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'The End of the Passing Past': Towards a Polytemporal Policy Studies

We have never moved either forward or backward. We have always actively sorted out elements belonging to different times. We can still sort. *It is the sorting that makes the times not the times, not the times that make the sorting...* Modernization has never occurred. There is no tide, long in rising, that would be flowing again today. There has never been such a tide. We can go on to other things – that is, return to the multiple entities that have always passed in a different way. (Latour 1993: 76)

An abiding preoccupation of much research in social policy research, and social science more broadly, is the question of policy change. This question is, I would argue, implicit in the theme of 'governance and new technologies'. Indeed, one could argue that transformation is one of the most common and widely used analytical frameworks organizing our thinking about social policy today. Referencing the advent of such phenomena as the 'network society', 'post-Fordist' systems of production and consumption, and, of course, 'globalization', many writers insist that the welfare state has (or must be) fundamentally changed. New times are provoking new approaches to welfare state governance, ranging from the 'activation' of the subjects and citizens of welfare, and the 'partnering' of relevant agencies, to the 'rescaling' of the institutions and geography of the welfare state itself. Nevertheless, not all observers agree. Some emphasize continuities in social policy, and caution against the thematization of rupture and crisis.

In this chapter I want to unsettle some of the ways in which we think about policy change. A great deal of research about the welfare state is

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framed in terms of great transformations. It depicts epochs, stages and other kinds of paradigm shift. Such periodizations are often heuristically useful and politically expedient. But at the same

time they carry with them the risk of a kind of thought where the polymorphism and irreducibility of things is eclipsed in favour of analytical schemes, which sort things according to singular logics and all-encompassing systems.

How might we think about change in ways that refuse the obligation to side with or against continuity? We might not be able to avoid all the traps of epistemological reductionism, but are there forms of analysis that limit its risks? What Foucault called 'genealogy' (Foucault 1991a) offers an affirmative answer to these questions. A considerable body of work has elaborated and refined the principles of genealogy as a method and ethos of inquiry (Colwell 1997; Brown 2001; Dean 1994). Such work includes investigations of the challenge which genealogy poses to welfare state theories (Dean 1991; Walters 2000). Rather than rehearse such discussions here I have opted to explore some themes and concepts that, I want to argue, can be considered complimentary to a genealogical perspective. These are Latour's idea of 'polytemporality' and Deleuze's refinement of Foucault's notion of the 'diagram'. Combining these concepts allows us to advance a kind of genealogical analysis that resists the temptations of progressivism and reductionism, while attending to the plural and hybridic constitution of all things.

In the second part of the chapter I seek to exemplify these claims by means of a case study. I focus on an issue that has recently acquired a high degree of political prominence – compulsory identity (ID) cards. Many governments are currently considering ID cards as a response to the social panics of 'illegal' immigration, welfare 'abuse', and terrorism. While it might be tempting to see the ID card as another symptom of the emerging network society, as one more way in which identity gets recoded, digitalized and deterritorialized, I will argue that a fuller appreciation of the advent of ID cards is possible if we place them within a space of hybrids and plural temporalities.

Epochs

In a recent essay entitled 'From Discipline to Flexibilization', Nancy Fraser has conferred a novel and somewhat unusual accolade upon Michel Foucault. She has described him as 'the great theorist of the Fordist mode of regulation' (Fraser 2003: 160). Acknowledging that Foucault did not himself understand his project in this way, she argues that from the vantage point of the present, a present where we are 'standing on the brink of a new, postfordist epoch of globalization, then we should reread Foucault in [this]

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light' (160). Foucault theorized the disciplinary mechanisms which underpinned Fordism, she argues. Amongst the elements he disclosed were the totalizing ambitions of expert power which permeated society, seeking to organize the time and space of factory life as much as the intimate space of the home; and, perhaps, most originally, the way in which 'fordist discipline' effected a 'mode of social ordering {that} worked largely through individual self-regulation', fostering 'self-activating subjects capable of internal self-governance' (164). She adds that while Foucault did not theorize it is as such, he nevertheless assumed that these modes of power operated within a national frame.

By casting Foucault as the theorist of fordist regulation Fraser seeks to build an argument that we need new concepts and theories to make sense of the present. She contends that the Foucauldian thematics of discipline can certainly illuminate aspects of the present she characterizes as globalizing and postfordist. However, this emerging mode 'diverges sufficiently

from the fordist one to preclude simple extensions of the Foucauldian analysis of discipline (161). Hence she looks to postfordism and proposes a 'globalized governmentality'.

