**Canada Excellence
Research Chair in
Migration & Integration**

Industrializing migration management in Canada and its implications for automated decision making

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Abstract

The qualitative study that will be presented addresses the historical evolution of Canadian visa officers' experiences processing and making decisions on economic immigration applications from the 1970s to the present. Semi-structured in-depth interviews were conducted with five retired Canadian visa officers, and were analyzed alongside academic literature addressing subjects of discretion, street-level bureaucracy, advanced technology, and migration management. From the 1970s to present, processing and issuing decisions on economic immigration applications has become increasingly structured, delegated and impersonalized. Migration is increasingly managed using an industrial approach, which in turn incentivizes the use of automation. This industrial logic, rather than the use of automation, is transforming the relationship between IRCC, its staff and clients. While the use of artificial intelligence and automation within government raises novel challenges for stakeholders to work through, the core question of how digitally-enabled public-serving institutions ought to interact with their clients deserves further consideration. Given that the Department of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada's multi-year digital transformation is underway, termed "Digital Platform Modernization," this is an opportune period for stakeholders from the state, academia, and the private and non-profit sectors to convene, collaborate and advocate on what a digitally-enabled immigration regime should look and feel like.

Biography

Nicholas Lee-Scott is a graduate of Toronto Metropolitan University's MA in Immigration and Settlement Studies and currently works as a policy analyst at Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC). He is participating in the workshop as an independent researcher and not as a representative of IRCC. His research focuses on Canadian migration management and how technological innovations and organizational priorities have impacted the relationship between decision-makers and clients. He is interested in exploring ways to renew the relationship between public institutions and clients to account for the state's increasing reliance on bulk processing, automated decision-making and digital-first service delivery.