issues Jonas Kunst, University of Oslo Fair Protection: Public Perceptions of Fairness in Asylum Decision-making Lenka Drazanova, European University Institute Recognising the needs of others? How do people understand migrants' decisions Colin Patrick Scott, Impact Canada Visual Narratives of Human Smuggling: Analysing Social Media Imagery in Migration Services Alice Massari, University of Copenhagen and CERC Migration, TMU; Luigi Achilli, European University Institute Discussant: Line Patry, IRCC
12:45 –1:45 PM EDT	Lunch break
AFTERNOON PANEL	
1:45–4.30 PM EDT	How can we effectively communicate migration data knowledge to a broader audience of stakeholders Chair: Shana Almeida, Toronto Metropolitan University Co-chair: Sarah Hoyos Hoyos, Toronto Metropolitan University Steven Vertovec and Dan Hiebert introducing the Superdiversity data visualisation project Roundtable participants: John Lauermann, Pratt Institute Mary C. Waters, Harvard University (TBC) Marina Manke, Global Migration Data Centre, IOM (TBC) Natalia Banulescu-Bogdan, Migration Policy Institute Neil Ruiz, Pew Research Centre
4.15-4.30 PM EDT	Reflections and concluding remarks

ABSTRACTS & BIOGRAPHIES

How should we interpret survey data? | Andrew Parkin, Environics Institute

TBC

How do people form their judgements on migration related issues | Jonas Kunst, University of Oslo

This presentation focuses on the profound influence that the framing of information exerts on shaping judgements concerning migrants and migration. I will introduce research that illustrates how depicting immigration as a threat to a society's cultural identity, resources, safety, and well-being leads to unfavorable evaluations including blatant hostility. Such heightened perceptions of threat can trigger a deeply ingrained human suspicion towards immigrants, a tendency likely partly rooted in evolutionary mechanisms. This suspicion often targets individuals who maintain connections to both their heritage culture and the society they have joined. Additionally, I will highlight experimental studies that demonstrate the influential role of prevalent conspiracy theories, such as "The Great Replacement," in fostering these threat perceptions. Remarkably, some studies reveal that such conspiracy theories are disproportionately endorsed by individuals who perceive themselves as belonging to a minority group, despite being part of the demographic majority. Transitioning to strategies for positively framing information about migrants and migration, I will introduce research that underscores the advantages of information emphasizing overarching categories shared by host nationals and newcomers. For example, accentuating common migration histories in settler societies or shared religious backgrounds (such as an Abrahamic lineage) can foster more favorable attitudes towards migration and migrants.

Jonas R. Kunst is a professor in cultural and community psychology at the University of Oslo. He was awarded his PhD in social psychology in 2016. Throughout the duration of his doctoral studies, he received a Fulbright scholarship to Harvard University, collaborating closely with Professor Jim Sidanius. Subsequent to completing his PhD, Kunst undertook a post-doctoral fellowship at Yale University under the guidance of Professor John F. Dovidio. His research encompasses a broad array of subjects including acculturation, intercultural and intergroup dynamics, the spread of misinformation and conspiracy theories, as well as the study of extremism.

Fair Protection: Public Perceptions of Fairness in Asylum Decision-making | Lenka Drazanova, European University Institute

Asylum decision-making is a highly salient policy area in many European (and other) countries. It has, however, been largely neglected in existing research on public fairness perceptions in policy-making. This study aims to "unpack" and identify key features of public conceptions of fairness in asylum decision-making in Europe. We ask two questions: First, to what extent are Europeans' conceptions of fairness in this policy area based on notions of *procedural* fairness vis-à-vis asylum seekers and/or *distributive* fairness vis-à-vis the host country's population? Second, does the perceived importance of procedural versus distributive notions of fairness in asylum processes depend on the characteristics (specifically the country of origin) of asylum seekers? To address these questions, we conduct original conjoint survey experiments with nationally representative samples of respondents across two European countries – Germany and Italy. We find that the public in these countries considers both procedural and distributive fairness when assessing the fairness of asylum decision-making processes. In contrast to research on public attitudes and policy preferences vis-à-vis asylum seekers and other migrants, we find that public fairness considerations are not influenced by the identity (national origin) of asylum seekers. The study contributes to research on public perceptions of fairness in policymaking, and to research and policy debates on the governance of asylum and refugee protection in Europe.

Lenka Drazanova is a Research Fellow at the Migration Policy Centre at the European University Institute. She received her PhD in political science from the Berlin Graduate School of Social Sciences at Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin in 2016. Lenka's primary research agenda focuses on comparative political behaviour and political/social attitudes and their interdependence with policy, institutions, political actors and cultures. She published in international peer-reviewed journals such as *Political Studies*, *Acta Politica* and *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*. Her book "Education and Tolerance" analyzes quantitatively cross-national variations in the effect of education on social and political tolerance based on a large-scale survey.

