

The role of digitalisation in the Finnish asylum procedure

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ABSTRACT

The asylum procedure is increasingly digitalized changing how asylum applications are examined. Due to the heterogeneity of asylum applicants and claims that people present combined with the procedure's inherent high stakes, the tension between technological streamlining and individual assessment is a key issue that needs to be addressed. Exploring the contextual epistemic culture(s) (Knorr Cetina 1999) of those closely working with and developing digital tools or systems is instrumental in understanding the implications of digitalisation. This presentation examines how the Finnish Immigration Service envisions and constructs the role of technology and digitalisation, particularly in the context of the asylum procedure. I will present findings of interviews conducted with immigration officials as well as my analysis of the agency's relevant policy documents. A preliminary thesis of the study is that efficiency and technological possibilities drive the use of digital systems, and that even though there is some acknowledgment of the risks digitalization poses for the legal protection of asylum seekers, these 'worries' are not materialized or embedded in the development of administrative (digital) practices.