

Consulates under diplomatic pressure? Bureaucratic resistance and relational discretion in visa issuance in China

Juliette Dupont

To cite this article: Juliette Dupont (2025) Consulates under diplomatic pressure? Bureaucratic resistance and relational discretion in visa issuance in China, Political Research Exchange, 7:1, 2546328, DOI: [10.1080/2474736X.2025.2546328](https://doi.org/10.1080/2474736X.2025.2546328)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/2474736X.2025.2546328>



© 2025 The Author(s). Published by Informa UK Limited, trading as Taylor & Francis Group



Published online: 22 Aug 2025.



Submit your article to this journal [↗](#)



Article views: 381



View related articles [↗](#)



View Crossmark data [↗](#)

RESEARCH ARTICLE



This article belongs to Special Collection: Searching the Power of Discretion.
The Implementation of Migration Policies Through Relational
Approaches

Consulates under diplomatic pressure? Bureaucratic resistance and relational discretion in visa issuance in China

Juliette Dupont 

Institute for European Studies, UCLouvain, Brussels, Belgium

ABSTRACT

This study examines the intricate dynamics of visa policy implementation, focusing on the conflicting imperatives of promoting tourism and ensuring border security. Through ethnographic immersion within a visa service abroad and interviews with consular and diplomatic staff, the research reveals the struggles between competing street-level actors. The article argues that visa officers exercising discretion are embedded within a web of relationships that include both rival and allied actors. These officers leverage their bureaucratic autonomy to resist an attractiveness policy they perceive as inconsistent with the primary function of the visa, while relying on the immigration liaison officer to reinforce a policing approach of border control. By highlighting the relational and interdependent nature of visa policy, the findings contribute to a broader understanding of the openness *versus* closure dilemma faced by immigration frontline workers.

ARTICLE HISTORY

Received 26 September 2024
Accepted 6 August 2025

KEYWORDS

Visa policy; relational approach; discretion; border control; institutional fragmentation

Introduction

Thomas¹, a visa officer working at the French consulate in Beijing, China, describes the conflicting pressures that burden his work: 'The Embassy yells at us if we don't issue visas quickly enough, and Home Office yells at us if there are too many asylum seekers.' His statement highlights the dual imperatives faced by visa administrations abroad: enhancing national attractiveness by issuing visas swiftly to potential tourists or economic partners while simultaneously curbing unwanted forms of mobility.

Short-term visa requirements are imposed on specific nationalities deemed to pose a risk of irregular immigration, thereby serving as a mechanism of remote control that sorts desirable from undesirable foreigners (Bigo and Guild 2005; Zaiotti and Martin 2016; Zolberg 2003). European Union (EU) Member States, including France, apply a common list of short-term visa requirements, which is currently imposed on nationals from 103

CONTACT Juliette Dupont  juliette.1.dupont@uclouvain.be  Institute for European Studies, UC Louvain Saint-Louis Bruxelles, Belgium

© 2025 The Author(s). Published by Informa UK Limited, trading as Taylor & Francis Group
This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>), which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited. The terms on which this article has been published allow the posting of the Accepted Manuscript in a repository by the author(s) or with their consent.

third countries.² Their consular administrations abroad issue a uniform visa, also known as the Schengen visa, to 'block-listed' third country nationals seeking to travel to Europe for less than three months for tourism, family visits or business purposes. The visa is an ambivalent instrument of immigration and border policy. Unlike other control devices, it balances dual objectives. According to the European Commission, its role is both 'to facilitate tourism and business, while preventing security risks and the risk of irregular migration' (European Commission 2018). This duality is reflected in the liberal paradox of border control: the short-term visa must both promote the movement of economically beneficial visitors to enhance state competitiveness and exclude individuals perceived as political, security or migration risks (Adamson, Chung, and Hollifield 2024; Hollifield 2004).

This article aims to analyse the daily materialization of the interplay between economic and security imperatives inherent in visa policy. How is the implementation of visa policy shaped by conflicting conceptions of border control upheld by competing actors? Using a relational approach to implementation, this article sees visa bureaucracy as a social space where practices and representations are determined by the positions of State agents, and the structure of relations that bind them (Bourdieu 1993; Dubois 2014). More specifically, this article seeks to explore how street-level bureaucrats implement visa policy while being embedded within a web of power relations with actors advocating for different views of migration management. It advocates for a relational approach to visa policy, which I define as a conceptual framework that analyses implementation practices as influenced, sometimes constrained, by other actors, especially in a fragmented institutional context where different professionals are in competition. This article focuses on the issuance of Schengen visas by a French consulate in China. The Chinese case reveals an alternative articulation between the two functions of the visa, as the implementation paradoxically leans towards attracting tourists framed as high spenders. The tension between security and attractiveness is thus symbolized by the conflicting relations between the diplomatic body, which advocates for a visa policy in favour of tourism, and the visa officers, who are socialized to the bureaucratic habitus of fighting irregular migration (Alpes and Spire 2014).

Drawing from an ethnographic study conducted before the COVID-19 pandemic within the French consular administration in China, the article documents the discretionary practices of visa officers who resist the economic directives issued by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and relayed by the diplomatic body at the street level. These interactions and interdependencies also involve other administrative actors, including immigration liaison officers, co-opted by the consulate staff to reinforce a logic of suspicion against visa applicants perceived as 'undeserving' of the mobility privileges granted to them. Furthermore, the article analyses the dynamics of implementation within the broader context of institutional fragmentation. In France, national authority over visa policy is divided between the Ministry of the Interior and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Drawing on interviews with senior officials from both departments, the article decomposes the State to approach implementation as the outcome of tensions between competing actors, beginning already at the domestic, policymaking stage.

To analyse how the web of interdependent relationships between competing and cooperating actors impact visa policy outcomes, the article proceeds as follows. The first section reviews the literature on visa policies and highlights the need for a relational approach to understand how the interactions between diplomatic and consular staff shape visa issuance practices. The second section explains the case selection and the

ethnographic methods employed for this research. The third section elaborates on relational discretion by discussing empirical findings on bureaucratic resistance to diplomatic pressure on the one hand, and strategic use of the privileged relation with immigration liaison officer by visa officers on the other.

The bureaucrats and the diplomats: a relational approach to visa policy

The multiple actors of visa policy

Immigration and visa policies are shaped by multiple actors, each embedded in potentially divergent organizational cultures (Wakisaka 2022). Bureaucratic politics approaches have emphasized the extent to which migration policy is marked by organizational fragmentation, particularly in the absence of a single, unified ministry dedicated to migration management. Depending on the national context, migration policy usually involves multiple government departments, such as Justice, Labour, but also Interior and Foreign Affairs, as it is the case with visa policy. While this article focuses mainly on implementation, in line with the special issue's thematic, it argues for including decision-making process in the relational analysis of visa policy. The tensions observed at the street-level between bureaucrats and diplomats reflect similar rivalries between administrative elites, who also compete over how visa policy is shaped and defined.

The formulation of migration policies is marked by turf wars – disputes over spheres of influence, in which bureaucratic bodies seek to steer policy according to their own priorities and ideas (Natter 2018; Paquet 2020). Civil servants from various departments tend to see things differently from colleagues in other departments, since their organizations have different objectives, and they have been socialized into different ways of thinking and acting (Consterdine 2017). The overlapping of different bureaucratic cultures may lead to the coexistence of divergent paradigms within a single migration regime (Finotelli and Ponzo 2023). For instance, actors within the Ministry of the Interior tend to prioritize security-oriented paradigms, whereas authorities within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs typically focus on diplomatic concerns (Fernández-Rodríguez and Céleri 2024). According to these same authors, changing constellations of actors and shifting responsibilities regarding policy-making help explain why one approach may come to dominate over another across time. By extending these assumptions to visa policy, this article seeks to understand to which extent the sometimes-divisive implementation is the result of domestic fragmentation.