In a somewhat similar vein, Gilles Deleuze argues that the disciplinary society that Foucault examined in such depth has broken down. Gradually we are seeing its replacement by a new kind of social order – the *control society*. In control societies power becomes much more fluid, operating in terms of networks and circuits of production, consumption, and desire which completely overflow fixed, institutional sites like the school and the factory. Communication becomes its model (witness the currency of such ideas as 'information society' and 'network society') and marketing one of its most privileged know-hows. Instead of molding its subjects, control implicates them in systems of modulation. Power ceases to take the appearance of an external authority and becomes ever more internalized and continuous with subjectivity. As one influential interpretation has put it, 'mechanisms of command become ever more "democratic", ever more immanent to the social field, distributed throughout the brains and the bodies of the citizens (Hardt and Negri 2000: 23).

Fraser and Deleuze make important contributions because they urge us not to regard Foucault's concepts as a fixed repertoire, valid for all societies and all times. The thrust of their argument is that any attempt to understand the present will come up short if it confines itself to the concepts of discipline, panopticism, biopolitics and normalization which Foucault introduced into social analysis in his famous studies of the regulatory regimes surrounding and producing such phenomena as madness, criminality and sexuality. But then Foucault certainly did not offer these concepts in the spirit of a general theory of modernity – a point that Deleuze recognizes much more than Fraser. Although Foucault's studies in the *Archaeology of Knowledge* and

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Order of Things might imply a scholar given to the systemic, one could also argue that the bulk of his work does not support the view that Foucault was a systems-builder. For it reveals a somewhat fragmentary and experimental thinker, pragmatically crafting concepts and hypotheses like tools to undertake a certain analytical task but unafraid to dispense with them should they outlive their usefulness.

To make sense of the present, Fraser and Deleuze argue that we need to invent new concepts, devise new maps and chart new territories. Whereas certain radical theories are tempted to find biopolitics or the panopticon everywhere,¹ they steer us away from the position that sees only a monotonous reproduction and expansion of one particular system of power. They highlight the mutability and particularity of power relations. Yet in one respect, at least, they present us with a fairly conventional move. Both situate systems of power relations along a temporal axis where the implication is that the latter system is more subtle, more insidious, and altogether more advanced than the former. Previously power was organized in fixed institutions; today it is nebulous. Some time in the past there was an outside to power; today it permeates the entire social space. In this respect they resonate with a whole range of theories (e.g., Castells 2000), which inscribe some kind of developmental logic within their accounts of power relations.

Pat O'Malley has identified a similar tendency amongst theorists of crime and risk. Speaking of a number of recent studies of actuarialism he notes that 'These accounts imply that technologies of power can be ranked hierarchically in terms of their efficiency, and even that there is a kind of natural selection among technologies such that the most efficient survive. Despite their claims to a Foucauldian lineage, such interpretations run against Foucault's

insistence on the fragmentary nature of social relations across time and space.’ (O'Malley 1996: 192).

As a corrective to the rather linear view of policy change presupposed amongst many theorists of risk, O'Malley reminds us of Foucault's now well-known observation concerning the genealogy of the modern state. This is to avoid the assumption of a succession of modes of power – sovereignty, discipline, governmentality – but to think in terms of a 'triangle' (Foucault 1991). In this spirit O'Malley emphasizes a view of modes, strategies and techniques 'in terms of articulations and alliances, colonizations and translations, resistances and complicities...rather than in terms of their unilinear development' (192). O'Malley's argument involves placing a greater emphasis on the role of political struggles and competition. This is vital if we want to avoid accounts that are automatic and determined in advance.

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Hybrids

The assumption of a developmental logic to historical and social change is, of course, in no way confined to theorists working in the vicinity of Foucault. It is a widespread feature within the social sciences. The popularity of binaries like modern/postmodern, fordist/postfordist, and now national/global within social policy suggests it has not been immune to this tendency. It is a part of the modern imagination of temporality – a point that has been explored at length in Bruno Latour's highly provocative but important book, *We have never been Modern* (Latour 1993). Despite its somewhat extravagant tone, I want to argue that a consideration of Latour's critique of the idea of modernization offers a set of richly helpful images that open the way to a more complex and non-reductionist view of change.

