
The Importance of Being Earnest

Why ethics and culture matter in identity management



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Emilio Mordini

- **Emilio Mordini** is a clinical psychoanalyst and founding director of the Centre for Science, Society and Citizenship. He is Professor of Bioethics at University of Rome "La Sapienza". He was formerly Director of the Psychoanalytic Institute for Social Research (1986-2001) and scientific secretary of the Bioethical Commission of the National Research Council (CNR) from 1994 to 2004.
- He was originally trained as a medical doctor (M.D. from "La Sapienza", 1981; specialisation in gastroenterology, 1984) before switching to psychoanalysis (registered psychoanalyst, 1989;) and then to ethics and social sciences (M.Phil. from the Pontifical University of Rome "Angelicum", 1994).
- Emilio Mordini's current research concerns biometrics and identification technologies, and their social, ethical, cultural and legal implications. This research focuses on the political, social and ethical implications of recent developments in identification technology and the ways in which these change our ideas about human identity, about the distinction between private and public spheres.



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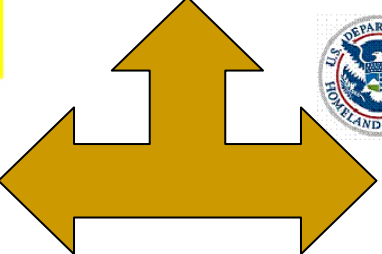


BIOMETRIC IDENTIFICATION TECHNOLOGY ETHICS

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IDENTITY AND SECURITY

The chief principle of a well-regulated police state is this: That each citizen shall be at all times and places ... recognized as this or that particular person. **No one must remain unknown to the police.** This can be attained with certainty only in the following manner: Each one must always carry a pass with him, signed by his immediate government official, in which his person is accurately described. There must be no exception to this rule.

Johann G. Fichte, THE SCIENCE OF RIGHTS.



GOAL OF MY PRESENTATION

I would like to challenge this statement and this belief..

I aim to demonstrate that Identification is:

- 1) Culturally constructed (i.e., there is no objective ID to be unveiled)*
- 2) A means to empower people rather than a means by which the Power rules people*
- 3) A fundamental Human Right*



What is “identity”?

“To say of anything that it is identical with it self is trivial, and to say that it is identical with anything else is absurd.”

(W.O.Quine, *Quiddities*)

When we state something about the identity of “A”, we assert that, under that specific circumstance, “A” is identical to any other “A” sharing the same properties (e.g., when we state that the identity of an apple is being an apple, we actually state that an apple is identical with any other apple under this specific circumstance). But when we state that “A” is “A”, we mean that there are not two different items but only one (e.g., when we state that this apple is the apple we purchased yesterday, we are actually saying that there is only one apple with two different descriptions).



Yet Quine is still overoptimistic...

Not only anything cannot be identical to anything else but anything cannot be identical even with itself because time never stops and – all other conditions being equal – time coordinates will be different,

Nothing is truly identical to anything else whenever it was, is, and will be.

Every physical item is continuously changing. Beings are made up by time, every existing object flows over time and goes by...

No man ever steps in the same river twice, for it's not the same river and he's not the same man

Heraclitus



So why identity matters?

- None of these questions is obviously new, yet what makes them new is their current political relevance.
- Defining the conditions for individual identification does not reduce to specifying conditions for identities of persons, for personal continuity or survival, or for other highly metaphysical questions.
- Defining the conditions for individual identification means specifying the characteristics that distinguish a person, the elements by which a person is distinguished by other persons.
- Any kind of transactions and the whole political, legal and financial domains could not be even thinkable if there was no certainty about personal identity.

