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The digital migrant - ethical, legal and humanitarian perspectives

EMN Norway National Conference, 1 June 2017

Introduction: smart phones & the refugee crisis



Reuters/Alexandros Avramidis

- *Smart phones discovered in the fall of 2015 as a key tool for migrants and refugees, as "more important than food and water"*
- *New apps and platforms developed to aid refugees*
- *Volunteer initiatives focusing on providing right infrastructure to refugees: wifi and recharging stations*

What is the digital migrant?

- **Digital migrant: using digital tools to find and share relevant information, to communicate with others (other migrants, family members, etc) and thereby producing digital traces and digital profiles.**
- **Raises the question of how this information may be put to use for other purposes, and what concerns that may create: ethically, legally and in humanitarian terms.**

Smart phones as tool for European authorities – for what purposes?

- **Distinguish between two different, although related, potential uses**
 - *Smart phones to verify migrants and asylum applicants' identity (eg. when lost papers)*
 - *Smart phones to check if migrants or asylum applicants pose a security threat*
- **They raise a set of common questions, with the second prospected use raising some additional ones**

The digital device does not lie?

- **Reliance on digital device as the “real” reflection of ones identity:** the new biometric identity
- **Vulnerable persons fleeing wars:** what information is there and what is not there on social media and other platforms?
- **Ideas about the ”smart phone” and actual uses:** instances of multiple persons using the same phone

Effectiveness?

- European authorities’ “need to use all information available”
- As many tools seeking to control migrants’ mobility: they may eventually affect migrants’ (and smugglers’) behavior

Power and distrust

- **Compulsory or not:** power relationship between the one claiming an identity and the one checking it
- **Proportionality:** weigh need of intrusive measures against risk of increased distrust between refugees and authorities

Humanitarian and legal concerns: if failure to protect

- Privacy
- Data protection
- Reliance on possible wrongful or wrongfully interpreted information
- What right to appeal for individuals concerned?

Takk!

References

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