Latour offers us a characteristically heterodox view of modernity. While modernity is typically associated with the birth of humanism, or scientific progress, Latour proposes a definition that emphasizes constitutive ordering principles. Modernity designates the conjunction of two kinds of practices. The first set is 'mediation' or 'translation' practices which 'creates mixtures between entirely new types of beings, hybrids of nature and culture' (10). The second set is 'purification' which 'creates two entirely distinct ontological zones: that of human beings on the one hand' and 'nonhumans' on the other (11). Modern culture is thus characterized by dual processes: the production of hybrids, coupled with purification projects which obscure the reality of these hybrids while simultaneously inciting their proliferation. Latour argues that these modern separations are now breaking down allowing our hybrid constitution – and therefore the continuity of the 'premoderns' and the 'moderns' – to become more visible. This is a process he endorses. Recognizing our impure constitution opens up new political possibilities. Not the least of these is to destabilize the opposition of the traditional and the modern and the various political projects, which have mobilized such divisions. Consider, for instance, the way in which western governments, typically operating through the medium of international agencies like the World Bank, call upon 'developing nations' to 'modernize' and to practice 'good governance' as a condition for development funding. To recognize, in Latour's words, that the West has never been modern – that is, that it has always mobilized strange hybrids which conjoin the old and the new – is to expose the power relations embedded in the discourse of modernization.

What is interesting about Latour's arguments for our purposes is the perspective it affords on historical time. Latour aims his criticism at the assumption that things march in step, or that time can be organized neatly into stages. Instead of the assumption of linearity shared by moderns

and anti-moderns he argues that ‘every contemporary assembly is polytemporal’ (74). Instead of the modern idea of ‘cohorts’ whose intelligibility is given by

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their common habitation within a particular epoch, and whose movement resembles a ‘laminary flow’ (77), he favours the image of a world populated by hybridic objects and subjects. These hybrids do not march in step: mediation ‘has always mixed up epochs, genres, and ideas’ (69); the world is constituted by entangled and heterogeneous networks which combine elements from many different times. Time is not external to these networks but an effect of their organizing practices. And the social sciences have been for some time some of the most eager participants in such organizing activity.

‘I may use an electric drill, but I also use a hammer. The former is thirty-five years old, the latter hundreds of thousands. Will you see me as a DIY expert ‘of contrasts’ because I mix up gestures from different times? On the contrary: show me an activity that is homogeneous from the point of view of the modern time.... As Péguy’s Clio said, and as Michel Serres repeats, “we are exchangers and brewers of time”.... It is this exchange that defines us, not the calendar or the flow that the moderns had constructed for us.’ (75)

Latour’s notion of polytemporality is an appealing one which can serve as a powerful antidote to the temptation to impose too much order and coherence on the present. It challenges us to think about politics and change in ways that no longer rely on the ethically loaded oppositions between traditional and modern, or the teleologies of the modern and postmodern. Yet I want to argue that as much as we need to acknowledge the polytemporal and impurely constituted present, it is hard to imagine forms of analysis which dispense entirely with ordering concepts. Is meaningful political activity possible if we cannot ascribe a certain coherence, a certain order to the present? ‘Neoliberalism’, ‘Empire’, ‘postfordism’... aren’t these and other simplifications of a messy world prerequisites for mobilizing and acting on that world? How can there be a critical politics that does without a map? Perhaps the challenge that faces us is one of mapping, locating and understanding in ways that do not fix or essentialize (Gibson-Graham 1996).

Here it is useful to return to Deleuze. Although his discussion of control societies has been interpreted in rather stagist and unilinear fashion (Hardt and Negri 2000), elsewhere Deleuze offers a wealth of concepts that could facilitate a non-reductive, non-linear understanding of policy change. Even the briefest survey of Deleuze and Guattari’s ‘geophilosophy’ is well beyond the scope of this paper. Instead, I shall confine myself to Deleuze’s remarks on the diagram.

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Diagrams

Deleuze develops the concept of the diagram in the context of a critical appreciation of Foucault and the way he transforms our understanding of power. Deleuze notes how, in a passing remark, Foucault identifies panopticism as a diagram: ‘a functioning, abstracted from any obstacle... or friction {and which} must be detached from any specific use’ (Deleuze 1988: 34). For this reason it is an ‘abstract machine’, a machine that is ‘almost blind and mute, even though it makes others see and speak’ (34). If a part of Foucault’s contribution was to promote a more spatialized, topographical conception of power (‘less a property than a strategy’ (25) – hence Deleuze’s

epithet of ‘new cartographer’ – then the diagram plays a central part of this endeavour. It is a ‘map of relations of forces, a map of destiny, or intensity’ (36). As John Rajchman has put it, it offers a glimpse of ‘something at work in many different institutions and situations, spread out in several countries, working in a manner not given in the map of social policies and prescriptions, planned as such by no one’ (1999: 47). Diagrams are not to be confused with particular policies. Instead, they delineate certain political and organizational *a priori* operating at a level that usually places them beyond our apprehension.