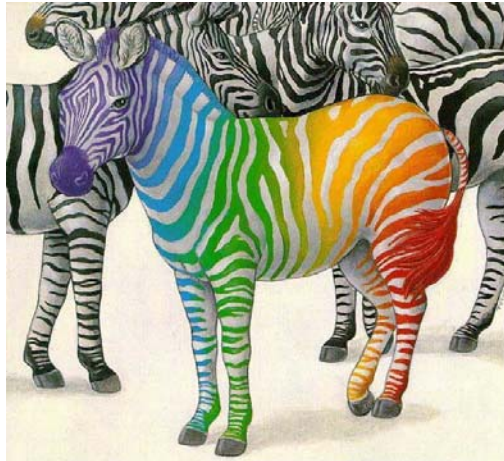


1° Argument

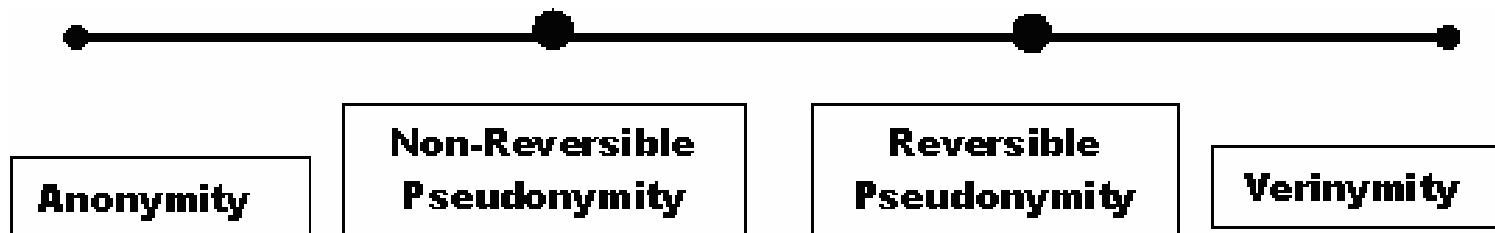
- Identity is an empty term, if it is taken rigorously.
- When one speaks of personal identity and personal identification one is referring to an important social practice, which changes over time and across different cultures.



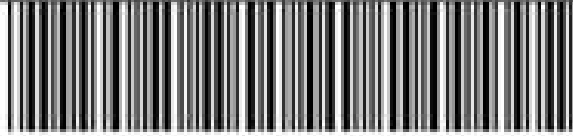
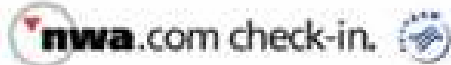
Personal Identity and its Components



Personal Identity means diverse things and there are diverse degrees of identifiability.



Legal Name

			
BOARDING PASS 1			
Name:	BIN LADEN/OSAMA	Coach Class	
Frequent flyer Nbr:	NW3233110361	Confirmation:	SXPEYX
E-Ticket Nbr:	424903353059	Request:	
Seat: 07-C	Gate: A10 - Gate may change, check monitors	Seat: 07-C	
Date:	26OCT2006		
Flight:	NW 7305		
Depart:	Indianapolis, IN	10:50AM	
Arrive:	Washington - Reagan Natl	1:30PM	

- ❑ Identification may involve a person's legal name. The assumption is made that there is only one John Smith born to particular parents at a given time and place. Even twins have different first names and birth times.
- ❑ Name usually involves connection to a biological or social lineage and can be a key to a vast amount of other information.



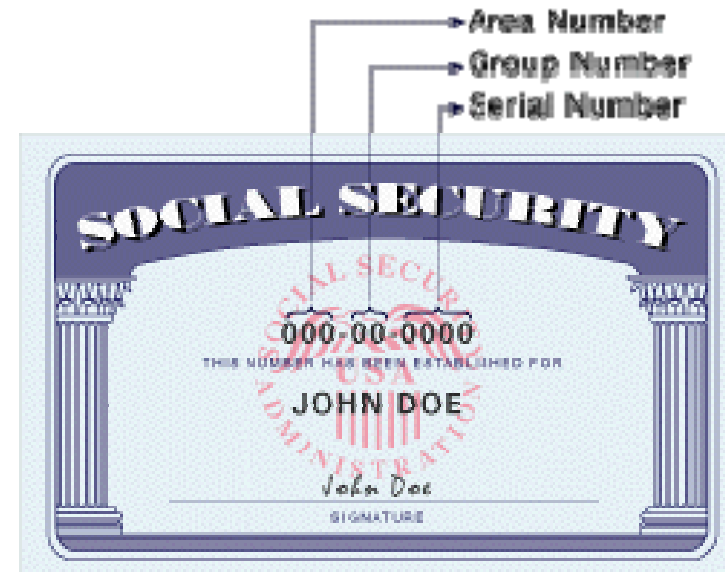
Locability

- ❑ Identification can refer to a person's address: it answers a "where" rather than a "who" question.
- ❑ Downing Street" or "Number 10" is often used as synonym for the UK Prime Ministers.
- ❑ This involves "reachability", whether in actual or cyberspace (telephone number, mail or E-mail address, an account number).
- ❑ It does involve the ability to take various forms of action such as blocking, granting access, delivering or picking up, charging, penalizing, rewarding or apprehending.

