

Script Week 1

It's 6.59 am on Tuesday and Ameer is just waking up. She's 23, lives in London and works as a secretary in an office. She is just a normal person going about her normal business. Ameer thinks she has total privacy but she's wrong. She doesn't know it but Ameer lives in the most watched country on the planet: the United Kingdom. When Ameer's alarm goes off, she switches her mobile phone on. Immediately her phone sends a signal to the nearest phone masts. This means her mobile phone company can now see her location. Also able to track Ameer's location, is her boyfriend: he signed up for a facebook application called Sniff that allows him to pay 50 p in return for details of where Ameer's phone is at any given moment provided it's switched on. Ameer had to agree to being tracked but she doesn't know when or how often he requests her location.

Ameer knows her building has security cameras but she is so used to them that she doesn't pay attention. All the images of Ameer entering and leaving her apartment are being recorded on a DVD by her landlord. The information commission recommends only keeping the images for as long as necessary but no maximum time is given. It's up to her landlord to decide.

It's 8 am and Ameer has arrived at the tube station. She owns a pre-paid oyster card which allows her to travel around London on public transport. Ameer's oyster card contains a radio frequency identification chip, meaning it records information about every journey Ameer makes using the card and stores it for 8 weeks. When she registered, she had to give her name, address and photo so every journey she makes using the card can be linked with her identity. When she tops up the oyster card with money, she pays with her credit card. Each time she uses her credit card the bank logs the time, location of the shop and how much she spent.

This information is often used to trace the movements of missing persons but it's also being used to track people suspected of committing a crime.

It's 8.42 am. Ameer left her house an hour ago but already she has been caught on camera 19 times. Now she is in the city centre that number starts to shoot up: there are cameras in shops, on buildings and on the street.

These street cameras are owned by the council and are monitored 24 hours a day all year round by trained operators. Under the Data Protection Act, there are strict rules to follow: operators are only allowed to zoom in on people they suspect are committing or about to commit a crime: anything else is considered an invasion of privacy.

8.58 am : and Ameer is arriving at her office : the building is one of the growing number with fingerprint scanners. The scanner recognizes 20 small points on Ameer's finger, which are turned into code compared against the original fingerprint she gave. If the code matches, the door opens. If it doesn't? the door remains closed. The fingerprints themselves aren't stored but German researchers said they turned the code back into a fingerprint meaning potentially the print could be stolen. Other people though would say it's easier to get Ameer's fingerprint on the glass door she closes behind her.

Like many UK companies the policy at Ameer's office is to monitor all her email and internet usage to ensure she is working effectively. By law, every internet service provider also has to keep information about every email sent or received in the UK for a year. They must give this information to any public body which makes a lawful request. The government says the data, which doesn't include the email content is vital for crime and terror inquiries.

1.04 pm and Ameer is at a local supermarket getting lunch. After choosing a sandwich Ameer goes to the check out to pay. She has a loyalty card which gives her one point for every pound she spends. Each time she swipes it, the card gives the supermarket information about exactly what Ameer has bought and because

Amee gave her address when she signed up for the card, they send her special offers tailored around her buying habits. As well as monitoring emails and web use Amee's company monitors telephone calls and being a secretary Amee makes a lot of them.

"Hi, can I speak to Christine in Accounts please". Amee's company can record every word she says. "Hi, Christine, there just seems to be a problem with one of our accounts". And the phone company logs information every time she makes a call, listing the time and who the call was to. But there's something more sinister here: Echelon is an international network of computers and people. Every phone call, fax, email or radio transmission can be intercepted by powerful computers capable of voice recognition: "It's showing up that we spent 80 pounds and I don't know that that amounts right". They are looking for a long list of key words which will provide evidence of crime like terrorism. Are they listening to your phone calls? Probably not but who knows for sure ? and how can we find out what the government won't tell us ?

5.05 pm and Amee is getting a lift home with her boyfriend. Since 2006, some roads and most petrol stations have been fitted with cameras that read the number plates and send the information to the police to be cross-checked against cars known to be stolen, uninsured or involved in crime. In central London, drivers also pay a congestion charge, cameras map the route and read the number plates to check which cars have paid the charge and which haven't. Police routinely use this information to reconstruct car journeys of persons of interest.

6.18 pm and Amee is back home. So far she has been located, tracked and monitored by her mobile phone, CCTV, travel card, credit card, email, internet, work phone, loyalty card and traffic cameras and she's unaware of most of it. But if she logs on to her social networking site, Amee's more than happy to tell people what she's been doing that day. She gives the information freely, so is privacy that important to her in the first place ? the Human rights act was introduced in 1998 to define the rights that every single UK citizen has. Article 8 addresses the right to privacy, it says : everyone has the right for his private and family life, his home and his correspondence.

There shall be no interference by a public authority with the exercise of this right except such as in accordance with the law and is necessary in a democratic society in the interests of national security, public safety or the economic well-being of a country, for the prevention of disorder or crime, for the protection of health or morals or for the protection of the rights and freedoms of others.

As Amee goes to bed she is blissfully unaware that tomorrow, like today, she will be tracked, monitored and located hundreds of times. Given everything we've seen in the day of an ordinary person the question has to be : Does privacy really matter ?