Research on implementation has mostly focused on visa officials and the development of their organizational culture. Drawing from the street-level bureaucracy framework (Lipsky 1980) and a Bourdieusian approach of implementation (Dubois 2014), researchers have documented how visa officers process applications with a 'suspicion by default' (Zampagni 2016) and use their discretionary powers to enforce stricter border controls. Their main task is to assess the 'migration risk' of applicants, meaning detecting foreigners suspected of planning to settle in the destination country after entering with a tourist visa. Therefore, visa officers are socialized to the bureaucratic imperative to fight fraud (Alpes and Spire 2014). In addition, visa officers build practical knowledge to assess applications. This discretionary process involves profiling practices based on age, gender, occupation and religious characteristics, which are used to establish local and moral categories of 'deserving' and 'undeserving' applicants (Infantino 2019b; Infantino and Rea 2012; Zampagni 2016).

In addition to consulate staff, visa policy implementation involves a wide range of actors who interact daily. Consulates, while following the directives of their central administrations, collaborate with various local intermediaries, including private service providers (Infantino 2017; Sánchez-Barrueco 2018). Furthermore, in the framework of Schengen cooperation, consulates of Member States collaborate closely, bound by the Community Code on Visas (Visa Code), to standardize their procedures (Infantino 2019a). Visa officers also engage with other professionals within the diplomatic mission where the consulate operates. For example, they work with immigration liaison officers stationed in the Embassy. Liaison officers are mid-level civil servants trained and sent by police administrations to foreign jurisdictions to support border management and collect information in cooperation with third countries to prevent irregular migrations. They play a role of 'immigration risk' brokers by providing guidance to consulates, ultimately influencing visa policy implementation (Ostrand 2022; Ostrand and Statham 2022).

Consulates are 'hybrid' institutions that navigate a landscape of conflicting directives (Spire 2017). On the one hand, their bureaucratic mission is to assess immigration risk posed by visa applicants, serving as 'first line against the entry of undesirables' (Torpey 2018, 252). On the other hand, they are part of the Embassy, fulfilling *de facto* a diplomatic mission of national representation abroad. The diplomatic bodies within the embassies, such as the political, cultural, or scientific services, indirectly influence the daily implementation of visa policy. Ethnographic research on consulate staff has demonstrated, for example, how they implement, at the request of the diplomatic bodies, *ad hoc* facilitation practices granted to *bona fide* applicants, such as fast-track appointments or simplified applications reserved for local elites only (Dupont 2025; Infantino 2019b; Spire 2008).

However, several gaps exist in understanding the internal dynamics influencing visa issuance. Apart from Ostrand's work, few studies explore how consulate staff interacts with immigration liaison officers and relies on their risk management knowledge to effectively execute their border control responsibilities, more especially in 'low risk' context of implementation such as China. Likewise, there is limited research on the interactions between diplomatic and consular staff. Existing literature suggests a hierarchical and symbolic division between the administrative tasks of consulates, often seen as 'dirty work' when involving direct interactions with foreigners, and the more esteemed diplomatic duties of other services within the chancery (Loriol et al. 2007; Loriol, Pietet, and Delfolie 2008; Spire 2008).

A relational approach to visa implementation

This article argues that the practices of visa officers are intricately structured by power relations within the workplace, implying negotiations, interactions, and strategies between bureaucratic and diplomatic actors (Darling 2022). To explore these power dynamics and their impact on visa policy implementation practices, I adopt a relational approach to implementation. I define this approach as a conceptual framework to understand to which extent implementation practices of street-level bureaucrats are influenced, sometimes constrained, by other actors, especially in a fragmented institutional context where different professionals compete. Such framework allows for the analysis of decision-making and discretion as 'socially embedded' within groups of professionals, rather than solely the domain of visa officers. Daily interactions, such as work routines,

training or informal socialization between visa officers and other bodies contribute to shaping either a tacit collective understanding of border security (Côté-Boucher, Infantino, and Salter 2014; Ostrand and Statham 2022) or, conversely, exacerbating antagonistic visions of border management. This research draws on the relational approach as understood in the Bourdieusian sociology of public policy to conceptualize the implementation of visa policy as a bureaucratic field. This field is a social space structured by power relations between agents, each seeking to reinforce their own position (Dubois 2022). Their individual trajectories, their personal and professional socialization are factors influencing the interactions and relations within the bureaucratic field, ultimately shaping the daily implementation of visa policy (Alpes and Spire 2014; Bourdieu 1993; Dubois 2014).

A few studies have focused on the effects of competing logics on implementation, such as how judicial control (or the lack of) by courts may constrain or expand room for interpretation by case-workers dealing with detention in Switzerland (Miaz and Achermann 2022) or family reunification in Belgium (Mascia 2021). Their findings suggest that on the one hand, discretion is always relational in the sense that street-level bureaucrats do not take decisions alone but are dependent on other actors who directly or indirectly interfere with decisions. On the other hand, they also show how the profiles and habitus of bureaucrats, their legal and political abilities, as well as their collective strategies, matter in the exercise of relational discretion (Affolter 2021).

Following these insights, this article argues that implementation is shaped by the practices and logics of competing actors with whom visa officers are in multiple relationships of interdependence. While previous research has established the influence of judicial or police actors, little is known on the interference of diplomatic or economic actors on migration policy implementation. Likewise, existing scholarship has explored the effects of bureaucratic fragmentation on migration policy formulation, but not on implementation. More broadly, the effects of the dilemma between the attractiveness imperative and the control imperative on day-to-day bureaucratic practices remain understudied (Bauböck, Mourão Permoser, and Ruhs 2022). The article seeks to demonstrate how visa officers' decisions are constrained by the work and pressure of other actors included in visa policy, such as diplomatic actors based within the Embassy, relaying the Ministry of Foreign affairs (MOFA)'s objectives of using visas to promote attractiveness. In line with this special issue's conceptual ambition, this article contributes to the literature on migration policymaking on the ground by analysing how economic and diplomatic incentives affect bureaucrats' practices. The article particularly engages with the frontline agents' perception of what is legitimate or not according to their bureaucratic habitus of border control. The relational perspective of implementation allows to analyse their practices of control within a multiple system of relations in their workplace: on the one hand, they adapt to the imperative for attractiveness advocated by the diplomatic body, and on the other, they use the immigration liaison officer as a strategic resource to legitimize and to reinforce their bureaucratic autonomy based on the mission of protecting national borders.

Case selection and methods

This research is based on a multi-sited fieldwork, combining interviews with the national level – where administrative elites define the objectives of short-term visa policy – and

ethnographic investigation in a consulate abroad, where frontline officials are responsible for its implementation. More specifically, the article draws on findings from fieldwork conducted in Beijing, China. Before I elaborate on the methodology and the challenges related to field access, I first contextualize the Chinese context of implementation, which articulates both security-oriented and attractiveness objectives attached to visa policy.

