



More **correct** Information. Less Discrimination

## The sociology of the gaze and the power of framing

**The relationship between the video/photographer, the subject, and the viewer**

## The Sociology of the Gaze & Dehumanisation.

### Defining key concepts of biased representation

#### Stigmatisation

The repetitive association of a group with negative traits (danger, passivity). It reduces complex humans to simple, harmful labels.

#### Racialisation

Assigning negative meaning to physical or cultural traits to define groups as "others." It often happens visually, without explicit words.

#### Dehumanisation

The process of stripping individuals of their humanity, often achieved by portraying them as anonymous, faceless masses.

## Analyzing the gaze: deciding the camera angles

The angle of a camera is a deliberate choice. It determines whether the viewer sees a person or an object.

### ➤ The surveillance gaze - high-angle or distanced gaze:

- **What to look for:** Photos taken through car glass or from balconies, upper-floor windows.
- **Sociological effect:** Looking *down* on people in a street or park makes them look like **subjects to be monitored or a problem to be managed**. It frames their presence as a loitering threat. It positions the viewer as an overseer rather than a witness.

### ➤ The eye-level gaze:

- **What to look for:** Photos taken at the same height as the subject's eyes, often in medium or close-up shots. It suggests that they are aware to be filmed or gave consent.
- **Sociological effect:** This restores agency. You are looking *at* a person, not *down* on a group. It acknowledges them as a neighbour or a fellow citizen.



A cropped photo ignoring the huge space of the Triton Place in Valletta. Photo: [Emna Mizouni](#) - Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 4.0 International

## Analyzing the gaze: Identifying the “abuser” tropes

### Common visual patterns used to stigmatise or racialise migration narratives:

- **The resource scarcity trope:** Photos showing only migrant people in line in front of service providers—such as post offices, banks, or clinics—can suggest that they are taking up space or using resources that belong to locals.
- **The lifestyle crop:** Zooming in on a smartphone, a cigarette, or brand-name clothing. This is used to frame the individual as **a fake refugee or a scammer**, ignoring the reality that these are basic tools for modern survival and communication.
- **The cultural clash juxtaposition:** Purposely framing a migrant subject in front of a local religious or national monument to suggest they are out of place or a **threat to tradition**.



African immigrants protesting in Valletta, Malta. Photo Regine Nguini

## Exercise : The gaze shift

- **The Scenario:** Imagine a short video from a mobile phone showing a group of Migrant people having an argument in a local town square or outside a housing complex.
- **The analysis task:**
  - **Identify the gaze:** Is the video shot from a distance/hidden (surveillance gaze) or up close? How does the "hidden" camera change the feeling of safety?
  - **The generalization trap:** Why is a situation that could affect anyone being used to implicit the “normal” behaviour of thousands of others in the country?
  - **The missing "before and after":** Does the video show what started the argument? Disinformation often starts the "record" button only when the Migrant individual look aggressive, cutting out any provocation.



Link to the Video from Lovin Malta, a leading news outlet in Malta:  
<https://www.facebook.com/share/v/1AfDJiivw/>

### Critical reflection:

Does the video have a clear journalistic value? Am I looking at this person through a *spy* lens or a neighbour lens? Is this one photo being used to define a whole population?