



The scary downside of Amazon



Who has not yet ordered anything at Amazon, the online corporation? It is fast, convenient and easy.

But the backgrounds of the group are by and large unknown. Who is the founder of Amazon, which connections does this company have and how sincere are the intentions behind it, for example when "Alexa" is placed as an understanding assistant into the living rooms of its customers. Learn more in this documentary about Amazon and its dark sides.

Control by Amazon at every turn

"3, 2, 1, mine" – for years this eBay advertising slogan has represented consumer behavior, where shopping desires can be met with just a few mouse clicks. This method has been developed even further. Today's spoiled consumer, sitting on his sofa, just says the words "Alexa bring me a beer!" and there it comes – often on the same day, and in the very near future just within minutes. This is made possible by a small voice computer from the online trading group Amazon. It responds to the name "Alexa" and millions have already found their way into the world's living rooms. Privacy was yesterday. Alexa hears everything that is spoken at home: As soon as the keyword "Alexa" is mentioned, complete conversation sequences are passed on to Amazon. Like this not by a totalitarian surveillance state is spying on you, but "merely" a company that via internet has worldwide access to private homes, across all national borders – the brave new world! It is so nicely comfortable that we do not realize the scary downside of this development or do not even want to see it. In this series Kla.TV sheds light on the consequences and presents practical ways out.

The supermarket that scans you

In early 2018, Amazon opened the first branch of its new high-tech supermarket chain called Amazon Go in the USA. The underlying idea: no more waiting at checkouts, no counting change, no sales personnel. The only things required are an app* and an Amazon account. Inside the store the customer simply takes whatever he likes, and leaves right away. The receipt arrives via e-mail. Details about how this works are not being disclosed by Amazon. The German Data Protection Commissioner, Peter Schaar, criticizes that this is not transparent for the customers shopping at an Amazon Go store which data is being collected and what happens to it. Certainly, there are a variety of cameras and sensors in the stores tracking and recording each and every step and the behavior of every customer. So the Amazon Go grocery store approach perfectly aligns like this, with the company's strategy to completely screen and spy on its customers. [4]

*application program on the smartphone

Amazon over everyone...

Amazon provides its services, like the payment service Amazon Pay, to other distributors as well – extending its dominant position like this, worldwide. In this way Amazon is able to control purchases beyond of its own group and collect corresponding personal data.

Rising of a giant

Jeffrey Preston Jorgensen, alias Jeff Bezos was born in 1964. After obtaining his degree from an elite university in the USA, he worked on Wall Street and was able to convince his mentor to invest in the project "Online-Shop". At first the name relentness.com was considered for the business, meaning 'unforgiving', 'merciless', however, it was finally replaced by Amazon*. Today Jeff Bezos not only owns the largest department store in the world, but with the takeover of the Washington Post, has also gained media power. Furthermore, with his company Blue Origin, Bezos sends spacecrafts into space, he owns 45 percent of the worldwide digital cloud** and by means of artificial intelligence (for example Alexa) he gains increasing access to all areas of human life. For Bezos it is still "Day One" because technology's possibilities are still very much in the beginning stages. [1]

*named after Amazon River, by far the river with the most water in the world

**Internet service, offering computing and storage capacity

Amazon cooperates with the NSA

The NSA* is investing 600 million dollars into the development of a Cloud-System** by Amazon. The official goal of the platform is said to be transferring data and other intelligence information that the NSA collects around the globe into one single "data lake". This is supposed to allow the NSA and 16 other US intelligence agencies to exchange information faster and "interconnect" them. Amazon boss Bezos was enthusiastic about his company's cooperation with the US Intelligence Services. [2]

*largest US foreign intelligence service

**internet service offering computing or storage capacity

Amazon answers the door!