Since the adoption of first joint visa requirement list in the early 1990s, Chinese citizens have been subject to visa obligation to travel to any Schengen country. Besides, international travel had long been prohibited by the Chinese communist regime, which viewed international tourism as counter-revolutionary (Arlt 2006; Biao 2007). While travel bans were gradually lifted by the Chinese authorities, travelling abroad was limited to official delegations visiting Europe for professional or diplomatic purposes. In 2004, the Chinese government and the EU signed an approved destination status (ADS) agreement, a typically Chinese bilateral agreement that allows guided tourist groups to travel to state-approved destinations (Coles and Hall 2011; Paradise 2020; Tse 2013). Under this agreement, state-owned travel agencies, known as ADS agencies, are authorized to sell and promote all-inclusive travel packages to these destinations. These agencies are required to collaborate with European consulates, pre-screening visa applications to ensure they are genuine and compliant with Schengen regulations. During trips to Europe, ADS tour operators monitor the tourist groups to prevent over-stays and ensure all travellers return to China. In exchange, visa applications for ADS tourists are simplified; for example, applicants are exempted to provide proof of sufficient income or detailed travel itinerary.

The ADS system offers two key benefits to EU countries. First, it opens access to a growing market of Chinese tourists who are increasingly able to travel and consume abroad. Second, it enables European authorities to rely on state-owned ADS agencies for initial visa application screening and early identification of migration risks. As a result, this agreement has gradually led to the framing of Chinese visa applicants as low-risk, 'high-yield' tourists (Dupont 2024). However, it is crucial to stress that, since 2004, such a 'favorable' framing has targeted only a very limited fragment of Chinese society: less than 10% of Chinese citizens hold a passport allowing them to travel abroad, and most internationalized upper classes are concentrated in major urban centres. The rest of the population remains largely excluded from travel incentives (Arlt 2020). In other words, the ADS system thrives on both the Chinese regime's capacity to control its population, and the economic and social inequalities that shape Chinese society.

The framing of upper-class urban Chinese tourists as 'desirable' became even more pronounced after the 2008–2011 global financial crisis. Interventionist measures from the Chinese government to support domestic demand, combined with double-digit growth, gave a boost to outbound tourism. In 2012, China became the world's top tourism source market, spending \$102 billion abroad (UNWTO 2013). The financial means and shopping behaviour of Chinese visitors have started catching the interest of high-profile destinations such as France, Italy, Switzerland and Germany (Taunay, L'Hostis, and Johnson 2020). With this awareness came a concern about visa requirements, seen as a barrier to tourism growth from new outbound tourism markets (Macías-Aymar, De Pedroi, and Pérez 2012). Fostered by shifting responsibilities toward

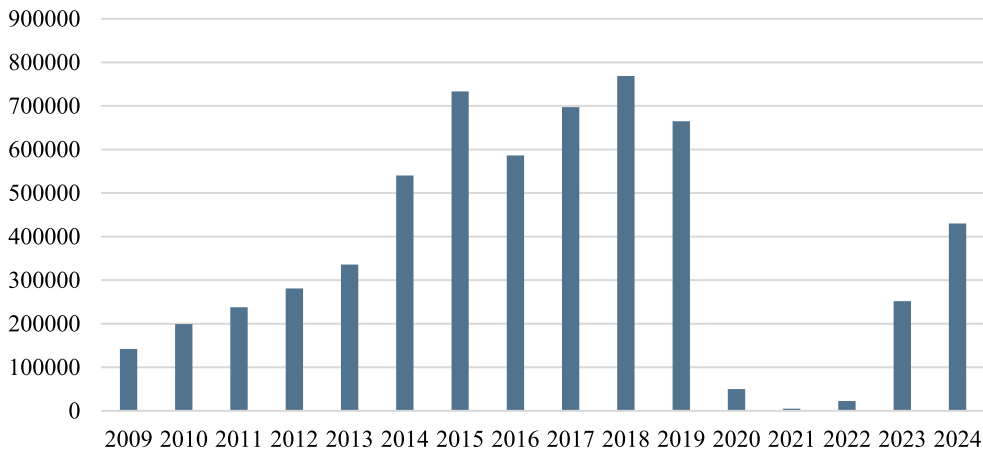


Figure 1. Number of short-term visa applications processed by French consulates in China (2009–2024). Author elaboration based on the European Commission’s statistics for short-stay visas issued by Schengen countries (https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/policies/schengen-borders-and-visa/visa-policy/short-stay-visas-issued-schengen-countries_en).

the MOFA, the French government reinforced a ‘tourist-friendly’ approach of visa issuance for Chinese applicants (as further discussed in the ‘Results’ section). As illustrated in Figure 1, this regime led to an exponential increase of visa services’ activity – interrupted only by a temporary decline in 2016 due to heightened security concern following the 2015 Paris and 2016 Nice attacks, and later by a sharp halt with the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic.

To analyse the implementation practices of visa officers in relation to the agenda-setting of a ‘tourist-friendly’ policy, this article draws on two-month field research in Beijing conducted before the COVID-19 pandemic.³ It relies on two types of primary data: ethnographic observations in the French consular visa section and semi-directed interviews with French visa officers, consular and diplomatic officials. Within the consulate – where 25 to 30 persons are assigned to the visa section – I conducted interviews with a total of seven visa officers, including the head of the visa section and the Consul General. I also interviewed members of the diplomatic staff, such as the immigration liaison officer, as well as representatives from agency for the tourism development agency (Atout France) and the agency for the international development of French companies (Business France). These actors are all based within the French Embassy and maintain daily contact with the visa section. Although such empirical material is not directly cited in the article, the findings presented here are also informed by a total of 29 semi-directed interviews conducted with actors involved in Schengen visa policy in Beijing, including other Member States’ consular staff, representatives of French, Italian and Switzerland tourism development agencies, employees of external service providers, and Chinese visa applicants.

Unlike other contexts where visa policy is a sensitive issue and researchers face significant difficulties in gaining field access (Satzewich 2015; Scheel 2018; Spire 2017), interviewing national visa officers, and obtaining permission to visit and observe the consulate has been relatively easy and straightforward. Two main reasons can explain

this fieldwork ‘anomaly’. First, the ease of access may be attributed to an implementation context where migration risk is perceived as limited. This is reflected in the refusal rate, which is ‘only’ between 3% and 5% in China, whereas in Northern and Central African countries (regions where most field research on Schengen visa implementation has been conducted), 25% to 50% visa applications are rejected. As a result, street-level bureaucrats in China tended to be less under pressure and more likely to accept outsiders such as an academic researcher, in comparison to the other contexts where access is much more difficult to negotiate.⁴ Another factor that could explain this facilitated access to consular administration is closely linked to the findings discussed in this article. As an interlocutor with visa officers, I observed on several occasions during my fieldwork that they found in my presence and the interviews both a space to relieve the pressure imposed by the diplomatic body, and a way to re-legitimize their profession and their vision of border management. This observation highlights the social role played by ethnographers in their own fieldworks, and the inevitable interference of human interactions inherent to this method on the production and collection of data (Tomkinson 2015a; 2015b; Wedeen 2010).

In addition, this research is informed by a national-level investigation involving senior administrative elites based in France. I conducted interviews with officials from the Ministry of the Interior ($n = 4$) and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs ($n = 3$). As I elaborate in the following section, this attention to relational dynamics on the domestic side of visa policy informs the understanding of the impact of travel incentives measures on the daily routines of visa officers, a professional body traditionally oriented towards combatting immigration.