The significance of the diagram, and its potential for a non-reductionist, non-linear form of power analysis becomes clearer if we consider some examples. As Deleuze notes, the diagram that Foucault elaborates most fully is disciplinary society where power seeks to organize the entire social field, breaking down dangerous congregations and wandering masses. If there is a model for this kind of social order it is the startling image of the plague town which Foucault carefully describes in *Discipline and Punish* – ‘This enclosed, segmented space, observed at every point, in which individuals are inserted in a fixed place, in which the slightest movements are supervised, in which all events are recorded... in which power is exercised without division, according to a continuous hierarchical figure’ (Foucault 1977: 197).

But there are others. Indeed, ‘there are as many diagrams as there are social fields in history’. For one is dealing here with mappings of forces; a technology or regime of practices that recurs as we move from one site to the next. Deleuze seems to regard control as a diagram rather than a stage of historical development, a diagram he juxtaposes with discipline. But one should not overlook the diagram of insurance, which is of particular relevance to the study of social policy. As Ewald has put it: ‘Insurance, at the end of the nineteenth century, signifies at once an ensemble of institutions and the diagram with which industrial societies conceive their principle of organization, functioning and regulation’ (Ewald 1991: 210). The rise of the welfare state is commonly narrated in terms of the evolution of norms (eg, solidarity), institutions (social rights), and processes (class struggle). But in

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theorizing insurance in this way Ewald draws our attention to the level of political technology, to a machinery that, whether taking a private or public form, made possible ‘a form of association which combines a maximum of socialization with a maximum of individualization’ (204). If nothing else, to pose the question of insurance, and its corresponding form of society, is to complicate the rather straight line which Fraser and others draw from a disciplinary world of Fordism to a networked and decentred space of globalized governmentality.

We could continue to multiply examples of diagrams drawn from Foucauldian scholarship and elsewhere. But for the purposes of this paper – the question of how to practice a polytemporal and non-linear form of policy studies – there are three points I want to make.

First, the diagram allows us to diagnose transformations in power relations but does so in a way that avoids making strong claims about the overall coherence or systematicity of society. When Deleuze identifies a diagram of sovereign societies and contrasts this with disciplinary or control societies, he is making a claim that each harbours a particular mode of exercising power, a particular set of aims and objectives, and certain techniques. While it is easy to slip from this position to the argument that these represent different modes or epochs, I want to argue that we should think of diagrams like maps. This is to hold on to an epistemologically weak conception of the diagram. Think of a city. The number of ways in which the city can be mapped is almost infinite. It is not a question of one being more accurate than the other, or one succeeding the

other, so much as the fields and functions which they individuate. A map of the city's sewers implies a different functionality, a different technology from a map of its streets and railways, or its zones of wealth and poverty. To think at the level of the diagram does not implicate us in totalizing claims of the kind that sometimes creep into theories of fordism, risk, etc.

Second, the diagram is useful because it offers what Dean (1999: 179) calls a 'positive account of the present'. While concepts like post-modernism and post-fordism - Dean calls them 'post-ism' - are useful heuristic devices which trace changes in particular formations, they tend to portray change along a straight line. Moreover, they tend to inscribe a lack in the heart of the present. The past is presumed to be whole, complete, the present invariably fragmented or compromised. For example, Fordism appears as a neat, nationally integrated system of production and reproduction whereas post-Fordism is, by comparison, compromised, only partially integrated. By contrast, the diagram offers a positive account because *it dwells not so much on what is lost but what is emergent*. If genealogy is a mode of inquiry that attends to the contingent, the unexpected, the eruption and the interruption, if it is a form of history that is jagged and forked, then it needs diagrams to capture the diagonal movement, the provisional coherence that finds no

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single point of origin in the past. Or to think with Latour, the diagram maps the rhizomatic productions - strange composites like the 'anti-social behaviour order' or 'social capital' - whose emergence no one foresaw. Such hybrids can often appear quite suddenly, and yet, almost overnight, they can be assimilated into everyday political discourse and policy practice. We need the diagram to point out their rarity.