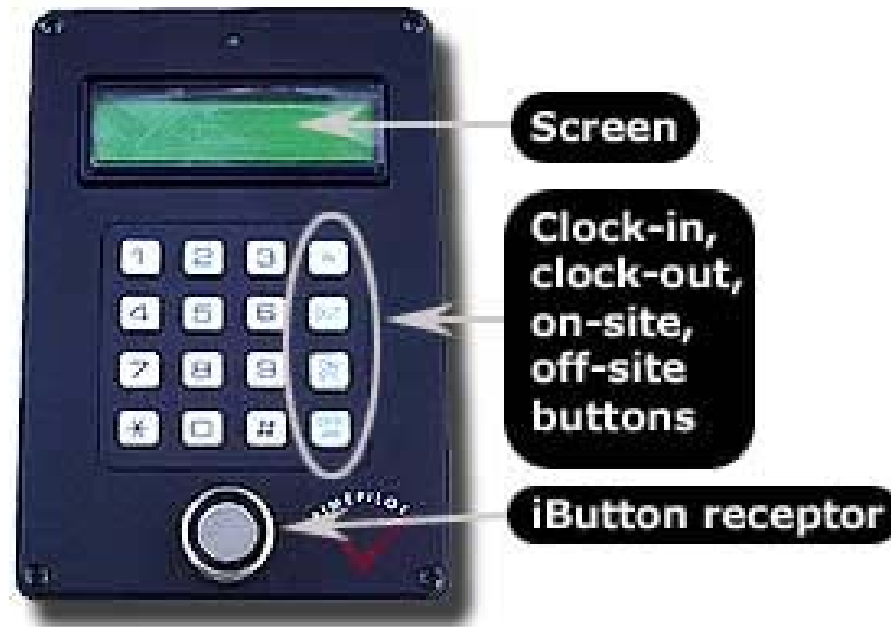


Pseudonyms 1

- ❑ Identification may involve alphabetic, numerical or other symbols such as a social security number or biometric patterns which **can be linked back to a person.**
- ❑ As with name, the symbol is intended to refer to only one individual (but unlike a given name which can be shared, letters and numbers are sufficient as unique identifiers).



Pseudonyms 2



- ❑ Identification may involve symbols which **can not in the normal course of events be linked back to a person.**
- ❑ PINs (Personal Identification Numbers) are an example of personal symbols which can save anonymity



Token

Identification may involve certification in which the possession of knowledge (secret passwords, codes) or artifacts (tickets, badges, tattoos, uniforms) or skills labels one as a particular kind of person to be treated in a given way.

This is categorical and identifies their possessor as an eligible or ineligible person with no necessary reference to anything more.

This may be linked back to a unique person/place identity, but need not be.



Distinctive patterns

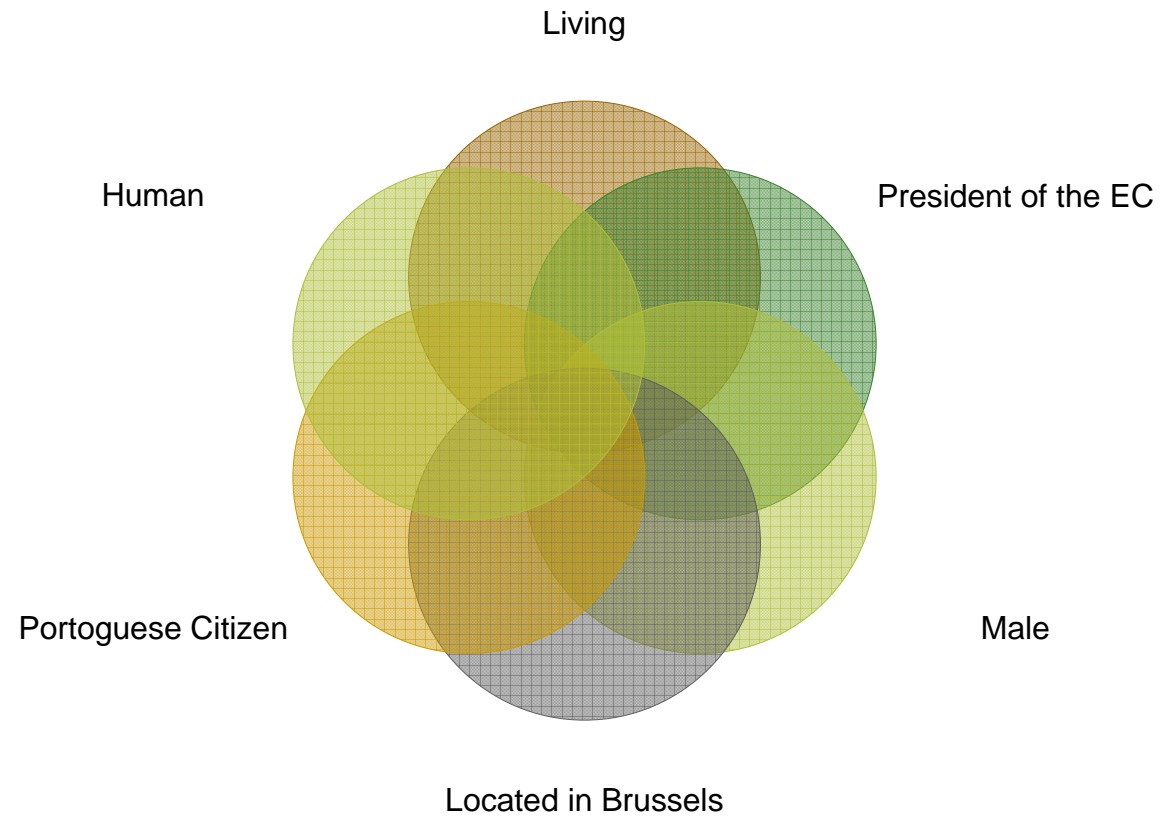
Identification may be made by reference to distinctive appearance or behavior patterns of persons

Being unnamed is not necessarily the same as being unknown. Some information is always evident in face-to-face interaction because we are all ambulatory autobiographies continuously and unavoidably emitting data for other's senses and machines.