Results

The fragmented governance of French visa policy

To seize the relational dynamics of implementation, it is crucial to pay attention to the fragmented institutional context of visa policymaking, where multiple actors and paradigms of border control compete. Understood as a ‘chewing-gum policy’ (Guiraudon 2010), short-term visa policymaking stretches both vertically – between Brussels and Paris – and horizontally – across the Ministry of the Interior (MOI) and Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA). While the institutional framework of common visa policy is adopted at the EU level, it is flexible enough to provide Member States with considerable discretion in its incorporation into national laws and practices (Infantino 2019b). In France, as it is the case for Germany or Czech Republic, two administrations share the domestic competence for visa policy. Since the post-war era, migration policy has rarely been the exclusive domain of a single ministry, and has long been the object of interinstitutional struggles, with each body of government promoting a specific approach of immigration (Laurens 2009). Long entrusted solely to Foreign Affairs, visa policy was transferred to the ephemeral Ministry of Immigration and National Identity in 2007, in the aftermath of Nicolas Sarkozy’s presidential election, whose campaign was heavily centred on anti-immigration themes (Carvalho 2016; Carvalho and Geddes 2012). As one MOFA senior official explained, the right-wing newly elected President, formerly Minister of the Interior (2002–2004 and 2006–2007), ‘was well known for his hostility to the diplomatic body’ and

the creation of this new ministry was perceived as intended to shift immigration and visa authority away from the MOFA (interview with Marc, civil servant, MOFA, Paris).

Following the dissolution of the Ministry of Immigration in 2010, responsibility for visa policy was divided between the Ministries of the Interior and Foreign Affairs. This dual governance arrangement is marked by significant institutional asymmetry. The visa division within the MOI employs over 110 civil servants and is tasked with coordinating consular operations, transposing the EU legislative and procedural framework for visa issuance, and training visa officers. In contrast, the visa unit within the MOFA comprises only a dozen staff members, whose responsibilities are limited to diplomatic visas and those related to international adoption. Both divisions are required to jointly validate the policy directives transmitted to consular posts abroad. While officials within the Ministry of the Interior often portray this institutional arrangement as a 'hand-in-hand' collaboration,⁵ their counterparts at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs describe more frequent tensions and conflicting policy orientations:

Visa policy pursues three objectives: security and public order, migration management, and tourism attractiveness. It is essential to maintain all three, as they justify the dual competency, which may appear administratively incoherent. For the Interior, tourism and France's international reputation are not necessarily priorities. And to be honest, border control is not the Foreign Affairs' priority either. (Interview with Isabelle, civil servant, MOFA visa unit, Paris, France)

This asymmetric institutional arrangement favours the MOI and, *a fortiori*, security-oriented approach of border control, even though the MOFA strives to maintain influence over the symbolic construction of visa policy, towards attractiveness. However, the power balance between the two administrations can vary depending on shifting national politics and the relative influence of each ministry within the government over time. The appointment of Laurent Fabius as Minister of Foreign Affairs in François Hollande's centre-left government in 2012 marked a significant shift in visa policy. With the perspective of contributing to consolidate public finances during the euro sovereign debt crisis, Minister Fabius introduced a strategy of 'economic and global diplomacy', which incorporated visa policy into its framework (Lequesne 2014). During his mandate, the Minister also succeeded in securing a new institutional arrangement by transferring responsibility for the Tourism portfolio from the Ministry of Labour to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. This reallocation reinforced the reorientation of visa policy toward objectives centred on tourism attractiveness, shifting away from sole security concerns (Dupont 2025). New resources and staff were allocated to visa services abroad, and directives aimed at promoting tourism were conveyed to consular posts overseas. Moreover, the Minister championed a proactive discourse on reducing visa processing times to enhance France's attractiveness as a touristic destination, centred around the flagship initiative of the 'Visa in 48 hours'. This scheme, guaranteeing the processing of short-stay visa applications within two working days, instead of the standard two weeks prescribed by the EU regulations,⁶ was first introduced in China. Minister Fabius announced this initiative himself during his speech celebrating the 50th anniversary of diplomatic relations between France and the People's Republic of China, in January 2014. The implementation of the 'Visa in 48 hours' scheme immediately impacted visa demand in China, resulting in a 35% increase in issuance from 2014 to 2015, as depicted in [Figure](#)

1. Following the French example, Italian consulates announced in 2016 that they would process visa applications within 36 h, engaging a race to the bottom in terms of administrative delays (Dupont 2024). To allow visa services abroad to keep up with the growing demands in such intra-Schengen destination competition, the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs increased resources allocated to consular network in China. Consequently, the number of Schengen visa applications processed by French consulates in China surged. Before the COVID-19 crisis, France processed around 800,000 visa applications annually in China (see Figure 1).

Therefore, the dynamics of short-term visa implementation in China can be analysed through the lens of inter-institutional struggle between the two administrations in charge with this policy, having unequal resources and conflicting visions of its core objectives. The following sub-sections analyse how these administrative tensions play out at the 'street level', adopting a relational approach to implementation to understand how the work of visa officers is constrained and shaped by actors who relay conflicting approaches of border management.

'The Embassy is blinded by money'. The bureaucratic resistance to diplomatic pressures on visa issuance

The consulate, which hosts the visa section, is located on the ground floor of the French Embassy in Beijing. It is situated right next to the cafeteria where the 300 employees of the diplomatic campus meet for lunch and coffee every day. The visa service is only accessible with a specific badge or with the authorization of the General Consul, 'to control who enters and who leaves [...] and to avoid any compromise'⁷ in a sector where the risk of corruption is considered high. Under the Community Code on Visas and the French legislation on visas, expatriate civil servants posted to the consulate are the only ones granted discretionary powers and the authority to make decisions on visa applications. Nevertheless, other services within the Embassy regularly interfere with visa policy implementation. For instance, the economic service negotiates partnerships with major Chinese companies and administrations to facilitate visa issuance for their employees. Their applications are flagged (*signalés*) by the economic service, who generally prepare an official cover letter explaining the motives for their visit to France. The preferential and privileged treatment of *bona fide* applicants is a common practice in consular administrations abroad. Although this practice has been internalized by visa officers accepted as part of their routines, they often complain about such applicants:

Their applications are generally poorly put together but difficult to reject diplomatically-speaking. Documents are often missing, which means we are constantly contacting Chinese companies and administrations to obtain them. It is very time-consuming. (interview with Thomas, visa officer in the French consulate of Beijing, China)

Furthermore, several actors relay, at the local level, the attractiveness policy championed by the French MOFA. Bernard, the General Consul, is a prime example of such approach. Trained as a diplomat, his background and career predispose him to support the objective of promoting tourism now tied to visa policy. Prior to his appointment in Beijing, he held a significant position within the MOFA visa unit. Bernard worked there while Laurent Fabius was at the head of the Ministry, which he refers to as 'the golden age of attractiveness'. His

daily work consists in collaborating with several stakeholders, including Chinese ADS travel agencies, the national bureau for the promotion of tourism *Atout France* and the private visa application centre to which the consulate has outsourced public reception. To maintain the attractiveness of France as a destination, the consul encourages visa officers to alter practices that might be perceived as too dissuasive. When incomplete or forged applications submitted by ADS travel agencies are rejected by visa officers, the consul urges them to provide ‘pedagogical denial’, meaning they should explain the reasons for rejection to travel agencies so they can immediately resubmit the application without turning to competing consulates and ultimately, competing destinations. In line with the climate of competition to attract Chinese tourists, the consul, the economic and the cultural services pressurize the visa service to maintain quick processing times. The swiftness of the procedure has been the main comparative advantage of the French visa policy implementation since the ‘Visa in 48 hours’ operation launched in 2014.

