REF2014
Research Excellence Framework

Institution: London School of Economics and Political Science

Unit of Assessment: 19: Business and Management Studies

Title of case study: Costly, problematic proposals for identity cards scrapped

1. Summary of the impact (indicative maximum 100 words)

LSE research played a key role in shaping the political and public debate around unpopular and ill-founded plans to introduce identity cards in the UK, showing the proposals to be unsafe, ineffective and costly. Plans for national biometric identity cards were scrapped by the coalition government in May 2010.

Former Home Secretary David Blunkett described the detailed, cross-disciplinary report from academics at LSE as having "changed the culture and atmosphere around, and attitudes towards, the scheme and its intention". An alternative, privacy-friendly identity policy is being developed in its place with LSE researchers playing a significant role in its development. Lessons from the UK continue to influence government identity policy in other countries including India, the Caribbean and Latin America.

2. Underpinning research (indicative maximum 500 words)

Research Insights and Outputs: More than 15 years of research developed across a number of publications on the complexities that arise when technology drives developments in policy rather than responding to them [1] provides the foundation for the work LSE undertook on identity cards. The ongoing research challenge is to ensure the development of effective technology-based policies by understanding how stakeholders engage with the technologically specific details of those policies [2]. Our research has shown that public perceptions of privacy concerns are of particular significance [3].

A distinctive feature of LSE research in this area has been the explicit consideration of technological issues within the broader policy making process [4]. For example, we have studied the privacy concerns about electronic medical records of various stakeholder groups in health research [5] and the technological, privacy and business issues arising from the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act (2000) [6] - which regulates the powers of public bodies to intercept communications.

When the government introduced proposals for introducing biometric identity cards based around a central database there was increasing concern about the lack of informed debate about the complex interplay between technological, organizational, business and societal implications of this government policy [1, Chapter 5]. In response to that concern, in January 2005 academics based at LSE drew on their existing research expertise and initiated the LSE Identity Project to examine in detail the potential impacts and benefits of the Identity Cards Bill [7].

The production of the LSE Identity Project report was co–ordinated by Dr Edgar Whitley (reader in Information Systems), Simon Davies and Gus Hosein (both Visiting Senior Fellows until 2011). It was overseen by an advisory committee of 16 LSE professors. Numerous LSE staff members and an international team of over 60 researchers contributed to, and reviewed, the reports. The research drew on the policy expertise of academics in information systems, government, law, media, economics and social policy as well as practical concerns from industry and regulators.

At the time of the research, no identity scheme on the proposed scale had been undertaken anywhere in the world. The LSE research noted that smaller and less ambitious schemes had encountered substantial technological and operational problems. It questioned whether the proposal to use fingerprint biometrics in a large–scale national system would be workable.

Other issues raised by the LSE research included the risk of unauthorized access, hacking or

malfunctions associated with the proposal for a centralized database of all identity information. It also noted the UK government's poor record of implementing large IT projects successfully.

The LSE Identity Project report questioned whether the scheme would be well accepted by citizens and queried the proposed business benefits of the Identity Card Scheme, suggesting that technological infrastructure requirements - smartcard readers for example - and administrative burdens may limit the take-up of the scheme by industry.

The report presented research which demonstrated that other national identity systems perform best when established for clear and focused purposes. These were in contrast to the UK scheme which had multiple and rather general rationales.

Finally, the report challenged Government estimates of the total cost of the Scheme being limited to £5.86 billion over ten years. LSE estimated the likely cost to the taxpayer would be £10.6 billion on the 'low cost' estimate, rising to £19.2 billion in the worst case [7].

Key Researchers: Edgar Whitley at LSE since 1989; Simon Davies and Gus Hosein (both Visiting Senior Fellows at LSE until 2011).