Similarly detectives may attribute re-occurring crimes to a given individual even though they don't know the person's name (e.g., the Unabomber, Jack-the-Ripper).



Identity as a set of infinite sets



2° Argument

- Identity results from the intersection between different sets to which one belongs, any society and culture define those sets that it believes to be relevant
- Personal identification systems are all based on the fiction that there is an ultimate set made up only by one individual, that is the identified individual.



STATE AND IDENTITY 1

- Till the beginning of the modern era, most people did not need to demonstrate their identities, but a few categories of mobile people such as pilgrims, beggars, messengers.



STATE AND IDENTITY 2

- This order was overturned with the birth of the modern nation state.
- The origins of the modern nation-state system can be located in the group of centralised European territorial states that emerged during the sixteenth century.
- Those states developed centralised administrations, established precise borders, delimited their populations, and founded a system of interstate relations which provided for reciprocal recognition of integrity and sovereignty.



STATE AND IDENTITY 3

- After the Westphalia treaty all people were ascribed nationality.
- Citizenship emerged within this system as a means of facilitating governance and establishing control over the movement of populations.



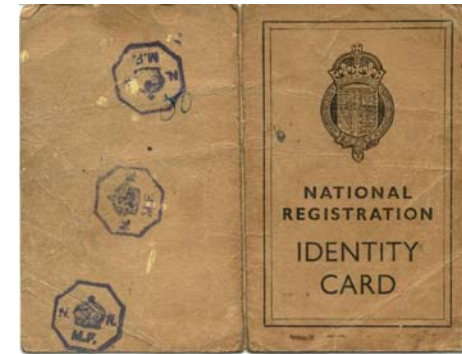
IDENTITY IS BASED ON BIRTH REGISTRATION

BIRTHS, DEATHS AND MARRIAGES REGISTRATION ACT.
SCHEDULE D—Particulars of Birth. OCT 5 1906
Victoria 3917

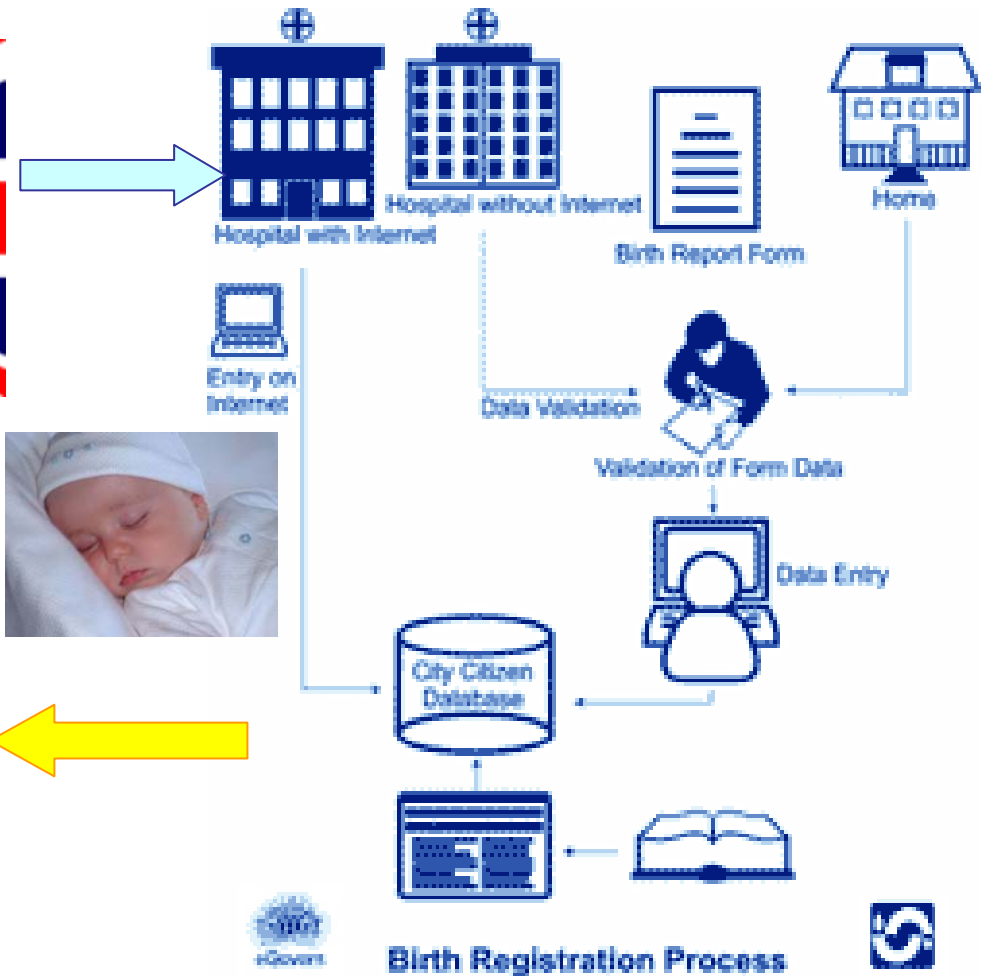
Under and pursuant to the provisions of the "Births, Deaths and Marriages Registration Act" that I, the Registrar of Births, Deaths and Marriages, do hereby certify that the following particulars of birth have been registered in accordance with the provisions of the said Act:

Date of Birth: 17th November 1864
Place of Birth: Victoria B.C.
Sex of child: Male
Name of child: Clarence Lucy
Name and Position: Joanna Sobiech
Name and position of mother: Solicitor (at that time) - now a retired judge of Supreme Court of B.C.
Name of mother at date of birth: Joanna Sobiech
Name of mother at date of registration: Joanna Sobiech
Name of father: [Blank]
Name of father at date of registration: [Blank]
Name of child at date of birth: Clarence Lucy
Name of child at date of registration: Clarence Lucy
DATED at Victoria B.C. this 3rd day of October, 1906
(Signature of Informant) Will Trawin Draft
(Address in full of Informant) 2 Pleasant St. Victoria

BIRTH CERTIFICATE



BIRTH REGISTRATION IS A LEGAL ACT ENFORCED BY A NATION STATE, WHICH GIVES “CIVIL” BIRTH TO A NEW CITIZEN



CERTIFIED COPY OF AN ENTRY OF BIRTH
 GIVEN AT THE GENERAL REGISTER OFFICE
 Application Number COL001167

REGISTRATION DISTRICT St. George Hanover Square
 1914. BIRTH in the Sub-district of Mayfair and Knightsbridge in the County of London

No.	When and where born	Name, if any	Sex	Name and surname of father	Name, surname and middle name of mother	Occupation of father	Signature, description and residence of informant	When registered	Signature of register	Name entered after registration
420	12th Street Mayfair	Signe Adelaide	F	James Arthur Mayfair	Frances Adelaide Mayfair	Medical Officer of Health	James Arthur Mayfair, 12th Street Mayfair	1914	[Signature]	Signe Adelaide

CERTIFIED to be a true copy of an entry in the certified copy of a Register of Births in the District above mentioned.
 Given at the GENERAL REGISTER OFFICE, under the Seal of the said Office, the 2nd day of December 2005

BXCB 390111

CAUTION: THERE ARE OFFENCES RELATING TO FALSIFYING OR ALTERING A CERTIFICATE AND USING OR POSSESSING A FALSE CERTIFICATE. PENALTY: IMPRISONMENT.
 WARNING: A CERTIFICATE IS NOT EVIDENCE OF IDENTITY.



Why identification/verification matter today?

The couple citizenship/personal identity emerged from around the sixteenth century, and is beginning to disintegrate.

Globalization, which is in its essence removal of fix boundaries, implies weakening of the traditional concept of citizenship and personal identity based upon the notion of a bounded society.

An important outcome of globalization is thus the development of automated systems for human identification

These technologies originate from some practical problems but they unavoidably tend to take over one vital function on nation states, that is certification of identities



