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DRORI, Gili S. (DELMESTRI, Giuseppe; OBERG, Achim)

Title

The iconography of universities as institutional narratives / Gili S. Drori ; Giuseppe Delmestri ; Achim Oberg

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Abstract

The coming of “brand society” and the onset of mediatization spur universities to strategize their visual identity and pay particular attention to their icon. Resulting from branding initiatives, university icons are visual self-representations and material-cum-symbolic forms of organizational identity. In this work we ask: What identity narratives are conveyed through the organizational iconography of universities? How do narratives combine in this iconography? Drawing upon content analysis of Internet front-page icons of 826 universities from 22 countries, we identify four identity narratives: guild-like classic narrative, professional scientific narrative, localized narrative, and organizational narrative. Second, we show that such visual self-representations of university identity appear as products of broad historical themes. Last, we consider the relations between the four visualized identity narratives, showing evidence for iconographic sedimentation between the compatible guild-like classical, professional, and local-national narratives, along with iconographic abrasion of the logic of managed organization on the former. We discuss such findings in relation to the historical studies of the institution of the university. (HRK / Abstract übernommen) Drori, Gili S., E-Mail: gili.drori@mail.huji.ac.il