Finally, if diagrams are like maps then a caveat is in order. One should not confuse the diagram with a claim about particular, concrete societies. Diagrams are abstractions, not expressions of a sociological reality. When Foucault identifies the isolated and enclosed town under plague as a model for the disciplinary society, it might be objected that this is (thankfully) an extreme situation and one that bears little resemblance to everyday life. This is the point: normally, disciplinary power is crosscut and tempered by other political logics and practices (for instance, the game of political citizenship). But the plague town is an emergency, an event when other political logics have been suspended. Under the auspices of public health, disciplinary power dominates the entire social. The mechanisms and tactics of discipline become fully transparent in the plague town.

The Case of National Identity Cards

What might this discussion of hybrids, diagrams and polytemporality bring to policy studies? How might it nuance the way we think about policy change? Let us consider a particular case: the recent political emphasis that has come to be placed on practices of identification as an aspect of security policy. If it is the case, as scholars and other expert commentators now constantly warn us, that we are living in an 'age of insecurity', one of its more visible signs is a heightened political concern within western states with questions of identity authentication. In the UK the government is proposing legislation that will make a national identity card compulsory for all citizens. In Canada proposals for a similar card have stalled although new identity cards for permanent residents have become compulsory (House of Commons 2003). In continental European ID cards have long been a part of the everyday life of citizens (BBC 2002). For instance, in Italy and Spain national ID cards have been in use since the 1930s when they were

introduced by fascist regimes. Perhaps in Europe a more pressing issue has been the establishment of identification systems, which target marginal populations. An example is the Eurodac system which archives the fingerprints of any person registered as seeking asylum, sharing them amongst the relevant policing authorities throughout the EU (van der Ploeg 1999). Even if ID cards themselves may not be new for many Europeans, doubts are being raised about the security of existing forms of identification. Various experiments are under way to add

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microchips, biometric information, or to introduce additional new cards to regulate access to social entitlements. In addition, many EU countries are now looking to update the security of their national passports. Not the least impetus here is the passage by the US federal government of the Enhanced Border Security and Visa Entry Reform Act of 2002. For citizens to enjoy visa-free travel into the US, it will be necessary for their governments to issue machine-readable passports, which incorporate biometric and authentication identifiers meeting the standards of the International Civil Aviation Organization.²

The UK offers a promising case for studying the politics of the ID card. There the government must confront a public that has long regarded such practices with deep suspicion, associating the ID card with unwarranted intrusions into personal privacy. Perhaps this helps to explain why the UK government has been so explicit in stating its case for implementing an identity scheme. Five kinds of benefit have been repeatedly associated with the identity card: it is to tackle illegal immigration and ‘immigration abuse’; disrupt the use of false and multiple identities by criminals, terrorists and their facilitators; protect the public from identity fraud and theft; ensure that free public services are only used by those with entitlements; and facilitate ease of access to public services (House of Commons 2004: 20).³

One could certainly imagine a perspective on identity cards which made them intelligible in terms of the shift Deleuze describes in his ‘Postscript on control societies’. It would perhaps go something like this. In control societies surveillance and normalization practices are no longer tightly clustered around fixed institutions like the school or the factory. Schooling gives way to lifelong learning, just as industry is replaced by business. Meanwhile electronic tagging allows the prison to seep further into the space of society beyond its walls. ‘Marketing is now the instrument of social control and produces the arrogant breed who are our masters’ (Deleuze 1995: 181). As Diken and Lausten put it: ‘control brings with it an infinite intensification of discipline in a smooth space devoid of enclosures; control is discipline without walls, a mobile form of discipline that regulates humans and non-humans “on the move” (Lyon)’ (2003: 7). ‘A man is no longer a man confined but a man in debt’ (Deleuze 1995: 181).

Control societies govern us as coded flows. This is why the password is in many ways the paradigmatic political technology of control (Deleuze 1995: 180). And the password can materialize in a number of different forms. There are credit cards, reward cards and other durable, swipe-able artefacts which, coded like gold, platinum and other precious metals, sort us into various ‘membership clubs’; PINs which mobilizes the memory in security practices; and that more recent invention, the biometric which, in configuring a readable body, looks to enlist ‘the citizen’s body... in the distribution of benefits, services, and rights’ (van der Ploeg 1999: 296) and in some cases

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turn that same body 'into a witness against themselves' (van der Ploeg 1999: 301). These and other passwords and codes, once they are linked to databases and other personal profiles, function like filters that distribute inclusion and exclusion across mobile populations. Passwords regulate access to information, credit, travel and other 'privileges'. At the same time, they allow each and all to be uniquely and dynamically profiled in databanks and information systems.