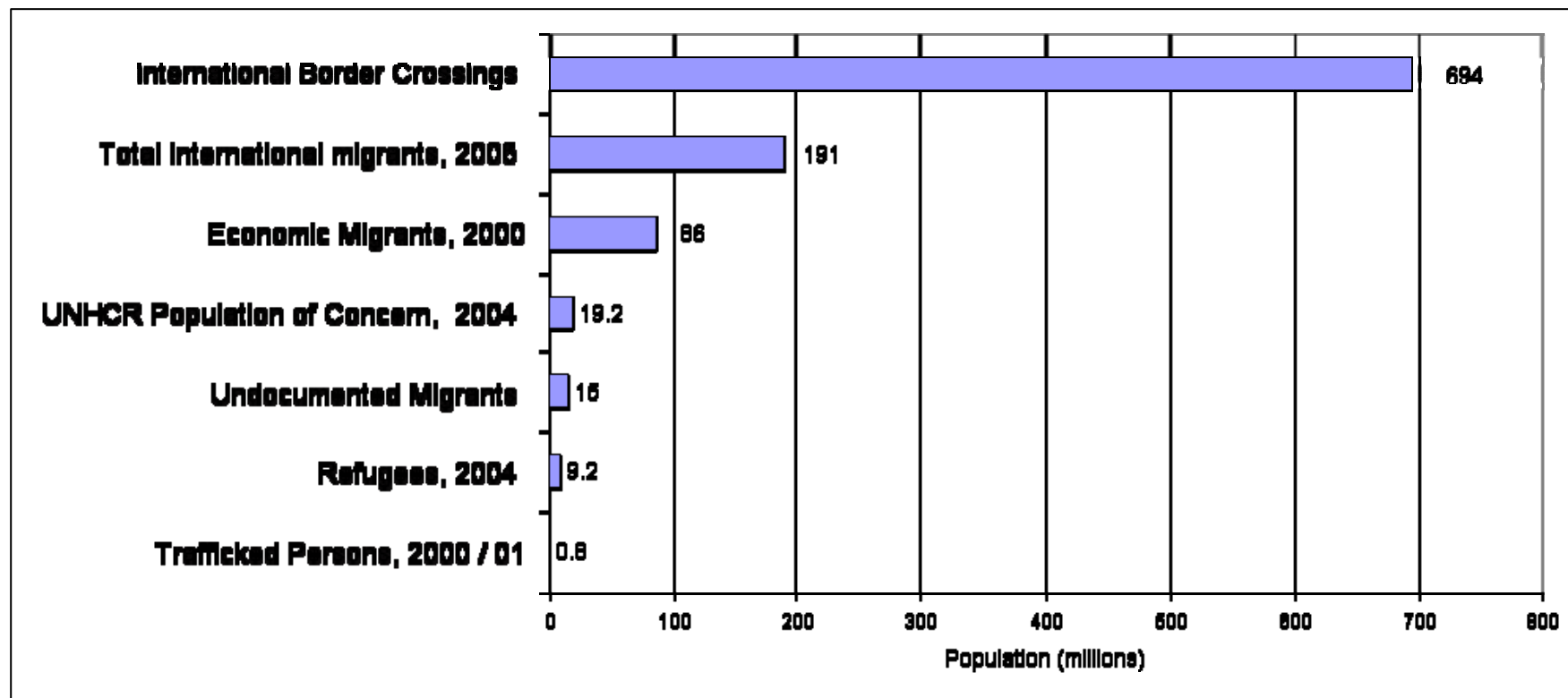
The world in transit



The world is in increasing and constant transit. On any given day, about 8 million people are flying in the sky. The figure was 100.000 in 1983, and 3 million in 1999.



Types of mobile populations



Note: 'UNHCR population of concern includes refugees, asylum seekers, returnees (returned refugees), Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs), returned IDPs, and others of concern to UNHCR (stateless, those holding temporary asylum, etc).

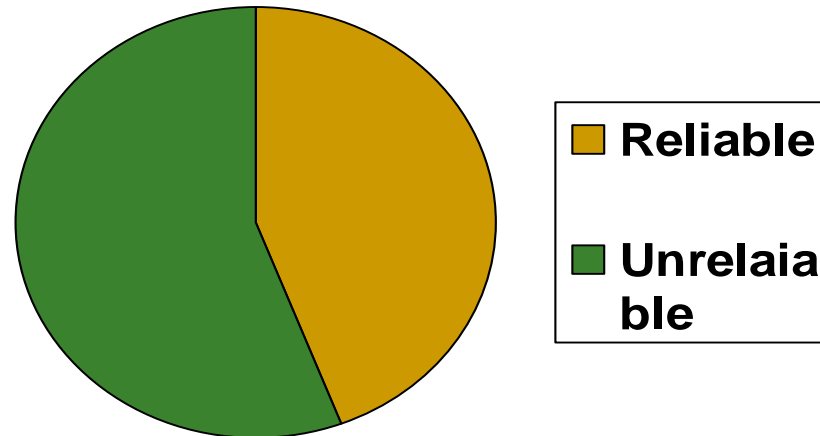
Sources:

- Grondin D. and Collett E. (2004) 'Failing migration health, the case of Tuberculosis', Business Briefing: Clinical virology and infectious diseases
- Trends in Total Migrant Stock: The 2005 Revision. UN Department of Social and Economic Affairs, Population Division. No.: POP/DB/MIG/Rev.2005/Doc. February 2006
- 2004 Global Refugee Trends: Overview of Refugee Populations, New Arrivals, Durable Solutions, Asylum-Seekers, Stateless and Other persons of concern to UNHCR. Population and Geographical Data Section, Division of Operational Support. UNHCR: Geneva. June 2005. Available from: <<http://www.unhcr.org/statistics>> [18 May 2006]
- ILO (2004a) 'Facts on Migrant Labour' [Online]. Available from: <<http://www.ilo.org/public/english/bureau/inf/download/factsheets/pdf/migrants.pdf>> [18 May 2006]
- USDS (2005) Trafficking in Persons Report, [Online] Available from: <http://www.state.gov/g/tip/rls/tiprpt/2005/> [18 May 2006]