The diplomatic imperatives to limit decisions of rejections while keeping tight deadlines for processing applications create cognitive dissonance among visa officers. Their strategic and discursive resistance to the attractiveness policy depends on the positions of visa officers, and how they conceive their own professional mission. Thomas, for instance, fits the ‘pragmatic’ type of border bureaucrats identified by Spire (2007). Trained as a software engineer and having worked in the private sector, Thomas entered the consular administration to follow his spouse, who works within the French Embassy (in a service unrelated to visas). Relatively new in the profession, Thomas does not conceive the function of visa officials as a ‘crusade against immigration’, nor as an advocacy for fundamental human rights. His stance is that he deplores the lack of resources and the lack of consistency to complete his tasks. He complains about the working conditions imposed by the economic and diplomatic objective of attracting Chinese tourists. Along with other officers of the service, they describe ‘infernal rates’ and voice concerns about the ‘managerial pressure’⁸ of having to process 150 visa applications each day, echoing the impressions of downgraded professional status and of ‘doing the dirty work’ as highlighted by previous ethnographic research on visa sections (Infantino 2019b; Spire 2008). To Thomas, the attractiveness policy has led to poor working conditions:

The 48-hour standard in which we’re supposed to process applications has never really been questioned by anyone since Fabius. It’s only a political discourse, far removed from the alienating and exhausting red tape work we do on daily basis. (interview with Thomas, visa officer in the French consulate of Beijing, China)

Furthermore, visa officers criticize the consul and diplomatic services’ requests to implement favourable treatment for ADS visa applications, which contradicts the mission to detect ‘fake tourists’. Catherine, the newly appointed head of the visa section, is particularly vocal in opposing these practices. Having joined the consular administration twenty years ago, driven by ‘an ideal of public service and a passion for travel’, she is strongly committed to combatting fraud and irregular immigration. Her previous experience in ‘high-risk’ visa sections such as Algeria and India has shaped her firm stance against immigration. Opposing the Embassy’s objective of attracting tourists through visa policy, Catherine stands as a ‘guardian of the temple’ according to Spire’s typology of border bureaucrats (Spire 2007). Having developed a sense of loyalty

towards the consular institution throughout her civil career, she sees her profession as a moral mission to protect the economic and social interests of the State against potential abuses by visa applicants. To her, the diplomatic pressure of deadlines and the high volume of applications often prevent thorough case-by-case reviews. As a result, Catherine believes that 'leniency' towards ADS travel agencies and the lack of time to carry out in-depth checks of visa applications are damaging the reputation of the visa section, increasing the risk that 'smuggling networks learn about and take advantage of it to submit fake applications' (interview with Catherine, head of the visa section, French consulate of Beijing, China).

To counteract diplomatic pressure and restore a focus on control, visa officers reintegrate risk-management practices into their daily routines. They rely on their local practical knowledge, based on investigation, while delegitimizing the diplomatic approach to visa policy. The local practical knowledge consists in 'everyday knowledge' based on experience and understanding of documents, customs and the socio-economic characteristics of the implementation context (Infantino 2019b, 166–69). This bottom-up expertise allows them to exercise their discretion in categorizing, detecting and neutralizing 'bogus' tourists. At the Beijing consulate, the primary concern is not irregular immigration *per se*, but rather the risk of visa misuse – i.e. the use of short-stay visas to pursue illegal activities in France. Visa officers draw on their knowledge of China's geographic and sociological context to assess these risks. A large map of China is pinned behind Thomas's desk. During one of my visits to the consulate, Thomas points to the map and explains the visa misuse risks specific to each Chinese province:

His index finger points the south of Shanghai. 'Fujian is where the Chinese diaspora living in the 13th district [a Parisian district with a significant Asian community] comes from. So, there is a historical migration pressure and some smuggling networks that are still active.' His finger shifts to the northeastern part of China, Dongbei: 'Around Shenyang, that's Belleville [a district in the north of Paris, where Chinese migrants have settled from the 1990s]. It's a very, very poor area of China. 50-year-old divorced women are fleeing, to work as prostitutes in Paris and send money back home to their families'. (fieldwork notes)

The officer's local geographical knowledge is based on the history of Chinese immigration to France. Since the early twentieth century, Chinese immigrants have mainly come from the Zhejiang and Fujian regions (Ma Mung 2009). More recent flows have come from Dongbei province, as a result from massive de-industrialization in this area (Chin 2003; Chuang 2013). His comments reflect a cognitive shortcut between the geographical origin of migration flows and smuggling networks. This contextual knowledge leads him to be more suspicious of applicants from these regions. Later on, Thomas highlights the incorporation of more recent practical knowledge and a new risk of visa misuse:

He now points to the capital of China: 'around Beijing, Jinan and Shandong are very poor industrial areas. Workers earn 200 euros a month. So, they try to come to France, work for a few weeks in construction sites and make the triple of money. They use touristic or business visas, leave the country before the expiration date, but work in the shadow-economy. Here, the risk is obviously social dumping'. (fieldwork notes)

In other words, while the attractiveness policy focuses on the figure of the consumer rather than that of the 'fake tourist', the latter is reinvested by bureaucrats. With experience, they develop empirical and bottom-up knowledge that allows them to establish causal

beliefs between the risk and the type of organized networks, and the geographical origin of the applicants: irregular immigration (Fujian), trafficking and sex work (Dongbei) and undeclared work (around Beijing). Adopting a relational perspective on implementation proves useful to highlight the competition between the Embassy staff, who seek to maintain tourist numbers, and the visa officers, who are focused on safeguarding the initial mission of border control attached to visa policy. In this struggle, visa officers mobilize their local practical knowledge as a resource to perform their bureaucratic autonomy in opposition to the economic services alleged 'blindness' and 'sociological ignorance' of the social and geographical inequalities of China.

'Without relation, no information': the informal collaboration with the immigration liaison officer as a policing resource

While a relational approach enables to understand the effects of competing actors and logics on day-to-day implementation of visa policy, it also highlights the broader networks of relationships in which frontline agents are involved, including with 'resource' actors. Within the French Embassy of Beijing, visa officers have developed a contingent collaboration with the immigration liaison officer (ILO). Indeed, visa officers remobilize risk-management practices, encouraged by their informal collaboration with this agent. Immigration liaison officers are defined as 'representatives of a Member State posted abroad [...] to establish and maintain contacts with the authorities in order to contribute to the prevention of illegal immigration and to combat this phenomenon'.⁹

The immigration liaison position at the French Embassy of Beijing is held by Christophe, who has worked as a police officer for 20 years. Beijing is his first position as immigration liaison officer. Prior to this appointment, he had been posted abroad for drug trafficking and counter-terrorism missions. One of his main tasks in Beijing consists in collecting intelligence on irregular immigration flows, to detect and prevent them. To investigate trends of irregular immigration, Christophe cooperates with both Chinese authorities and the network of EU Member States' liaison officers, posted at the Embassies of Germany, the Netherlands, Finland, Hungary and Denmark.