Deleuze and Guattari have argued that the state can be understood as an 'apparatus of capture' (Deleuze and Guattari 1987). It does not invent systems of power and then impose them upon an unsuspecting or recalcitrant society, so much as select, imitate, adapt, colonize and generalize a host of little tactics that always come from elsewhere. 'Not only private systems but explicit parts of the machinery of state have an origin, a behaviour and a function which the State ratifies, controls or is even content to cover rather than institute' (Deleuze 1988: 25).

The state was reinvented as a welfare state when, at the end of the nineteenth century, it began, under quite contingent and largely unforeseen circumstances, to import into its architecture an insurance technology that was already widespread in commercial and associational life. Can we say that the ID card is to the information society what social insurance was to the welfare state: a moment of capture, appropriation and redeployment? Perhaps we are witnessing the birth of the control state, the state that takes as its task the coding of an already coded population - a sort of *meta-coding*. The state undertakes this function by means of the ID card scheme to facilitate the governance of smooth, networked, distributed spaces and flows of production, consumption, mobility and citizenship, which increasingly transgress its geographical borders. In this respect, the manner in which the former Home Secretary, David Blunkett, defended the ID scheme against the charge that it represented an unacceptable level of surveillance is quite telling.

'Suggestions of Big Brother-style surveillance are ludicrous', he insisted.

For the 85 per cent of UK households who hold at least one store loyalty card, a far greater and growing database of personal information will already be held by private industry... If you do hold a store loyalty card - and the odds are that you do - you have already consented to this information {shopping habits, household size, etc} being repeatedly shared with other companies without any requirement to ask again for your approval (Home Office 2004).

The thrust of the former Home Secretary's remark is this: our societies are already intensively codified, our movements scanned and our subjectivities inescapably identified by countless different agencies and authorities, seeking

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a variety of purposes. A control apparatus is already in place. Don't be alarmed, citizens! Far from being an exceptional measure the ID card is merely a modification of this apparatus, one that actually maintains higher standards of privacy than other areas.

Framing the advent and current political emphasis on the identity card in terms of the rise of the control society has a certain plausibility. But in making this move have we not engaged in precisely the kind of selective sorting activity which Latour criticizes? As he observes, 'a temporality, in itself, has nothing temporal about it. It is a means of connecting entities and filing them away. If we change the classification principle, we get a different temporality on the basis of the same events' (Latour 1993: 75). The point becomes clearer if we change the classification principle. The point is that we can locate the moment of the national identity card within other

trajectories. It can be plausibly sorted into other temporalities, each with their own diagrams. Let us briefly consider three of these.

First, we could analyze ID cards in terms of the history of state practices of legibility and documentation. At the risk of generalizing about a vast and diverse literature, it could be argued that the historical sociology of state formation has tended to focus on social forces and the long-term creation of institutions and governance structures. James Scott's *Seeing like a State* therefore marks an important contribution to this literature because of its emphasis on quite a different dimension of state-building – that of projects and practices of legibility which he regards as a 'central problem in statecraft'. Whether we are speaking of the creation of permanent last names, the establishment of cadastral surveys and population registers, the design and layout of cities, or the standardization of weights, these and other measures can usefully be understood, he argues, 'as attempts at legibility and simplification'. These are all so many ways in which officials have not only represented society in ways that made it governable, but – in the many circumstances where these classifications acquire the force of law and public policy – actually reshaped the terrain of the social (Scott 1998: 2-3).

Whereas the control society thesis interprets the ID card as one more symptom of a fundamentally new social logic, this line would cast the ID card as a development *within* the much older trajectory of documentary societies. For many centuries now we have inhabited the 'pays du tout en écritures {Dardy} – the land where everything is written down, where individual and social identities are inscribed in the innumerable records that organize people's lives as citizens, workers, taxpayers, drivers, mortgage-holders, pensioners, and so on' (Caplan and Torpey 2000: 2). In this way we might understand the ID card as another of Latour's hybrids where very contemporary innovations such as biometrics are grafted into centuries-long practices of documentation and identification.

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Situating the national identity card like this is important not just to avoid the temptation to overstate its novelty. It is also helpful because it places in sharper perspective one of the principal claims made on behalf of these cards. This concerns the question of identity fraud which a secure and robust card is supposed to counter. Rather than taking this notion at face value we need to ask: under what social and historical conditions can this phenomenon of identity theft emerge? In what kind of social order can individuals experience the theft of their identity as a risk? In what kind of society must the state take upon itself the task not only of securing our social lives but our identities? The answer, of course, is that this can only happen in a culture that is already intensively documented, where social functions like work, care and punishment are bound up with practices of record-keeping, enumeration, and so on. One should not for a moment underestimate the extent to which political opportunism, or the pressure of a burgeoning security and surveillance industry is driving the turn towards identity cards. But at the same time, we should note this move is inconceivable outside of a thoroughly governmentalized society.