Unreliable IDs

1. Bad Quality
2. Fake Documents
3. Translitteration of different alphabets
4. Lack of birth certificate

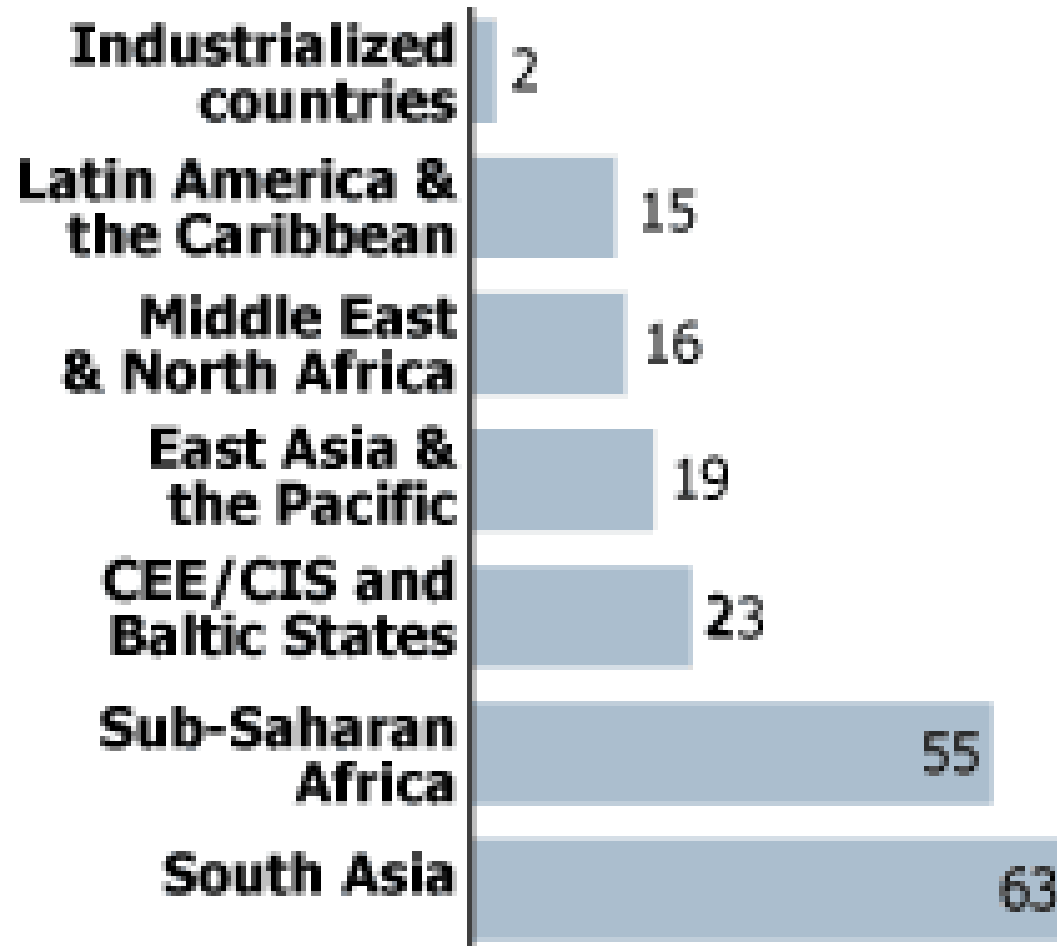


Unreliable identities

- In 2000 the UNICEF has calculated that 50 million babies (41% of births worldwide) were not registered and thus without any identity document. Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal have not yet made mandatory child registration at birth



World Percentage of Unregistered Children



IDENTITY AND THE INTERNET

- An increasing number of online applications require a reliable means of identification of users
- There are numerous examples such applications including Internet banking, online trading remote management of confidential databases and access to personal information B2B.
- The conventional means of identification (e.g. passwords, personal identification numbers) can be easily compromised, observed or forgotten.