Within the French Embassy, Christophe actively collaborates with the visa section. During my observations at the consulate, I noticed that Christophe and Catherine had a very good interpersonal relation. Both in their fifties, they refer to each other using their first names and address each other informally. Interpersonal relations are even so important that no legal framework mandates the visa section to cooperate with the liaison officer:

Interpersonal relationships matter. You know, I am a policeman within an Embassy: in other words, some sort of alien. I am lucky here, because I get along very well with the head of the visa section. Without relation, no information, because no legal provision requires our cooperation. Besides, our objectives are very different: my objective is to control, their objective is to respect deadlines and to not deny too many visas. But we have a good working relationship. I ask them to flag anything they find suspicious, any atypical case, but they have no obligation to do so. And at the end of the day, I am not the one deciding to approve or deny the visa. (interview with Christophe, immigration liaison officer in French Embassy of China, Beijing)

Christophe visits the visa section several times a week. In return for visa officers sharing information on applications, the liaison officer provides technical assistance on visa

application verification, such as checking potentially forged documents with specific tools like UV lamps. He also provides police support, offering operational help to detect broader patterns of frauds, when visa officers find several applications 'suspicious'. As a result, the immigration liaison officer stands as a circumstantial ally for visa officers who are critical of the Embassy's attractiveness policy. Indeed, his assistance contributes to reframing visa policy implementation as an activity of preventing irregular immigration and illegal transnational activities. In this respect, the liaison officer and visa bureaucrats form a 'security community of practices' engaging in informal relations and mutual learning, with a view to reinforce border control (Casella Colombeau and Clochard 2012; Côté-Boucher, Infantino, and Salter 2014; Wenger 1998).

Their investigative practices mainly target ADS applications, which are granted favourable treatment under the EU-ADS agreement and the diplomatic directives to issue mass numbers of visas to Chinese tourists. During my fieldwork, the liaison officer and the head of visa section were focusing their efforts on a specific group of ADS applicants, which illustrates well the processes of categorization and investigation that underpin the policing of visa issuance. Catherine first 'spotted' a group of applications she found 'shady'. They involved a group of tourists, applying through an ADS travel agency, consisting only of 'young women' with 'too perfect applications' travelling with one male tour-operator. These elements in the paper files led Catherine to suspect a network of 'mobile prostitution' travelling across Europe. According to Christophe, 'mobile prostitution' is a relatively recent transnational crime pattern:

In China, we have observed that usually women in good standing with decent incomes and jobs engage in mobile prostitution, mostly with Chinese clients in different European cities. They apply for tourist visas and travel to France, Germany, Italy. There, accomplices like transport company or apartment rental agencies help them secure their prostitution activity in exchange of money. (fieldwork notes)

After identifying these applications as suspicious, the head of the visa section informed the immigration liaison officer. They both decided to keep the files for further examination. They also called two members of the group for an interview. Article 21.8 of the Community Code on Visas provides the possibility to 'carry out an interview with the applicant [...] in justified cases'. The interview was conducted by Catherine, Christophe, and an interpreter. According to the immigration liaison officer, 'the applicants had prepared their cover story, but it didn't hold up after two or three questions'. With the liaison officer's advice, the consulate issued visas to the group, and transmitted their identities to the French police to continue the surveillance on the French soil and catch them in an illegal act.

A few weeks after the approval of visa applications, I returned to the Embassy to conduct an interview with Christophe. While we were sitting in the cafeteria, we encountered Catherine. She greeted us, leaned towards Christophe, and quietly said, 'You know, the girls from the other day: it was actually a story about handbags'. After a few days of surveillance in France, local police established that the group was indeed engaged in illicit activities, though not sex trafficking, but luxury goods smuggling, also called the *daigou* scheme (Glavas et al. 2023; Wang 2017). While in France, the women bought *haute couture* clothes and handbags and later received VAT refunds at Charles-de-Gaulle airport. The objective was to resell the goods at twice the purchase price through informal markets in China, where luxury goods are heavily taxed by the government.

Therefore, the reincorporation of a policing approach to visa policy implementation led to profiling and suspecting a group of tourists of mobile prostitution, which turned out to be a case of tax evasion. By developing an *ad hoc* interpersonal relationship with the immigration liaison officer and strategically using his skills in transnational crime risk management, the consulate staff reframed visa issuance as a law enforcement activity. This rendered the objective of leveraging visa policy to attract Chinese tourists, as advocated by the diplomatic body, obsolete.

Conclusion

In summary, this article highlights the daily manifestation of a migration policy dilemma: opening the borders to touristic flows while preventing irregular immigration risks. In implementation contexts like China, where visa issuance is incentivized, visa officers must navigate between the diplomatic directive to attract tourists and the bureaucratic imperative for enforcing border control. Despite managerial pressure, they exercise relational yet significant discretion, allowing them to adjust and resist diplomatic policies they perceive as inconsistent with their primary mission to fight fraud.

The relational approach to visa implementation highlights several findings. Frontline workers like visa officers are in a social and professional in-between position. They are part of the expatriate diplomatic body, yet are socialized into an institutional habitus based on a 'culture of suspicion' and committed to fight against fraud (Affolter 2021; Alpes and Spire 2014). Although visa officers are, according to the European and national legislations, the only caseworkers to produce decisions on individual applications, the exercise of their discretion is constrained by both bureaucratic and symbolic hierarchies. Institutionally, they work under the authority of the General Consul, who may pressure them to revise decisions of visa denials, to prevent ADS travel agencies from redirecting applicants to alternative touristic destinations. Symbolically, visa officers simultaneously distinguish and devalue themselves from the rest of the diplomatic staff. They perceived their work as 'alienating', lacking the prestige associated with other embassy departments. This self-disqualification echoes previous findings on the divide between consular and bureaucratic work, and more esteemed diplomatic functions within embassies (Loriol, Piotet, and Delfolie 2008). However, to compensate for their perceived inferior position, visa officers revalorize their own practical knowledge, which they contrast with what they describe as the diplomats' 'sociological ignorance'.

Moreover, the informal and *ad hoc* cooperation with the immigration liaison officer confirms the findings of Ostrand and Statham (2022), analysing them as 'influential interlocutors' in visa policy implementation. The relational framework allows to see that by producing and communicating 'risk knowledge', the immigration liaison officer helps visa officers to strengthen their position within the field of implementation, by questioning the deviations of the attractiveness policy. With the support of the liaison officer, visa officers leverage their bureaucratic autonomy to push back against the diplomatic agenda, as illustrated in the 'handbag ladies' case, in which they ultimately contributed to fighting against transnational fraud channelling through visa issuance.

Finally, this research demonstrates the value of jointly analysing the relational dynamics of policy implementation and the broader phenomenon of fragmented forms of governance. On the ground, tensions surrounding visa issuance are exacerbated by competition

between institutional habitus of actors who neither share the same missions nor the same visions. These tensions reflect the absence of unified institutional policymaking at the domestic level, as illustrated by the division of competences between the Ministry of the Interior (MOI) and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA). The French case exemplifies how struggles between paradigms can evolve depending on institutional arrangements (Bezes and Lidec 2016; Fernández-Rodríguez and Céleri 2024). Far from being universal, this shift in approach comes at the cost of a certain geographical selectivity that must not be overlooked. The attractiveness policy promoted by the MOFA reinforces a ‘scales of nationalities,’ privileging those considered desirable – whose mobility should be facilitated – while continuing to marginalize others. In this light, other contexts where similar tensions appear to unfold between tourism-driven directives and concerns over migration risk – such as India, Southeast Asia, or the Gulf States – may offer promising avenues for future research to further generalize the findings of this article.

