Is privacy stupid ?

Introduction

As Mark Zuckerberg is being elected 'person of the year' by TIME magazine and the number of Facebook users around the world is soon reaching 600 millions of people (1), social networks can be considered as an unavoidable internet usage, if not a part of our daily life. However, when you read about Facebook, it's often regarding the change of its privacy term or because someone just realized feeding all his personal data to a company might not be right. Privacy is nowadays a central focus in every conversation about social networks. On the other hand, the openness is praised here and there on the internet via for example the open-source communities, or the users of p2p networks. If internet should be open, how open should it be ? Starting from the playful statement 'Privacy is stupid' from the medialab moddr(2), this article will try to define the boundaries of openness and privacy, interrogating why and how we need privacy. This will be done first in looking where does this need for privacy come from, then asking if we really need it in order to finally think about how privacy and openness could merge.

1) Where does it come from ?

Connecting people together via the exchange of more and more personal data inevitably led to question how those data are being handled. Privacy is nowadays a central concern in every discussion about the web 2.0, whether you read about it in newspapers, hear about it in conferences dealing with technologies or have a chat about it with people who know about the internet. This contemporary concern about privacy doesn't originate from the internet. Since the events of September 11th, there has been a huge increase of the surveillance and control method worldwide. The United Kingdom is renowned as being the country number one regarding it's percentage of deployment of Closed-circuit television (CCTV) throughout its streets. The exact number is controversial, but the most recent study by the consultancy company IMS Research 'which produces an annual report on video surveillance worldwide based on global sales of CCTV cameras, has calculated that there are 3.2 million cameras in the UK' (3)(BBC, 2009). There is also a lot of worry about the RFID (4)(CNET, 2003) that can trace your shopping habit and a lot of speculation has been going on about national ID cards in the US (5)(ACLU, 2003), where the records of what your are can all be contained in a small chip. Because on behalf of security, our intimate space is getting smaller and smaller. By the end of 2011, the US plan to install 1000 full body scanner (6), an advanced scanning technology considered intrusive by many. It is slowly spreading in the rest of the world. Those are only a few examples of how our privacy is being challenged by law, under cover of security.

1. http://www.vincos.it/world-map-of-social-networks/
2. This sentence was written as a conclusion in a tutorial sheet handed out during a workshop on wireless network hacking, by the medialab moddr in Rotterdam, october 2010.
3. http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/8158942.stm
4. http://news.cnet.com/2010-1069-980325.html
5. http://www.aclu.org/technology-and-liberty/5-problems-national-id-cards
6. http://travel.usatoday.com/flights/2010-07-13-1Abodyscans13_ST_N.htm

TO COME

Origin : Law & Culture
1 privacy of data feeded through the web
2 privacy of data stolen without notice
3 privacy of data stolen with notice

2) Do we need privacy ?

How was the plane before ?
If there is truth in being open, why couldn't we be open all the way ? The Government of Norway + France Gov giving out data.

3) How could we deal with it ? / Open source