There is a second line that could be drawn. This is associated with a diagram I want to call liberal security. As Colin Gordon has explained, Foucault's thinking about 'governmentality' has the question of security at its heart. For Foucault, 'from the eighteenth century onwards, security tends increasingly to become the dominant component of modern government rationality: we live today not so much in a *Rechtstaat* or in a disciplinary society as in a society of security.' (Gordon 1991: 20). Liberalism jettisons the dream of a completely transparent society, which might lend itself to total administration in the image of a city writ large. Instead, it affirms the existence of spaces beyond the state - the opaque, dense and autonomous character of

processes of population, economy and society. It makes the governance of these processes its objectives on the basis of the acquisition of knowledge of the laws (e.g., the social sciences) concerning their true nature. Under liberalism, governing becomes a matter of enframing these processes within mechanisms of security.

Within this scheme, liberty is seen to be so closely related to security that Bentham was to describe it as 'a branch of security' (Gordon 1991: 19). Of course, Bentham did not confine himself to theoretical reflection on liberalism but sought in various ways to devise actual schemes for the shaping of practices of liberal government. The Panopticon was not the only one of these. Bentham also saw the tattoo as a technology of government. According to Stephen Engelmann, who has made a careful reading of Bentham on the subject of 'indirect legislation', Bentham proposed that a tattoo be placed near the wrist of every subject. He saw this not as a matter of branding people like cattle (for the purposes of a pastoral style of governance) but in order to make citizens transparent to one another. This

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indelible inscription would promote an 'economy of legislation', making all manner of offences less likely since people would be properly identifiable – both to the state, but more importantly to one another – and less inclined to rob, cheat, or swindle. Despite its rather draconian overtones, this universal tattoo should be regarded as economic and liberal in its method, Engelmann points out, 'because it gives individuals a new tool with which they can govern one another, thus building security far more effectively and economically than could be done through centralized power alone' (Engelmann 2003: 383).

One of the key claims made for the national identity card is that it will provide a 'gold standard' for the 'ever-more important aspect of modern life', namely the proof of one's individual identity. It is to give people 'a simple and secure means of verifying their identity to help them travel freely and complete everyday transactions securely, simply and with confidence' (Blunkett 2004). Here we have the image of the card not primarily as a relationship of surveillance between state and society, but as an instrument operating within civil and economic society. In other words, the idea of a form of identification which brings security to such everyday private transactions as taking employment or opening a bank account. By (re)securing such sites and their processes, it is to contribute to the promotion of the welfare of the population. In this way the card holds out the promise of fulfilling by biometric means Bentham's dream of constructing a social space of inter-personal transparency and certainty.

Again, my point in relating the national ID card to the diagram of liberal security is to caution against overstating the novelty of the present. While a case can certainly be made for seeing the national ID card as one more symptom of the emerging control society, a 'new age of insecurity', or even a further step towards a society of surveillance, I have deliberately suggested ways in which it remains consistent with many deeply-established assumptions and practices of liberal governmentality. In other words, the card does not break upon the political scene from nowhere but gestates within a long line of political and governmental reflection.

But if we can situate the national identity card in relation to the diagram of liberal security, it is also possible to draw out its connections to the game of social security. This provides my third and final trajectory. Consider the following rationalization of the national identity scheme.

The identity cards scheme will be an inclusive scheme, designed to cover everyone who has a right to be here. It will show that everyone belongs to our society whether they were born here, have chosen to make their home here or are just staying for a while to study or work. It will help people prove their identity to access services such as free health treatment or benefits and give everyone confidence that legal

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migration will not result in increased fraudulent use of hard-pressed public services. If our communities have confidence in our immigration controls, they will be more welcoming of new arrivals, helping to promote a more cohesive society (Home Office 2003: 6)

