

In/Visibility of Flight: Images and Narratives of Forced Migration

Monika Mokre / Maria Six-Hohenbalken (Eds.)

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Since 2015, the issue of migration has been omnipresent, widely mediatized and politicized (Castelli Gattinara/Morales 2017). Consequently, migrants have become hyper-visible scapegoats during crises, particularly in electoral times (Hutter/Kriesi 2022). Despite the prominence of migration as a political phenomenon, migrants themselves remain anonymous and unable to contribute to their narrative. The book *In/Visibility of Flight: Images and Narratives of Forced Migration*, edited by Monika Mokre and Maria Six-Hohenbalken, questions this duality through 12 contributions. The book's originality lies in its multidisciplinary nature and the diversity of perspectives, as the authors come from various backgrounds, including non-academic ones.

Some themes overlap across chapters. In line with Friese's (2019) work on refugees, the question of framing and narratives is addressed in the introduction by Mokre and Six-Hohenbalken (pp. 9-18), and in Mokre's chapter (pp. 199-218). Both contributions highlight the media's role in framing migration and as central actors in strategies of in/visibility. Based on a news story about the rape and murder of a young girl in 2021, Mokre's contribution highlights the invisibility of irregularized migrants, seen as people with no needs, ambitions, or abilities, but hyper-visible as a collective, faceless threat to society. Even when visible, they cannot contribute to their narrative, having to fit into externally ascribed roles. In the case of criminal migrants, despite being hyper-visible, they remain entirely voiceless.

The chapters by Tayebi (pp. 69-86) and by Rössl, Zardo, and Khoury (pp. 87-114) focus on research methods. Tayebi addresses ethical challenges in researching access

to reproductive health care for female Afghan refugees. She interrogates her positionality as a researcher sharing common features with the participants. Tayebi shares how the pandemic influenced research conditions, which led to a more intimate setting, allowing the participants to share personal aspects of their lives. What emerges from this contribution is the bond of friendship that developed between the participants and the researcher herself, which certainly contributed to the quality of the research. Rössl, Zardo, and Khoury interrogate the participatory and co-creation approach and its impact on the in/visibility of migrants, by focusing on the creation of an app for migrants in four cities. In this case, co-creation by migrants enabled active collaboration on solutions, the creation of a network, and access to new resources.

Several chapters of the book focus on in/visibility in times of crisis. Müller discusses Roma people in the Ukraine war (pp. 159-189), while Kohlenberger (pp. 219-236) and Six-Hohenbalken and Kohlbacher (pp. 237-262) investigate the situation of migrants during the pandemic from different perspectives. Pre-existing invisibility impacts the situation of the target group during the crisis. In the case of Roma people, anti-Gypsyism in Ukraine and in receiving countries impacted their condition. On the other hand, the positive contributions of Roma people to the war effort were invisible. During the Covid-19 pandemic, migrants faced significantly higher risks due to their general conditions, including a higher proportion of essential workers, and communication barriers. Despite these risks, their contributions were barely acknowledged.

These chapters stress the need to include marginalized groups and civil society organizations in policy-making to cope with crises and ensure that appropriate support is provided.

Lastly, one of the refreshing aspects of this academic volume is the inclusion of refugees' voices. The chapters by Mardnli (pp. 19-27) and Halujah (pp. 191-198) recount their experiences as Syrian refugees fleeing to Austria through an artistic perspective. Mardnli's chapter tells his traumatic journey through the paintings of the author. Halujah, on the other hand, recounts in poetic words her difficult arrival in a refugee camp in Austria, and her revival when she integrated a theatre troupe by chance. Visibility is also the power to reclaim one's narrative and be able to tell one's own story. Art is one of the many ways to do so.

The chapters of this volume highlight the actorness of the migrants and emphasize the importance of including them in public policies and ensuring that the narrative is reclaimed by those to whom it rightfully belongs. This shift of perspective would enable the promotion of positive examples rather than perpetuating negative stereotypes that harm entire communities. This book contributes to the emerging research agenda on the decentering of migration studies, to have a closer look at migrants' agency, beyond the supposed effectiveness of policies and questions of governance.

References

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