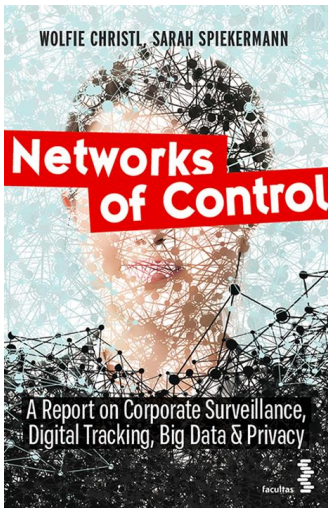


## New book “Networks of Control”

**Two Austrian privacy researchers have conducted a comprehensive study about corporate surveillance, digital tracking, big data and privacy. Their detailed report shows, how networks of companies are collecting, analyzing, sharing and making use of vast amounts of personal information about billions of people. Their book is available from October 2016.**



### ABOUT THE BOOK

Networks of Control

A Report on Corporate Surveillance, Digital Tracking, Big Data & Privacy  
Authors: Wolfie Christl and Sarah Spiekermann. Publisher: Facultas, Vienna  
Pages: 165. Price: € 19. On Sale: October 2016. ISBN 978-3-7089-1473-2

[www.facultas.at/2016/networksofcontrol](http://www.facultas.at/2016/networksofcontrol)

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*“having such a collection of examples in one place is really exciting”*

**Anna Fielder, chair of Privacy International**

The collection, analysis and utilization of digital information based on our clicks, swipes, likes, purchases, movements, behaviors and interests have become part of everyday life. While individuals become increasingly transparent, companies take control of the recorded data in a non-transparent and unregulated way. In their book, **Wolfie Christl and Sarah Spiekermann** explain how a vast number of companies are constantly tracking, profiling, categorizing, rating and affecting the lives of billions – across platforms, devices and life contexts.

Based on detailed examples their report answers the following questions:

- **Who are the players** in today’s personal data business? How do online platforms, tech companies and data brokers really collect, share and make use of personal information?
- **Which data is recorded** by smartphones, fitness trackers, e-readers, smart TVs, connected thermostats and cars? Will the Internet of Things lead to ubiquitous surveillance?
- **What can be inferred** from our purchases, calls, messages, website visits, web searches and likes?
- **How is Big Data analytics already used** in fields such as marketing, retail, insurance, finance, healthcare and work to treat us differently?
- What are the **societal and ethical implications** of these practices? And how can we **move forward**?

Their investigation not only exposes the full degree and scale of today’s personal data business, but also shows how algorithmic decisions on people lead to discrimination and social exclusion. Followed by an ethical reflection on personal data markets the authors present a selection of recommended actions. The authors conclude that a society based on ubiquitous digital tracking that is happening in a nontransparent way and systematically discriminating people for economic advantage raises serious concerns about the future of freedom, democracy, autonomy and human dignity.

**The authors** have been working on data privacy for many years, but stem from very different fields. Their report is a unique collaboration between a renowned digital rights activist and a distinguished academic. While Wolfie Christl is a privacy advocate, technologist, writer and educator whose work emerged from well-established networks in critical net culture and digital rights, Sarah Spiekermann chairs the Institute for Management Information Systems at the Vienna University of Economics and Business.

“Networks of Control” has been presented and discussed at the launch event of Vienna’s new “Privacy and Sustainable Computing Lab” at Vienna University of Economics and Business, co-founded by Sarah Spiekermann, on September 30, 2016. Other speakers at the launch event included Max Schrems, Anna Fielder (Privacy International), Paul Nemitz (Director Fundamental Rights, Directorate-General Justice of the European Commission), Udo Helmbrecht (Director EU Agency for Network and Information Security ENISA) and prominent guests from IEEE, W3C and ISOC. Details: <http://www.privacylab.at/events/launch>

## **Examples of corporate practices that have been examined in the report**

Many of the data collection and profiling practices presented in this book have rarely been examined in depth, or not at all. The authors hope that their comprehensive collection of facts will be taken up by other researchers, privacy advocates, digital rights organizations and media. Examples of corporate practices which are examined in the report include:

- **Data brokers** (e.g. Oracle, Acxiom, Experian, LexisNexis), **online and mobile tracking companies** (e.g. Lotame, Inmobi, Drawbridge, Sense Networks), **payment providers** (e.g. Adyen, MasterCard).
- Companies using big data analytics based on personal data in the fields of **credit scoring and personal finance** (e.g. ZestFinance, Lenddo, Kreditech, Cignifi, VisualDNA), **voter targeting** (e.g. Cambridge Analytica), **employee monitoring, hiring and workforce analytics** (e.g. Cornerstone, Humanyze, HireIQ), **insurance and healthcare** (e.g. Aviva, GNS Healthcare) and **fraud prevention, risk management and national security** (e.g. Trustev, TransUnion, IBM, Sentinel, Palantir).

## **The Authors**

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