A theme shared by a wide range of theories - including the control society, post-nationalism and Fraser's globalized governmentality - is the characterization of the present in terms of an unbundling of governance, a deterritorialization of various national institutions like the welfare state, and a growing openness to global forces and movements. Such logics tend to agree that the era of welfarism is over; marketization, rescaling, globalization are all processes contributing to a new political architecture. Yet a brief glance at the debate surrounding the national identity card reveals a set of contradictory processes. Amongst the foremost aims of the card seems to be a sort of rebordering of the space of national society, a reinscription of the boundaries of citizenship rights by means of new technologies of identification. If the welfare state came to be pre-eminent amongst the apparatuses of security, which Foucault associates with governmentality (Foucault 1991), then here we seem to be facing a kind of second-order securitization process – nothing less than the *securitization of the apparatus of security*. Put differently, the rationality of the card seems to be the provision of what we might call *meta-security*. National identity cards are not a system of benefit provision in their own right, anymore than one can use them as credit cards. Instead, they are supposed to secure the wider space in which social security (and, as we saw above, the commercial and civil spheres associated with liberal security) operates. Whether it's healthcare, assistance for those claiming asylum, or public education, by ensuring the identity of the applicant, the card is supposed to counteract the 'abuse' of these systems. (Note how a problem of 'abuse' is constructed not just through political speech but also through institutional practices.) More generally, it is to restore 'trust' and public support in these regimes, guaranteeing that they will retain or regain legitimacy as pillars of societal governance. In addition, this move of securitization implies a particular construction of the 'crisis' of the welfare state. As with the discourse of 'welfare reform', the ID scheme communicates the message that the problem of the welfare state is not so much that it is underfunded but rather that scarce resources are being drained away by fraud and abuse.

Conclusion

As part of the 2005 election campaign, Prime Minister Tony Blair (2005) delivered a speech that was staged in front of the iconic White Cliffs of

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Dover. The speech was dedicated to the question of 'immigration and asylum' – one of the more recent hybrids to organize the control of the movement of people. Blair welcomed the ID card as a contribution to improved migration control, describing it as 'the technology of tomorrow'. With this little combination of the words 'technology' and 'tomorrow' Blair seeks to legitimate the ID card, giving the scheme an aura of inevitability as well as a gloss of technological progress. But

he also illustrates a theme of this chapter – how temporality is not given but a matter of active sorting. In this case temporality is internal to politics, not its natural setting.

Latour has argued that a perspective of hybrids and networks is one that signals ‘the end of the passing past’. Adopting this perspective does not mean that one rejects the existence of a past or a future. But it does mean we abandon the linear idea of temporality - what Benjamin (1968: 261) called ‘empty, homogeneous time’. Latour suggests instead of straight lines or curves we think in terms of a spiral where ‘the future takes the form of a circle expanding in all directions, and the past is not surpassed but revisited, repeated, surrounded, protected, recombined, reinterpreted and reshuffled. Elements that appear remote if we follow the spiral may turn out to be quite nearby if we compare loops... Such a temporality does not oblige us to use the labels “archaic” or “advanced”, since every cohort of contemporary elements may bring together elements from all times’ (75).

Taking the example of national identity cards I have tried to show how they sustain multiple sets of relations and inhabit plural temporalities. One can certainly weave such an element into a narrative about societal transformation and post-modernization in which systems of power become more and more sophisticated. But to do so obscures the way they might play into, support and even revive systems of power that are often assumed to be obsolete or in the process of being replaced by more ‘advanced’ (or ‘regressive’) regimes. For instance, consider how the current turn towards programmes of ‘workfare’ revives the very old idea that the recipients of assistance should demonstrate their worthiness at the level of certain bodily acts and gestures, but often combines this with very contemporary emphases on counseling and individual profiling.

In sum, there is nothing that compels policy studies to continue to organize its analyses in terms of progressive/regressive and linear time. Perhaps it is time to stop sorting elements into neat cohorts and epochs – a move which obscures their polyvalence and ambiguity - and start thinking their multiple times. To do this would lessen the hold which apparently inexorable processes and master narratives like ‘globalization’ and ‘neoliberalism’ still exercise upon our political imagination.

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Notes

¹ For example, see Rabinow and Rose (2003: 4) where it is argued that widely-read theorists like Agamben and Hardt and Negri dilute the concept of biopolitics through their ‘highly general philosophical deployments’ of the term.

² Interestingly, there is presently no official proposal for the US to introduce an American national identity card. While de facto measures are being taken – for instance through technological upgrading of State driver’s licences and national data-sharing – it seems that in the heartland of homeland insecurity, citizen objections to such a scheme have ruled out such initiatives.

³ More recently the UK government has sought to qualify some of the claims it made when first introducing the ID card idea, admitting that it had been guilty of ‘overselling’ the scheme. See Guardian (2005).

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