With Amazon Key, package carriers and other service providers can gain access to your home while you are away from home. The customer receives a smart door lock, a networked surveillance camera and an app. In practice this means: When the delivery person has reached the apartment, and no one responds to the bell, he requests access from Amazon via an authentication process. As soon as the door is opened via remote, the surveillance camera starts recording. According to security researchers, the surveillance camera can be outsmarted with special software. According to Amazon, in the future, time frames can be set up for friends or customer services – such as dog sitters – during which the doors are opened for them. By doing so, customers not only are giving away their privacy sphere into the hands of Amazon, but also a meticulous record is made about who enters the home, and when. [5]

Alexa comes as a friend and spies on everyone

With the software 'Alexa', customer loyalty to Amazon is expected to be even closer. Alexa runs on the small voice computer 'Echo', which is installed together with a microphone in a loudspeaker box. Via the internet, Alexa can answer all verbally formulated questions and execute commands, e. g. turn on the light in the living room. In this manner, Alexa also operates other devices in the house, orders articles, plays music, reads out weather forecasts and is considered a "family member" by many. It is no wonder that Alexa is increasingly being installed in "normal" everyday products such as refrigerators, music loudspeakers and cars – ears everywhere! Allegedly, Alexa only reacts to the activation word "Alexa" and the customer will always retain control over his data. However, this is more than questionable practice considering that Amazon cooperates with Intelligence services. Alexa

cannot lead any profound conversations and does not respond to emotions - so far. In the future Alexa is supposed to even express a kind of simulated empathy. Then even the most intimate worries and thoughts would no longer be entrusted to friends, but to the data giant Amazon – good night! [3]

Profit-orientated instead of driven by demand

The worldwide mail order company Amazon destroys as-good-as-new products in vast quantities. Tons of unsold clothing, household appliances, cell phones, computers and foods end up in the garbage compactors. Returned items also end up in the garbage bin because the functional and safety testing for electrical devices would be too costly. If one considers the increasing poverty of the world's people and the prospering second-hand market, a flaring up of criticism seems justified: As long as the supply and consumption of goods does not relate to the real demand, but to profit and self-interest, humans and the environment remain side issues. [8]

Is Amazon unstoppable?

For 20 years, Amazon has been in the German market and works continuously on becoming a “universal vendor”. At first, just book stores were exposed to the online retailer's harsh competition – and many had to close down. In early 2017, Amazon Fresh, a delivery service for fresh foods, was started experimentally in Germany. After one year, however, the figures were sobering for Amazon. Germans still prefer to buy their fresh foods in person. As Amazon still lacks a tight branch network in Europe, the group has shown interest in several supermarket chains. In France, Amazon is having a tough time in this regard. The French daily newspaper “Le Monde” quotes a grocery store owner: “Amazon is not our friend: Their ultimate goal is to devour us. But we are not going to open the door for them and hand them the menu.” This shows us all: No matter how powerful Amazon is – it remains in our hands as customers or businessmen to decide whether Amazon will attain global domination. [7]

Customer is king – employee a slave?

In 2017, Amazon had 570,000 employees worldwide. According to an Amazon employee from the US, additionally there are hundreds of thousands of temporary workers who are hired “like slaves”, exploited and fired after 60 to 90 days, if they have not given up before this. In the huge warehouses, one worker was walking up to 20 kilometers (12.5 miles) a day. There are enormous time constraints – even during the worker's breaks: “Often the 15 and 30-minute breaks are barely enough to run to the toilet and back ...” A sophisticated rating system monitors time targets while maintaining quality control at the same time: If errors happen, the employee loses points. The resulting fear of losing their job leads to intrigues on all levels: “The main task of a supervisor is to find reasons to fire workers after no later than 90 days.” This way Amazon saves costs on permanent employment and can always resort to “fresh” temporary workers who withstand the extreme working conditions for a short time. On top of this, Amazon builds warehouses mainly in regions with high unemployment rates. This is obviously a sophisticated system for minimizing costs at the expense of people. Bezos thus promotes a society that becomes increasingly dependent on him: People with little money who come home from work totally exhausted and then can only say: “Alexa, bring me a beer!” If this inhuman system is not stopped, it is only a matter of time until large parts of humanity will be caught in such slavery. [7]

Who wants to become a slave, of a world steered by “intelligent” computers, which only serve their creator's interests? Anybody who wants that should just sit down on his couch

and talk to Alexa. But whoever deems his personal relationships to his fellow human beings more important than convenience should buy his products in the local shops and share a copy of this V&C issue with the salesperson. This way a movement for promoting relationships - and life-for affirming people, develops which opposes the anonymous, life-despising domination sought by large corporations!

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