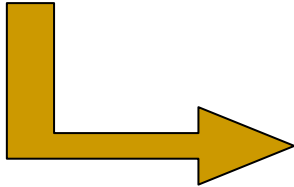
WORLD INTERNET USAGE AND POPULATION STATISTICS

World Regions	Population (2006 Est.)	Population % of World	Internet Usage, Latest Data	% Population (Penetration)	Usage % of World	Usage Growth 2000-2005
<u>Africa</u>	915,210,928	14.1 %	23,649,000	2.6 %	2.3 %	423.9 %
<u>Asia</u>	3,667,774,066	56.4 %	380,400,713	10.4 %	36.5 %	232.8 %
<u>Europe</u>	807,289,020	12.4 %	294,101,844	36.4 %	28.2 %	179.8 %
<u>Middle East</u>	190,084,161	2.9 %	18,203,500	9.6 %	1.7 %	454.2 %
<u>North America</u>	331,473,276	5.1 %	227,470,713	68.6 %	21.8 %	110.4 %
<u>Latin America/Caribbean</u>	553,908,632	8.5 %	79,962,809	14.7 %	7.8 %	350.5 %
<u>Oceania / Australia</u>	33,956,977	0.5 %	17,872,707	52.6 %	1.7 %	134.6 %
WORLD TOTAL	6,499,697,060	100.0 %	1,043,104,886	16.0 %	100.0 %	189.0 %



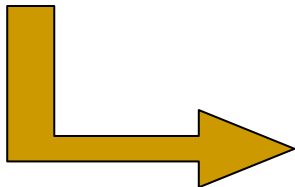
The Identity Revolution

1) Global Human Mobility



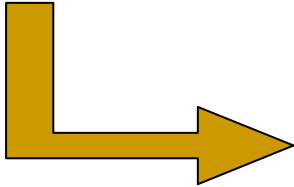
Mass of People in transit too huge to be handled in traditional ways

2) Unreliable Identity Documents



Too many people without reliable documents.
Too many unreliable States

3) Global Electronic Mobility



Digital Identities, dispersed and globalised



IDENTITY AND STATE OF EXCEPTION



The coming politics will not be a struggle between states, but, instead, a struggle between the state and humanity.

G.Agamben, 1993



The two sides of a same coin

Philosophers as Agabens are nothing but the side of a coin, whose other side is Fichte.

They all presume that identification is to oppress people, to dominate and control them.

Yet it is historically false and logically untenable.



3° Argument

In Primo Levi's memoir, *The Drowned and the Saved*, he describes the tattoo as a “pure offense”, as a hallmark by which “slaves are branded and cattle sent to slaughter”.

Concentration camps did not need to identify people, they just needed to humiliate them and cancel their identities. The tattoo
WAS NOT FOR IDENTIFYING PEOPLE.

Absolute powers have ruled the world for millenia without any need to identify people,

ON THE CONTRARY ABSOLUTE POWERS HAVE ALWAYS NEEDED ANONIMOUS CROWDS. HISTORICALLY SPEAKING IDENTITY HAS ALWAYS BEEN THE WAY IN WHICH THE OPPRESSED ONES AFFIRMED THEIR RIGHTS AGAINST THE RULERS



The Global Identity System

- We usually think that the request for proof of identity is an expression of power by the person doing the requesting. The requesting person may be a clerk at a food store or a security person at the airport or a police officer stopping a suspect or a guard at a highly secure military installation.
- Yet IDENTIFICATION IS THE MOST EFFECTIVE WAY TO CONTRAST CATEGORIZATION, that is actually the way in which dictatorships rule masses.
- In the ancient Greece slaves were called “faceless”, *aprosopon*.
- The word that in Greek designates the face, *prosopon*, it is also at the origin of the Latin word *persona*, person.
- The person is thus an individual with a face, that is out of metaphor a person with an identity
- The right to have rights is grounded on the existence of personal identities. Only identifiable people can make claims.



Empowerment

Secure identities are not means to control citizens, on the contrary they are essential instruments to empower people.

Human rights are unthinkable without “identifiable people”.

One can be entitled with rights only if he has an identity. No political, civil and social right can be enforced on anonymous crowds. Even the right to anonymity can be enforced only if one has an identity to hide.

The right to have an identity (to be able to prove his own identity and to be identified) is therefore a dignity right, which concerns the very existence of the human person.

It should be considered within the first 6 chapters of the Chart of Rights of European Citizens.



THE REAL ISSUE

- Who is going to take care of this huge mass of people who needs reliable and trustworthy identities and credentials?
- Nation states?
- One or more global super-powers?
- Private companies?

**LONG TERM, THIS IS
THE REAL
POLITICAL AND
ETHICAL QUESTION
BEHIND THE
IDENTITY
REVOLUTION**



The importance of being Ernest

- Algernon: ...your name isn't Jack at all; it is Ernest.
- Jack: It isn't Ernest; it's Jack.
- Alg: You have always told me it was Ernest. I have introduced you to everyone as Ernest. You answer to the name of Ernest. You look as if your name was Ernest. You are the most earnest looking person I ever saw in my life. It is perfectly absurd your saying that your name isn't Ernest. It's on your cards. Here is one of them. Mr Ernest Worthing, B.4, The Albany. I'll keep this as proof that your name is Ernest if ever you attempt to deny it to me, or to Gwendolen, or to anyone else.
- Jack: **Well, my name is Ernest in town and Jack in the country...**

Thank you for your attention!