Notes

1. All names have been changed to protect the anonymity of research participants.
2. Regulation (EU) 2018/1806 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 14 November 2018 listing the third countries whose nationals must be in possession of visas when crossing the external borders and those whose nationals are exempt from that requirement, consolidated version of 03/02/2025. The Schengen visa obligation also applies to holders of Palestinian Authority passports, as the entity is not recognized as a State by at least one Member State.
3. The exact period of the fieldwork is not specified to ensure additional confidentiality of the respondents. This study was approved by the Université de Montréal’s ethical committee (certificate no. CERAS-2018-19-115-D).
4. This research is drawn from a doctoral thesis comparing the implementation of visa policy in China and Algeria. In the Algerian case, characterized by a much sharper perception of migration risk and fraud, my ethnographic observations elicited significantly more suspicion and resistance from consular staff, who shortened the duration of my presence within the administration.
5. Interview with Richard, civil servant, Ministry of Interior visa unit, Nantes, France.
6. Regulation 810/2009 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 13 July 2009 establishing Community Code on Visas (Visa Code).
7. Interview with Bernard, General Consul of France in Beijing.
8. This quote and the previous are taken from the fieldwork notes.
9. Regulation (EU) 2019/1240 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20 June 2019 on the creation of a European network of immigration liaison officers (recast).

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

Funding

This research was partially funded by Quebec’s Fonds de Recherche Société et Culture and by Belgium’s Fonds National de la Recherche Scientifique.

ORCID

Juliette Dupont  <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-6391-9191>

References

- Adamson, F. B., E. A. Chung, and J. F. Hollifield. 2024. "Rethinking the Migration State: Historicising, Decolonising, and Disaggregating." *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 50 (3): 559–577. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183X.2023.2269769>.
- Affolter, L. 2021. *Asylum Matters: On the Front Line of Administrative Decision-Making*. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Alpes, M. J., and A. Spire. 2014. "Dealing with Law in Migration Control: The Powers of Street-Level Bureaucrats at French Consulates." *Social & Legal Studies* 23 (2): 261–274. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0964663913510927>.
- Arlt, W. G. 2006. *China's Outbound Tourism*. Contemporary Geographies of Leisure, Tourism, and Mobility. London: Routledge.
- Arlt, W. G. 2020. "New Trends in Chinese Outbound Tourism: Consequences for the International Hospitality Industry." In *The Routledge Companion to International Hospitality Management*, edited by M. A. Gardini, M. C. Ottenbacher, and M. Schuckert, 211–216. New York: Routledge.
- Bauböck, R., J. Mourão Permoser, and M. Ruhs. 2022. "The Ethics of Migration Policy Dilemmas." *Migration Studies* 10 (3): 427–441. <https://doi.org/10.1093/migration/mnac029>.
- Bezes, P., and P. L. Lidec. 2016. "Politiques de l'organisation: Les nouvelles divisions du travail étatique." *Revue française de science politique* 66 (3): 407–433. <https://doi.org/10.3917/rfsp.663.0407>.
- Biao, X. 2007. "The Making of Mobile Subjects: How Migration and Institutional Reform Intersect in Northeast China." *Development* 50 (4): 69–74. <https://doi.org/10.1057/palgrave.development.1100430>.
- Bigo, D., and E. Guild. 2005. *Controlling Frontiers: Free movement into and within Europe*. Burlington: Ashgate Publishing, Ltd.
- Bourdieu, P. 1993. "Esprits d'État. Genèse et structure du champ bureaucratique." *Actes de la Recherche en Sciences Sociales* 96 (1): 49–62. <https://doi.org/10.3406/arss.1993.3040>.
- Carvalho, J. 2016. "The Effectiveness of French Immigration Policy under President Nicolas Sarkozy." *Parliamentary Affairs* 69 (1): 53–72. <https://doi.org/10.1093/pa/gsu028>.
- Carvalho, J., and A. Geddes. 2012. "Chapitre 12. La politique d'immigration sous Sarkozy. Le retour à l'identité nationale." In *Politiques publiques* 3, edited by J. de Maillard and Y. Surel, 279–298. Académique. Paris: Presses de Sciences Po. <https://doi.org/10.3917/scpo.maill.2012.01.0279>.
- Casella Colombeau, S., and O. Clochard. 2012. "Officiers de Liaison : Ingérence et "Coopération" Au Service Du Contrôle Migratoire." In *Atlas Des Migrants En Europe, Géographie Critique Des Politiques Migratoires*, edited by O. Clochard. Paris: Armand Colin.
- Chin, J. K. 2003. "Reducing Irregular Migration from China." *International Migration* 41 (3): 49–72. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-2435.00241>.
- Chuang, Y.-H. 2013. "Les "aventuriers" et les "naufragés" : deux types d'immigrés chinois à Paris, ou une face cachée du miracle chinois." *Migrations Société* N° 149 (5): 175–190. <https://doi.org/10.3917/migra.149.0175>.
- Coles, T., and C. M. Hall. 2011. "Rights and Regulation of Travel and Tourism Mobility." *Journal of Policy Research in Tourism, Leisure and Events* 3 (3): 209–223. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19407963.2011.576865>.
- Consterdine, E. 2017. *Labour's Immigration Policy: The Making of the Migration State*. Cham: Springer.
- Côté-Boucher, K., F. Infantino, and M. B. Salter. 2014. "Border Security as Practice: An Agenda for Research." *Security Dialogue* 45 (3): 195–208. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0967010614533243>.
- Darling, J. 2022. "The Politics of Discretion: Authority and Influence in Asylum Dispersal." *Political Geography* 94: 102560. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.polgeo.2021.102560>.
- Dubois, V. 2014. "The Fields of Public Policy." In *Bourdieu's Theory of Social Fields: Concepts and Applications*, edited by M. Hilgers and E. Mangez, 199–220. London: Routledge.
- Dubois, V. 2022. *Les structures sociales de l'action publique. Analyser les politiques publiques avec la sociologie des champs*. Vulaines-sur-Seine: Éditions du Croquant.
- Dupont, J. 2024. "Schengen Visa Marketing in China: the Street-level Competition to Attract Tourists to Europe." *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 51 (7): 1770–1788. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183X.2024.2375364>.

