

Tries have b

Public identity schemes are now evolving in a variety of countries. The most comprehensive schemes, such as Belgium's, have been developed over many years. Other countries have been establishing the readiness for a logical identity card scheme in the background, but political infighting between departmental vested interests have introduced so much political inertia that the schemes have ground to a halt.

It is important to make a critical distinction here between a merely physical ID card and a logical ID card that is linked dynamically to a centralised database. When people point to mainland Europe as successful examples of ID card projects, they always refer unknowingly to the lesser physical deployments.

Logical ID card schemes entail the challenge of dealing with the fundamental vulnerability of identity data, given the relative ease of connecting the dots to extrapolate intelligence about people in a frictionless and fast moving, information-rich and Web-enabled world. This is indeed a challenge several orders of magnitude greater than that of a physical ID card scheme.

Many logical identity projects are quickly de-railed either by unsympathetic government departments or by public opinion, as recognition of the power both potentially beneficial and dangerous of a logical identity becomes common knowledge. In general, only in countries with more autocratic styles of government, where central control is more of a way of life, are such schemes accepted as part of the way of life (Belgium is a notable exception here; perhaps Belgians have accepted a draconian ID Card scheme partly due to their collective desire to prevent the recurrence of the horrific child abuse, murders and tortures by Marc Dutroux?).