3. References to the research (indicative maximum of six references)

[1] Whitley EA and Hosein G (2010) *Global challenges for identity policies.* Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke. (ISBN 978-0230542235) LSE Research Online ID: 28991

[2] Pouloudi A and Whitley EA (1997) Stakeholder identification in inter-organizational systems: Gaining insights for drug use management systems. *European journal of information systems* 6(1), 1-14. (ISSN 0960-085X) DOI http://dx.doi.org/10.1057/palgrave.ejis.3000252

[3] Whitley EA (2009) Perceptions of government technology, surveillance and privacy: the UK identity cards scheme. In *New Directions in Privacy and Surveillance* (Neyland D and Goold B, Eds), pp 133-156, Willan, Cullompton.(ISBN 978-1-84392-363-3) LSE Research Online ID: 29036

[4] Pouloudi A and Whitley EA (2000) Representing human and non-human stakeholders: On speaking with authority. In *Organizational and social perspectives on information technology* (Baskerville R, Stage J and Gross JID, Eds), pp 339-354, Kluwer, Aalborg, Denmark.(ISBN 978-0792378365) LSE Research Online ID: 10743

[5] Pouloudi A and Whitley EA (1996) Privacy of electronic medical records: Understanding conflicting concerns. In *EthiComp96: Values and Social Responsibilities of the Computer Science* (Barroso P, Bynum TW, Rogerson S and Joyanes L, Eds), pp 307-327, Madrid, Spain.(ISBN 84-921675-1-3) LSE Research Online ID: 29234

[6] Hosein IR and Whitley EA (2002) The regulation of electronic commerce: learning from the UK's RIP act. *Journal of Strategic Information Systems* 11(1), 31-58. (ISSN 0963-8687) DOI http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/S0963-8687(01)00059-2

 [7] LSE Identity Project (2005) *Main Report* (27 June) Archived at http://identityproject.lse.ac.uk/identityreport.pdf

Evidence of quality: peer-reviewed books and journal articles.

4. Details of the impact (indicative maximum 750 words)

Impacts: LSE research contributed significantly to the shaping of parliamentary debates on identity cards, as well as to public perceptions of ID card schemes in the UK and beyond.

A. The LSE Identity Project played a key role in shaping the parliamentary debates about The Identity Cards Bill, by highlighting that the scheme was technically unsafe, expensive, untested and lacked public trust. These concerns were reflected in the election manifestos of both the Conservatives and the Liberal Democrats, and, when the coalition government came to power, the proposals were scrapped.

There were over 200 explicit mentions of LSE reports during the 56 days of Parliamentary debate of the Bill. For example, in speech during the House of Commons Committee stage, the then Shadow Minister for Home Affairs, Conservative MP Edward Garnier, said:

"My hon[orable] Friend the Member for Newark has, quite properly, referred on a number of occasions to the valuable work done by the team at the London School of Economics. They have spent some time looking carefully at the subject and have reached a number of conclusions. I make no claims of originality; I am relying heavily on the findings of the LSE report." [Hansard, 12 July 2005 Column 229]

The House of Commons Science and Technology Committee inquiry into 'Identity Card Technologies: Scientific Advice, Risk and Evidence' [8] noted "the central role that the LSE reports have played in the debate regarding identity cards" (§63) and shared the LSE's concerns about "the validity of costs produced at this early stage [2006]" (§ 105).

Edgar Whitley was called to give oral evidence to the Science and Technology Select Committee and to the Public Administration Select Committee. The LSE Identity Project also submitted written evidence to a number of parliamentary committees' inquiries [9–11].

B. LSE research influenced public and media perceptions of the Identity Cards Scheme [3] and members of the LSE identity project were in demand to comment in national print and broadcast media, including the *Financial Times*, *The Times*, *The Daily Mail*, Radio 4's *Today Programme* and *The Economist*. An independent analysis [12] found that the Scheme was overwhelmingly reported in a negative light, specifically in terms of the concerns raised by the LSE report. Its unpopularity was reflected in the fact that by May 2010, after seven months of availability, only 14,670 cards had been issued.

C. Direct influence on Government policy as first Bill introduced by the Coalition government scrapped identity cards. The Conservative party included its intention to scrap identity cards in its manifesto for the 2010 election and the Liberal Democrats also reiterated their longstanding opposition to identity cards in its manifesto. By the time of the general election, almost every political party other than the Labour party had included proposals to scrap identity cards as part of their election manifestos.

