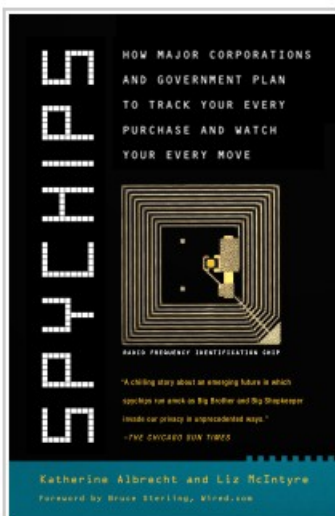


Knowing About Those, Who Know All About You

It is not forbidden, though it ought to be punishable by law, the spying of people's privacy. Spying on government's secrets and industrial spying can cause impressive sentences but spying on people (for government's and industrial concerns benefit) is permitted and possibly even stimulated. Presently, we cannot even demand to be informed when we carry the Trojan home [1]. And widespread ignorance among us, the potential victims, help further to spread the bad practice. I am talking about the spy chips (RFID or Radio Frequency Identification), which are spreading beyond control in billions of consumer products and may already – of course, without your knowledge and consent – be present among your clothes, shoes and in the bathroom (pardon by phantasy for not mentioning more).



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More on www.spychips.com

In my story "Just a Small Chip" (Chapter 11 in "Duodecameron" [2]), the potential of Big Brother's abuse of this technique is illustrated but the chip itself is not concealed, therefore mandatory. In real life, the chip is already there and is disguised. I shall limit this writing because an excellent description of the problem has already been made and is available in a book "SpyChips" by Dr. Katherine Albrecht and Liz McIntyre. I shall therefore limit my efforts here in (hopefully) making you curious in the emerging crime.

At first, let us consider two items that are found in the neighbourhood but are themselves to be regarded harmless in comparison: the bar code and the theft-tag.

The bar code is the 13-digit row of vertical lines, to be found on virtually all-sellable items and even on my books. The only adverse effect appears to be that the lady in the supermarket (there are really very few men there!) has lost the ability (bing) to calculate, the computer (bing) does it all for her (bing), even the subtraction if the delivered amount is paid cash and not given exactly as it demands.

The theft tag is the device to throw you into deep embarrassment if it was not deactivated properly and suddenly a shrill sound is heard, as you are about to leave the shop. Do not run now but go back to the counter, look the man/woman deep in the eyes and say in an insulted tune: "I think you forgot to deactivate something!" Just to make it clear who is to blame and deserve a red face. This tag is indeed a chip, but generally void of an antenna.

That characterizes the RFID, and whereas the chip itself may have become microscopic, the antenna is as big as ever. Currently, it is even larger when a battery is attached but – alas, spying firms – here help is coming, batteries are getting smaller and can now be printed on paper [3,4] (caution if you print it on toilet paper, that may yield an awkward surprise). But the normal RFID does not need any battery: the antenna serves the double function of receiving energy and transmit the signal, perhaps not miles/ kilometres but many yards/meters and through most materials.



One of a multitude of solutions: The small red dot is the chip, the rest is antenna. From www.SpyChips.com with permission

1 <http://www.spychips.com/right-to-know-bill.html>

2 <http://www.schou.de/literature/index-lit.html>

3 <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/technology/6945732.stm>

4 <http://hardware.slashdot.org/article.pl?sid=07/08/14/0023202&from=rss>

So much about the preconditions. However, that alone does not suffice to make it malicious. The ability for making love does not make the average man a rapist, for that a criminal intention is also required. That also such is present in rich amount (except that I must remove the word 'criminal,' much to my personal regret), is illustrated in the book, at best in the U.S. patency applications [20020165758 & 20020116274] by IBM, from which an "appetizer" shall be quoted:

Once the exact identity or some demographics or other characteristics of the person have been determined, the person tracking unit relies on this information to track the person as the person moves through the roaming areas. The person tracking unit may assign a tracking number to each identified person and store the tracking number in association with the collection of RFID tagged product information.

...

Although the systems ... of the present invention ... have been described in context of a retail store, it can be applied to other locations having roaming areas, such as shopping malls, airports, train stations, bus stations, elevators, trains, airplanes, restrooms, sport arenas, libraries, theaters, museums, etc.

...

the widespread use of RFID tags on merchandise such as clothing would make it possible for the locations of people, animals, and objects to be tracked on a global scale – a privacy invasion of Orwellian proportions

I am sorry not to be able to describe the adverse potencies of the new technique as brilliantly as IBM (shamelessly) has done. Big Brother's obedient servants are simply masters of expression.

Regrettably, some humans have implanted RFIDs on themselves. The firm VeriChip has developed chips of rice-corn size that can be implanted by a technique resembling an injection. The chip may contain your credit card number (when you bend the arm at the bar, your drink is automatically paid) or information about your disease. VeriChip refers to the FDA which granted permission – however, the FDA is subordinated the American secretary of health, and that was at the time of registration Tommy Thompson, who two weeks later, in January 2005, retired from his political position to serve in the executive committee of Applied Digital, the mother concern of VeriChip. Apparently, the FDA did not know that already in the 1990ies, RFIDs were suspected of causing malignant tumours in laboratory animals, and that in up to 10% of the animals [⁵,⁶]. A French study determined the rate in 1260 to 4.1% - and mice do not live so long. Would you, with this knowledge, just from the health aspect accept an implanted chip?

That was just a small starter. The book contains more exciting revelations, but I hope this suffices to awake your curiosity. A certain urgency is also connected to the topic: with the RFIDs spreading rapidly in our daily life, it is getting more difficult to get their conspicuous use get forbidden, possibly with 'Terroritis' [⁷] as the steady argument for all deprivations of civil rights.

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5 <http://www.inteldaily.com/?c=120&a=3470>

6 <http://www.heise.de/tp/r4/artikel/26/26167/1.html>

7 <http://www.schou.de/terrorwar/Terroritis.pdf>