Book Review

Lyon, David. 2009. *Identifying Citizens: ID Cards as Surveillance*.
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David Lyon's examination of national Identity cards through the theoretical lens of surveillance studies highlights the social and political dimensions of these technologies. Beginning from the assertion that identification is a starting point for surveillance, and that citizen identification entails surveillance, Lyon provides an overview of current research on national identification, provides a set of conceptual tools, and maps out a new mode of governing by identification. The book can be seen as a companion volume to *Playing the Identity Card* (Bennett and Lyon, 2008).

The book is based around a set of conceptual models for understanding contemporary electronic national identification cards, systems and infrastructures. These concepts are intended to show how these systems differ from their predecessors and to enable reflection on the potential consequences of their widespread use. Following the chapter titles, these concepts are: Demanding Documents; Sorting Systems; the Card Cartel; Stretched Screens; Body Badges; and Cyber Citizens. To these concepts I would also add the notion of protocol, explored in terms of the role of software and hardware in the 'card cartel.' This concept is important to understanding the politics of technology behind this work. It provides one reason why contemporary ID systems display such similarity despite their rhetorically different underpinnings. Seeing such concepts as 'tools for thinking' positions this book as a strong source of useful concepts that can be applied to guide analysis in specific contexts and of the individual features of distinct national identification systems.

Examining the chapters in turn, *Demanding Documents* provides a brief historical overview of identification documents from 2,500BC Sumer onwards, and argues that these systems reflected the political priorities of their given time and place, ranging from war to crime control, and were frequently tied up with issues of race and ethnicity. *Sorting Systems* examines ID cards as surveillance and the acts of power involved in categorisation and classification. The chapter also engages with the ambiguities of technologies and the importance of business practices. *Card Cartel* examines the various driving interests in the development of electronic national ID systems and engages with political economy and structures of government. *Stretched Screens* is concerned with the notion of the expanded border, international security, and the international interoperability of ID systems. *Body Badges* deals with the biometric dimension of ID systems whilst *Cyber Citizens* returns to the political dimension and the relation between citizenship, nation states and electronic identification.

For Lyon, a range of characteristics differentiates electronic national ID systems from their predecessors, and determines their likely impacts. Electronic national ID are remote; interoperable; categorical; they conflate risks; are bodily and behavioural; and fundamentally exclusionary. Because of the forces driving their introduction, ID systems create types of citizenship that focus upon globalisation and consumption.

Lyon's text is based upon an engagement with other thinkers and writers in this field, drawing together their ideas and research into a framework for the sociological and political examination of national identity cards. Lyon's ongoing and acknowledged engagement with the work of Zygmunt Bauman is particularly noticeable in this volume. Bauman's influence is identified in several of the conceptual models, including the one dimensional nature of consumer freedom and the liquidity and fluidity of contemporary relationships, producing an administrative desire to fix these through identification. Screens of various sorts must be stretched to catch the mobile, whilst modular and flexible controls allow 'triage' at borders: the free flow of some and the blockage of The Other. Most importantly, Lyon draws upon Bauman for the threat of identities constructed about us by others being imposed over the top of any account the individual can provide of their own identity. ID cards threaten to abstract and remove identity, producing situations where "telling your story no longer suffices, it is displaying your card that counts" (111). Lyon is concerned that national identity systems are 'stand-ins' for the politics of identity; reducing a highly important but contested category to abstracted, machine readable forms.

Lyon also engages with Gandy for accounts of cumulative disadvantage and the panoptic sort (1993), Torpey's account of the monopolisation by the state of the means of movement through the passport (2000), Scott's creation of 'legible' citizens (1998), Bigo's conception of the ban-opticon (2004), Rose's model of the securitizing of identity (1999), and with Latour (2005), Lessig (1999), Galloway (2004) and Foucault (1978) in terms of protocol. Lyon is, of course, also able to build upon his own previous work on social sorting, the globalisation of surveillance, and the tension between care and control in surveillance practices.

By identifying and engaging with the international relations and political economy of identification systems *Identifying Citizens* is perhaps Lyon's most obviously political book. This is a necessary and welcome direction. The concept of the card cartel is used to examine the role of a range of actors beyond the state involved in governing through identification, and shows how ID systems are shaped by powerful social interests. Lyon sees the state as the enabler and co-ordinator for ID schemes, whilst competing technology and information corporations provide the means and model for ID. The third side of this triangle is provided by the protocols and language of identity management. Furthermore, Lyon draws attention to the importance of organisations such as the International Civil Aviation Organisation and to identity cards as an international phenomenon in which the search for national security is at the same time a search for international security. The desire for mobile, flexible, and inter-operable identification across nations drives the search for international security standards. Lyon takes Gandy's concept of cumulative disadvantage and applies it at the international level, where 'harmonised' security regimes reinforce global political and economic disparities, and determine who is able to move freely or claim citizenship and who is not.

There is a strong sense of ethics supporting this work; based around the belief that justice and humanity are found in supporting the most vulnerable. From this follows the necessity of taking their needs into account when designing social and technological practices. This is laudable. However it is worth noting that the UK saw some arguments for the Identity Card being made in exactly these terms - that a national ID would protect those who were otherwise unable to protect their identity from fraud (Wills, 2008:173). One of the most common subject positions in the language of contemporary identity management is, in fact, 'the vulnerable.' Lyon rightly draws attention to the exclusionary power of contemporary practices of identification, which tend to remove nuance and discretion in favor of abstraction and remoteness.

Where the book is perhaps lacking is the assessment of counter-pressures and resistance to the near perfect storm of conditions driving electronic identification practices. ID systems are prevalent, Lyon argues, because of the coming together of a series of contributory 'streams.' These include the desire for easy and efficient travel and transactions; crime control; anti-terrorism; the availability of new technologies; the privileging of technological solutions over non-technological options; and the outsourcing of government

activity. Whilst Lyon identifies opposition to the INES scheme in France, and the Juki-Net system in Japan, an overall picture is presented of the inexorable tide of identification systems. This is despite acknowledging that there is little evidence of how such systems function over the long term.

Predictions in social science are fraught with danger and this highlights the importance of examining resistance to seemingly inevitable technological and policy developments. Lyon assumes "pragmatically that it is now too late to turn back the ID system in the UK" (59). Following the May 2010 elections in the UK, however, the coalition government has pledged to repeal the Identity Cards Act 2006, and at the time of writing has put an Identity Documents Bill before parliament. It remains to be seen which elements of the UK system will remain in place and how the repeal will be managed. It is also uncertain how the government will respond to the broader spectrum of pressures for identification that Lyon rightly identifies. Lyon also argues that "in the present political economic context it is unthinkable that the hardware and software [for identification systems] would be sought elsewhere than in private profit-driven corporations" (76). This ignores the potential of open source approaches to counter the monopoly of identification in more democratic, accountable and participatory ways. Resistance to particular surveillance technologies is complex, contextual and multi-faceted (Martin et al, 2009), and depends as much upon the discursive representation of the technology as upon its inherent technological features.

In conclusion, the scope of the book is impressive; it covers a wide range of topics relating to national identity schemes as surveillance, and engages with many theoretical approaches to develop a coherent narrative. This is primarily a work of synthesis, attempting to bring together recent research and theory in the field of national identity cards and examine them from a sociological and political perspective. The book therefore serves as an appropriate introduction to the field of national identity card research, and as an overview of currently published research in this area. It is highly accessible, although given the breadth of material covered in a volume of this reasonable size, there are sections where there could have been deeper engagement with some of the issues covered, or that are somewhat reliant on the primary research engaged with, but in a work of this size, covering a wide range of topics and concepts, this is understandable.

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