Recognising the needs of others? How do people understand migrants' decisions | Colin Patrick Scott, Impact Canada

TBC

Visual Narratives of Human Smuggling: Analyzing Social Media Imagery in Migration Services | Alice Massari, University of Copenhagen and CERC Migration, TMU; Luigi Achilli, European University INstitute

Abstract

This study delves into the visual strategies employed by irregular migration service providers, commonly known as human smugglers, to advertise their services on social media platforms, with a particular focus on TikTok. By examining the advertisement hooks used in these visual narratives, such as promises of protection, solidarity, safety, freedom, and affordability, we aim to understand how these narratives influence perceptions of migration and governance thereof. Employing visual social semiotic analysis, this research scrutinizes videos shared over the past year, offering insights into the semiotic resources that smugglers leverage to appeal to potential clients. This methodological approach allows for a nuanced understanding of the interplay between visual elements and viewer interpretation, highlighting how smugglers construct a persuasive visual rhetoric of migration. The relevance of this inquiry is underscored by the evolving role of social media in shaping public discourse on migration. Instances such as the migration crisis on the Belarus-Poland border, exacerbated by misleading information on platforms like Facebook, illustrate the potent effect of social media in both creating and aggravating migration challenges. This research contributes to the broader conversation on migration by exploring the visual dimension of smuggler narratives, a facet that has remained largely underexplored in discussions about migration governance and public perception. Furthermore, this study responds to the need for a deeper understanding of how visual representations of migration can influence societal views and policy decisions. By dissecting the visual tactics of human smugglers, this research offers critical insights into the broader spectacle of migration, where certain actors remain unseen yet profoundly impact the migration discourse.

Alice Massari is a Marie Curie Global Fellow at the CERC in Migration and Integration at the Toronto Metropolitan University and the University of Copenhagen. Her current work focuses on Visual Governance in Migration. She obtained a Ph.D. in Political Science, European Politics and International Relations, and a MA in International Relations. Since 2007, Dr. Massari has worked on migration and humanitarian aid in various capacities, including as a researcher, aid worker, and consultant. Her experience includes leading an INGO during the Syrian emergency, working as an EU expert on migration, and serving as a Humanitarian Analyst and Humanitarian Adviser for the UK Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office. Dr. Massari's research and writing have focused on migration, visuality, humanitarianism, and governance. She is the author of the book *Visual Securitization – Humanitarian Representations and Migration Governance*.

Luigi Achilli is a senior researcher at both the European University Institute in Florence, Italy, and the Christian Michelsen Institute in Bergen, Norway. He earned his M.A. and Ph.D. in social anthropology from the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) in London, United Kingdom. Achilli has held teaching positions at the University of Cambridge, SOAS, and several institutions in the Middle East. His research and publications center on irregular migration, transnational crime, refugee studies, political engagement, nationalism, and the Palestinian issue. Adopting an ethnographic approach, Achilli's work is deeply rooted in extensive field research conducted in the Middle East, Southern Europe, and Mexico, primarily among refugees and other displaced communities. He has published numerous articles and influential works on these subjects. His most recent research endeavor culminated in the co-authored publication of "Global Human Smuggling" (John Hopkins University Press, New York, 2023) alongside D. Kyle.

Speakers of Panel on

How can we effectively communicate migration data knowledge to a broader audience of stakeholders

Shana Almeida, Toronto Metropolitan University

Steven Vertovec and Dan Hiebert introducing the Superdiversity data visualisation project

Roundtable participants:

John Laueremann, Pratt Institute

John Laueremann is an associate professor at Pratt Institute in New York City, where he teaches GIS and data visualization in the [School of Information](#). He also directs the [Spatial Analysis & Visualization Initiative](#), a research center focused on spatial data and visual storytelling. He is an urban geographer whose research uses GIS to analyze how gentrification impacts the built environment of US cities. That work has been published in two books and 25+ articles, in journals such as *Annals of the American Association of Geographers* and *Journal of the American Planning Association*. His current work, funded by the National Science Foundation, is building a US national gentrification database and dashboard, to enable researchers, activists, and policy stakeholders to design custom gentrification indices and map/visualize the results

Mary C. Waters, Harvard University (TBC)

Marina Manke, Global Migration Data Centre, IOM (TBC)

Natalia Banulescu-Bogdan, Migration Policy Institute

Natalia Banulescu-Bogdan is Deputy Director of MPI's International Program, where she oversees the Institute's comparative work on social cohesion, migration and development, global governance, and climate. She has authored numerous publications on social integration and identity, public opinion and narratives, and international cooperation on migration, with a particular focus on Europe and Latin America. She is also a Nonresident Fellow with MPI Europe. Ms. Banulescu-Bogdan has represented MPI at international events and processes such as the Global Forum on Migration and Development, the International Migration Review Forum, the Group of Friends of the Quito Process, working groups of the Los Angeles Declaration on Migration and Protection, and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development's working group on migration communication (NETCOM). She regularly advises governments and international organizations on the design and implementation of migration policies and programs, including on topics such as combating xenophobia, targeting development investments, and designing effective communications strategies around migration.

Neil Ruiz, Pew Research Centre

Neil G. Ruiz is Pew Research Center's Head of New Research Initiatives. In this role, he is responsible for inspiring and advancing new opportunities for organizational growth and evolution. Neil is the principal investigator of the Center's comprehensive study of Asian Americans, which received the 2023 Inclusive Voices Award from the American Association for Public Opinion Research (AAPOR). He has a background in applying demographic, qualitative, and survey research methods in the [U.S.](#) and around [the world](#). Prior to joining the Center, Neil worked as a migration and economic development expert at the Brookings Institution, the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank. He was also the executive director of the Center for Law, Economics and Finance at George Washington University. He is a political economist with a Ph.D. from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, a master's degree from Oxford University, and a bachelor's degree from the University of California, Berkeley.