Press Release

**JMI organizes online lecture on Surveillance Capitalism by Canadian Prof. Avid Lyon**

The Department of English, Jamia Millia Islamia(JMI) , organized the twenty-first lecture of the Distinguished Lecture Series, " Surveillance Capitalism meets the Pandemic: Surveillance Challenges for the 'Social Contract'" by Prof. David Lyon, Professor Emeritus at the Department of Sociology and Faculty of Law at Queen's  University, Ontario, Canada and the Former Director of the Surveillance Studies Centre, on Friday, 22nd April, 2022.  Supported by the Scheme for Promotion of Academic and Research Collaboration (SPARC), Ministry of Education, Government of India, the talk was organized as part of the ongoing academic collaboration with the Department of English and American Studies, University of Würzburg, Germany, and promises to be one in a line of successively pertinent lectures.

The talk was conducted by, Ms. Zahra Rizvi, Ms. Shraddha A. Singh, Ms. Suman Bhagchandani and Aparna Pathak, Ph.D. scholars, Department of English, JMI, and was enthusiastically attended by a large crowd of scholars, students, and faculty from all over the world and across various time-zones.

Prof. Simi Malhotra, H.o.D., Department of English, JMI, Indian PI, delivered the welcome address, greeting the invited speaker, faculty, scholars, and students.  She, then, introduced the esteemed speaker, Prof. David Lyon, who was greeted by a round of applause.

In his lecture, Prof. David focused on the idea of surveillance capitalism that allows the data consumers to voluntarily share data with private and government bodies, thereby allowing them to negotiate the boundaries of privacy. Prof. Lyon used the argument in the light of the contemporary pandemic situation, introducing the term, 'vaccine passports' as one of the practices legitimised for use by medical practitioners, travel gatekeepers, and of course, the government, thereby giving them an agency to acquire data about people. This vast production of medical data, according to his study, creates a possibility of discrimination on racial lines which exceeds surveillance from an individual level to that of a community.

Prof Lyon's talk also traced the history of surveillance, starting with references to Hobbes and Locke's works, followed by industrialisation and capitalism which changed its meaning, use and applicability. This was suggested by yet another example of platforms like Google Maps, Amazon, Examity and Zoom which allow digital tracing of people's movement, choices and an examination of private spaces. It is in context of the present times that Prof. Lyon's raised the need for a data democracy which can be achieved by practicing a sensitive approach towards: 1.the civil society; 2. the state and its people; and finally, the 3. Their cooperation.

This was followed by an engaging, in-depth Q/A session coordinated by Ms. Suman Bhagchandani, Ph.D. Scholar, Department of English, JMI. The event was brought to an end with a Vote of Thanks by Ms. Aparna Pathak.

To ensure a wide range of viewership and participation, the event was also live streamed on YouTube, and was attended by over a hundred participants.

Public Relations Office
Jamia Millia Islamia

Surveillance capitalism
meets the Pandemic

Surveillance challenges to the "social contract"

David Lyon, Queen's University, Canada

## Vaccine passports as surveillance

- Questions of privacy but also of data justice raised by vaccine passports
- Pressure from "back-to-normal" and travel/hospitality industries especially
- Threats to privacy are part of the problem; lack of data justice is increasingly significant e.g. vaccine passports produce data "others"



## Democratic + digital social contract

- "Users" are involved in new ways and there's a looping effect (Ian Hacking)
- To "privacy" add "data justice"; scoring and ranking is how new platforms operate
- Surveillance makes people *visible* and thus *represents* them to organizations, which *treat* them accordingly
- Should not just invite surveillance through daily internet use; pause to evaluate activities (Pallito)
- Social contract worth exploring as means to digital democracy, which requires conscientization and commitment