As a result of this consensus, scrapping identity cards was probably one of the less contentious parts of the coalition programme for government, saving the country up to £20billion - twice the cost of the Olympics. More controversial, however, was the decision to abandon plans to store fingerprints on the next generation of chip - enabled passports. This was a specific Liberal Democrat proposal that had emerged following discussion about cost savings with members of the LSE research team. At the time of the election, storing fingerprints was still part of the Conservative policy.

D. Ongoing impact through close work with the Cabinet Office on its Identity Assurance Programme. The challenge of identifying oneself in online transactions did not disappear with the scrapping of the Scheme in 2010 and the LSE researchers have been working closely with the Cabinet Office to facilitate ways that people, businesses and devices will be able to verify their identity online in order to better access and transact with public services. In particular, Dr Whitley is a key member of the Privacy and Consumer Group [13]. This group has developed an influential set of privacy principles which were described by Francis Maude, Minister for the Cabinet Office as being "all about putting the citizen in charge, not the state" [14] and form a key part of the Government's Digital Strategy [15, Action 11].

The ongoing influence of the LSE work is not limited to the UK. A recent report about India's identity scheme (UID) proposals noted that as LSE's research is "very much relevant and applicable to the UID scheme, they should have been seriously considered" [16, Section 6].

Dr Whitley has also been working with the InterAmerican Development Bank in facilitating a series of high level policy workshops for governments in Latin America and the Caribbean including Brazil, Chile, Ecuador and Jamaica.

Why the Impact Matters: identity card schemes are costly and need to command public consent. LSE research persuaded the UK government not to spend up to £20 billion on an ill thought out scheme.

5. Sources to corroborate the impact (indicative maximum of 10 references)

All Sources listed below can also be seen at: https://apps.lse.ac.uk/impact/case-study/view/33

[8] Science and Technology Select Committee (2006) Identity Card Technologies: Scientific advice, risk and evidence *House of Commons* Sixth report of Session 2005-06 Archived at http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200506/cmselect/cmsctech/1032/1032.pdf Source file: https://apps.lse.ac.uk/impact/download/file/1530

[9] Whitley EA (2007) Submission to the House of Commons Home Affairs Committee inquiry into "A surveillance society?" by the London School of Economics and Political Science Identity Project (24 April) Archived at http://identityproject.lse.ac.uk/LSE_HAC_Submission.pdf Source file: https://apps.lse.ac.uk/impact/download/file/1531

[10] Whitley EA (2007) Submission to the House of Lords Constitution Committee inquiry into the "Impact of Surveillance & Data Collection" (16 July) Archived at http://identityproject.lse.ac.uk/HoLConst.pdf Source file: https://apps.lse.ac.uk/impact/download/file/1532

[11] Whitley EA (2011) Submission to the House of Commons Public Administration Select Committee inquiry into "Government's use of IT" by the London School of Economics and Political Science Identity Project (24 April) Archived at http://identitypolicy.lse.ac.uk/LSE_PAC_Submission.pdf

[12] Pieri E (2009) ID cards: A snapshot of the debate in the UK press *ESRC National Centre for e-Social Science* (23 April) Archived at http://danishbiometrics.files.wordpress.com/2009/08/pieri_idcards_full_report.pdf

[13] Cabinet Office (2012) Less About Identity, More About Trust (4 October) Archived at http://digital.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/2012/10/04/less-about-identity-more-about-trust/

[14] Cabinet Office (2012) Digital public services: putting the citizen in charge, not the state (25 April) Archived at https://www.gov.uk/government/news/digital-public-services-putting-the-citizen-in-charge-not-the-state Source file: https://apps.lse.ac.uk/impact/download/file/1538

[15] Cabinet Office (2012) Digital Strategy Archived at: http://publications.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/digital/ Source file: https://apps.lse.ac.uk/impact/download/file/1539

[16] Standing committee on Finance (India) (2011) The national identification authority of India Bill, 2010 *Ministry of Planning* (13 December) Archived at http://164.100.47.134/lsscommittee/Finance/42%20Report.pdf