- Dupont, J. 2025. *La politique des visas. Filtrer les mobilités internationales en Chine et en Algérie*. Vulaines-sur-Seine: Editions du Croquant.
- European Commission. 2018. "Adapting the Common Visa Policy to New Challenges, COM/2018/0251 Final: Communication From The Commission To The European Parliament And The Council".
- Fernández-Rodríguez, N., and D. Céleri. 2024. "The Power of Bureaucracies: Shaping Migration Policy Paradigms in Colombia and Ecuador." *Migration Studies* 12 (4), <https://doi.org/10.1093/migration/mnae039>.
- Finotelli, C., and I. Ponzo. 2023. "Introduction: Understanding Migration Controls in Europe." In *Migration Control Logics and Strategies in Europe: A North-South Comparison*, edited by C. Finotelli and I. Ponzo, 1–17. Cham: Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-26002-5_1.
- Glavas, C., G. Mortimer, H. Ding, L. Grimmer, O. Vorobjovas-Pinta, and M. Grimmer. 2023. "How Entrepreneurial Behaviors Manifest in Non-traditional, Heterodox Contexts: Exploration of the Daigou Phenomenon." *Journal of Business Venturing Insights* 19 (June): e00385. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbv.2023.e00385>.
- Guiraudon, V. 2010. "Les effets de l'eupéanisation des politiques d'immigration et d'asile." *Politique européenne* 31 (2): 7–32. <https://doi.org/10.3917/poeu.031.0007>.
- Hollifield, J. F. 2004. "The Emerging Migration State." *International Migration Review* 38 (3): 885–912. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1747-7379.2004.tb00223.x>.
- Infantino, F. 2017. *Outsourcing Border Control. Politics and Practice of Contracted Visa Policy in Morocco*. Cham: Springer.
- Infantino, F. 2019a. "How Does Policy Change at the Street Level? Local Knowledge, a Community of Practice and EU Visa Policy Implementation in Morocco." *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 47 (5): 1028–1048. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183X.2019.1662717>.
- Infantino, F. 2019b. *Schengen Visa Implementation and Transnational Policymaking: Bordering Europe*. Cham: Springer. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-10647-8>.
- Infantino, F., and A. Rea. 2012. "La mobilisation d'un savoir pratique local : attribution des visas Schengen au Consulat général de Belgique à Casablanca." *Sociologies pratiques* n° 24 (1): 67–78. <https://doi.org/10.3917/sopr.024.0067>.
- Laurens, S. 2009. *Une politisation feutrée: les hauts fonctionnaires et l'immigration en France, 1962–1981. Socio-histoires*. Paris: Belin.
- Lequesne, C. 2014. "La politique extérieure de François Hollande: entre interventionnisme libéral et nécessité européenne." *Sciences Po Grenoble working paper* 23.
- Lipsky, M. 1980. *Street-Level Bureaucracy: Dilemmas of the Individual in Public Services*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation.
- Loriol, M., F. Piotet, V. Boussard, and V. Porteret. 2007. "Recherche en sociologie du travail sur les métiers diplomatiques." *Rapport intermédiaire*.
- Loriol, M., F. Piotet, and D. Delfolie. 2008. "Le travail diplomatique. Un métier et un art." *Rapport de recherche pour le Ministère des Affaires étrangères et européennes*.
- Macías-Aymar, I., N. De Pedro, and F. A. Pérez. 2012. "La dimensión económica de la política de visados de España." In *La política de visados para el siglo XXI: más allá de la cola del visado*, CIDOB. Interrogar la actualidad 32. Barcelona.
- Ma Mung, E. 2009. "Diasporas et Migrations Chinoises." In *L'enjeu mondial: les migrations*, edited by C. Jaffrelot, and C. Lequesne, 235–244. Paris: Presses Sciences Po.
- Mascia, C. 2021. "How Bureaucracies Shape Access to Rights: The Implementation of Family Reunification in Belgium." *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 47 (9): 2127–2143. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183X.2020.1726734>.
- Miaz, J., and C. Achermann. 2022. "Bureaucracies under Judicial Control? Relational Discretion in the Implementation of Immigration Detention in Swiss Cantons." *Administration & Society* 54 (4): 629–659. <https://doi.org/10.1177/00953997211038000>.
- Natter, K. 2018. "Rethinking Immigration Policy Theory beyond 'Western Liberal Democracies'." *Comparative Migration Studies* 6 (1): 4. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s40878-018-0071-9>.
- Ostrand, N. 2022. "Overseas Immigration Liaison Officers: 'Knowledge Brokers' and Transnational Spaces of mid-level Negotiations Shaping Extraterritorial Migration Control Practices." *Migration Studies* 10 (1): 41–61. <https://doi.org/10.1093/migration/mnac004>.

- Ostrand, N., and P. Statham. 2022. "Liaison Officers as Influential 'Immigration Risk' Brokers in Visa Policy Implementation: Intermediaries across Institutional and National Borders." *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 48 (17): 3985–4009. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183X.2022.2103524>.
- Paquet, M. 2020. "Immigration, Bureaucracies and Policy Formulation: The Case of Quebec." *International Migration* 58 (1): 166–181. <https://doi.org/10.1111/imig.12555>.
- Paradise, J. F. 2020. "China's "Coercive Tourism": Motives, Methods and Consequences." *International Relations of the Asia-Pacific* 22 (1): 31–68. <https://doi.org/10.1093/irap/lcaa009>.
- Sánchez-Barrueco, M.-L. 2018. "Business as Usual? Mapping Outsourcing Practices in Schengen Visa Processing." *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 44 (3): 382–400. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183X.2017.1301814>.
- Satzewich, V. 2015. *Points of Entry: How Canada's Immigration Officers Decide Who Gets in*. Vancouver: UBC Press.
- Scheel, S. 2018. "Real Fake? Appropriating Mobility via Schengen Visa in the Context of Biometric Border Controls." *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 44 (16): 2747–2763. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183X.2017.1401513>.
- Spire, A. 2007. "L'asile au guichet. La dépolitisation du droit des étrangers par le travail bureaucratique." *Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales* n° 169 (4): 4–21. <https://doi.org/10.3917/arss.169.0004>.
- Spire, A. 2008. *Accueillir Ou Reconduire: Enquête Sur Les Guichets de l'immigration*. Paris: Raisons d'Agir.
- Spire, A. 2017. "Comment étudier la politique des guichets ?" *Migrations Société* N° 167 (1): 91–100. <https://doi.org/10.3917/migra.167.0091>.
- Taunay, B., M. L'Hostis, and P. C. Johnson. 2020. "Geographical Limits of Outbound Chinese Tourism in France." *Journal of Policy Research in Tourism, Leisure and Events* 12 (1): 66–81. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19407963.2018.1505108>.
- Tomkinson, S. 2015a. "Doing Fieldwork on State Organizations in Democratic Settings: Ethical Issues of Research in Refugee Decision Making." *Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung / Forum: Qualitative Social Research* 16 (1), <https://doi.org/10.17169/fqs-16.1.2201>.
- Tomkinson, S. 2015b. "Studying Refugee Decision-Making: Difficulties in Accessing the Research Site and Strategies for Resolving Them." *Refugee Review* 2 (1): 151–160.
- Torpey, J. C. 2018. *The Invention of the Passport: Surveillance, Citizenship and the State*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108664271>.
- Tse, T. S. M. 2013. "Chinese Outbound Tourism as a Form of Diplomacy." *Tourism Planning & Development* 10 (2): 149–158. <https://doi.org/10.1080/21568316.2013.783738>.
- UNWTO. 2013. "Press Release : "China – the New Number One Tourism Source Market in the World"." 4 April 2013. <https://www.unwto.org/archive/global/press-release/2013-04-04/china-new-number-one-tourism-source-market-world>.
- Wakisaka, D. 2022. "Beyond Street-level Bureaucracy: The Organisational Culture of Migration Policy-Making and Administrative Elites." *International Migration* 60 (4): 150–163. <https://doi.org/10.1111/imig.12919>.
- Wang, S. 2017. "Une mondialisation par le bas. Les daigous à Paris, des agents commerciaux intermédiaires entre producteurs français et consommateurs chinois." *Cultures & Conflits* 108 (108): 107–128. <https://doi.org/10.4000/conflits.19664>.
- Wedeen, L. 2010. "Reflections on Ethnographic Work in Political Science." *Annual Review of Political Science* 13 (1): 255–272. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.polisci.11.052706.123951>.
- Wenger, E. 1998. "Communities of Practice: Learning as a Social System." *Systems Thinker* 9 (5): 2–3.
- Zaiotti, R., and D. Martin. 2016. "Externalizing Migration Management: Europe, North America and the Spread of 'Remote Control' Practices (Routledge Research in Place, Space and Politics)." *Sociological Research Online* 21 (4): 219–220. <https://doi.org/10.1177/136078041602100403>.
- Zampagni, F. 2016. "Unpacking the Schengen Visa Regime. A Study on Bureaucrats and Discretion in an Italian Consulate." *Journal of Borderlands Studies* 31 (2): 251–266. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08865655.2016.1174605>.
- Zolberg, A. 2003. "The Archeology of "Remote Control"." In *Migration Control in the North Atlantic World. The Evolution of State Practices in Europe and the United States from the French Revolution to the Inter-war Period*, edited by A. Fahrmeir, O. Faron, and P. Weil, 195–222. New York: Berghan.