

National ID cards in a globalised world: Surveillance, security and citizenship

David Lyon

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12.30–14.00

Room 1.04, New Academic Building

New ID card systems are proliferating around the world. These may use digitized fingerprints or photos, may be contactless, using a scanner, and above all, may rely on computerized registries of personal information. In this timely new contribution, David Lyon argues that such IDs represent a fresh phase in the long-term attempts of modern states to find stable ways of identifying citizens.

New ID systems are "new" because they are high-tech. But their newness is also seen crucially in the ways that they contribute to new means of governance. The rise of e-Government and global mobility along with the aftermath of 9/11 and fears of identity theft are propelling the trend towards new ID systems. This is further lubricated by high technology companies seeking lucrative procurements, giving stakes in identification practices to agencies additional to nation-states, particularly technical and commercial ones. While the claims made for new IDs focus on security, efficiency and convenience, each proposal is also controversial. Fears of privacy-loss, limits to liberty, government control, and even of totalitarian tendencies are expressed by critics.

In his new book, David Lyon takes an historical, comparative and sociological look at citizen-identification, and new ID cards in particular. He concludes that their widespread use is both likely and, without some strong safeguards, troublesome, though not necessarily for the reasons most popularly proposed. Arguing that new IDs demand new approaches to identification practices given their potential for undermining trust and contributing to social exclusion, David Lyon provides the clearest overview of this topical area to date.

David Lyon is Director of the Surveillance Project, Queen's Research Chair in Surveillance Studies and Professor of Sociology at Queen's University, Kingston, Ontario. From 2008-2010 he holds a Killam Research Fellowship from the Canada Council. He has authored or edited 20 books and published many articles. They have been translated into 15 languages. The most recent books are *Identifying Citizens: ID Cards as Surveillance* (2009), *Playing the Identity Card: Surveillance, Security and Identification in Global Perspective* (co-edited with Colin Bennett, 2008), *Surveillance Studies: An Overview* (2007) and *Theorizing Surveillance* (ed. 2006). He is on the international editorial boards of a number of journals and is the North American editor of *Surveillance and Society*. He has held visiting positions at the Universities of Auckland, Edinburgh, Melbourne, Leeds, Tokyo, the Institute for Social and Economic Change, Bangalore, India, the Universidad Autónoma del Estado de México and the Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales in Paris, France. He has received several honours including Fellowship of the Royal Society of Canada (2008) and a Lifetime Achievement Award from the American Sociological Association (2007). David is married to Sue, a studio potter. They have four adult children and five grandchildren. David also writes songs, paints in watercolour, and participates in the Kingston triathlon.