Narratives of Migration: Between Politics and Policies

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Understanding digital racism and xenophobia: Toward a theoretical model

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In recent decades, anti-immigrant, racist and nationalist attitudes have been increasingly mainstreamed, transforming public debates on immigration and immigrants in Europe and beyond. These attitudes and sentiments have not only been widely distributed but also amplified through digital communication, including commercial social-media platforms. To understand the relation between racism/xenophobia and digital communication, this talk will propose a multi-theoretical approach to the notion of digital racism and move beyond media-centric explanations. By bridging sociological, political, and communicative/technical perspectives, panelists will unfold the complexity of digital racism. A theoretical model is proposed using examples from empirical research on digital racism from various national and political contexts to assess (hyper)masculinity, affect, femonationalism, far-right/right-wing populist strategies, conspiracy thinking and the socio-technological affordances of social media. The presentation will show how these perspectives interlock at the macro, meso and micro levels of digital racism. In conclusion, the wider social and political implications of digital racism, including the possible impact on policy, will be discussed.

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