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TEXT

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PHOTOS

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GEENS BUKAUSKAS

The simple act of going online

these days opens you up to cyber attacks that can come in the form of deploying data-stealing malware on your system, deceptive and dangerous middle-man attacks leading to all kinds of infections, and many other guises, all with potentially crippling consequences. The allure of free, public Wi-Fi is an especial hazard for your data and personal security – banking information, passwords, birthplace, social security number, address, your browsing history ... the list is endless. It seems that for the moment there is no absolute cyber security for regular people. It could, however, be on its way.

AS ABSTRACT as they may seem to most people, cyber threats can never be discounted and a successful cyber security professional has to understand a wide range of technological application, be intellectually curious and also be trustworthy. We met Jaak Geens, Director of *Strategeens* and Dr. Linas Bukauskas, Vice Dean at the *University of Vilnius* (Faculty of Mathematics and Informatics), who are together developing the *geens.com* platform that could be the next major advance in cyber security.

“In these times of elevator pitches (i.e. ‘explain in a minute what you are working on’), limited tweets or text messages, trying to quickly tell you what we aim for with *geens.com* is a nice challenge,” says Jaak Geens. “The platform is an environment that is totally yours; it is privacy itself, it is the anti-cloud, it empowers you and gives you all the decision power to show and to know what you want – completely anonymously.”

“Moreover, the whole concept is set-up by you becoming a member

of it: geens.com is a European Non-Profit Organisation (NPO). By law, you can become a member, similar to a shareholder in a 'profit' organisation. Our bottom-line is a highly professional environment – a guarantee for your privacy and owned by you. No hidden agenda – no strings attached; but also conceptually so designed that misuse is prevented and key.”

In boardrooms intelligent people

unless you want to open well defined information to some external source.”

The app collects all of your medical data on your phone (input by yourself), which is then complemented by external input from, for example, health institutions or wearables, information that is 'scrambled' every time before reaching your app and vice-versa. Your medical records are therefore always in your

know – about everything that can be done with health. The platform doesn't focus solely on diseases, but wants to advise you as a person, not as a patient. All kinds of data collected will give you advice on what to look for, what to follow-up, where to go and whom to go to.”

“If we make the right anonymous database and enrich it permanently with the newest technologies, you will get the best solutions and information – again with no strings attached,” says Linas Bukauskas. “Geens.com will not work with just user forums, but enrich these with the best technologies all the time. Needless to say, there is a huge need for objective and key information, which are all reasons why we decided to set up this concept.”

Whilst getting the concept up and running has required amassing considerable amounts of important and confidential information, this material could at the same time prove highly valuable to a number of companies, some of which may not be so keen on having an ethical committee in place.

“Absolutely true, and that is a very important part of the whole concept, in that we will create in a short time a huge database that a lot of big companies would be interested in buying,” says Jaak Geens. “Whatsapp was sold to Facebook for 50 dollars a user – could this happen with geens.com? Our answer is clearly: no. Geens.com is non-profit and cannot be sold at all – that's the law.”

“However, if we do realise, together, the main goal of building an important big data warehouse, geens.com will be able to generate income comparable with the business plans of traditional social media. You could decide that you want to be part of a clinical trial or have a coupon for a new shampoo. And yes, it is

“The allure of free, public Wi-Fi is an especial hazard for your data and personal security”

have traditionally got together to brainstorm and learn how to manage the respective behaviours and feelings. Nowadays social media and any kind of app is designed to learn from your online activity and the data generated then used to give you a better service or, increasingly, stream a product that you might need.

“You'll be happy to get an offer for that pair of shoes that you always wanted, or even to find that shampoo that deals with your unpredictable hair, but most people also feel a bit offended when some kind of spy tool decides that you have a lazy eye or that because your father had hair loss a machine is suggesting pills against it for you,” says Linas Bukauskas.

“The platform works via an app that you have to install on your smartphone, has its own database and is installed physically and working 'offline' on your device. Data is times-tamped, backup and encrypted on the main server, but there is absolutely no way for anyone – other than you – to find out from whom the data is,

pocket, or, as the initiators like to say, 'it's all in your jeans'.

The starting point of the platform is an offer of vast potential on the basis of holding sensitive information, which is why they have set-up an *ethical committee* in the NPO. The committee members are a mixture of guardians of society, including professors of famous technology institutions, who safeguard the members' ethical and privacy principles. If any concern about the principles arises the ethical committee can be contacted directly. Yet a cocktail of sensitive information and an ethics committee begs the question of just what kind of potential the platform can actually offer.

“The first goal is to offer you the power over your most intimate data and what it can tell you about the virus you caught last week, for example, or the one from years ago,” says Jaak Geens. “It is a data science tool and big data is a big issue. People are open to the right solutions and want to know – or don't want to

“For the moment there is no absolute cyber security for regular people”

important – and in many cases even to your own advantage – for all kinds of providers to have the possibility to contact the right group. Even in this case, however, privacy will be fully protected, unless you decide otherwise, and all income will go back to the geens.com community, like with a Frequent Flyer Membership. As you are a member of the community you are empowered: it is you that will decide.”

Along with ownership and decision power a further aspect of the platform is that members will also have the ultimate right of whether to remain with the community or leave it altogether, including bringing their data with them.

“You will have your data of being a member and there is also your medical data, and the system will only know you by your aliases to make external communication,” says Jaak Geens. “You can delete that data any time and restore it under a new nickname, or just delete it forever. Data is on – and only in – your app and you can at any time store it on your PC’s hard drive or a USB. The definition of the geens.com concept is that you are totally empowered. The platform by definition *just focuses on the privacy layer* itself.”

“Let us take a Taxi-app as an example: our platform is supplementary on top of all existing Taxi-apps. Why should the Taxi company know where you go or even who you are to deliver their service? Or even take the risk that an IT guy runs away with the customer database and starts his own Taxi-app? Unless there would be an accident or a payment discussion, then personal details can be provided to resolve the incident. And for a good understanding: geens.com will never offer a Taxi-app or any commercial application.”

The NPO did develop though one free demo application for polling (geepoll.com). The purpose of the voting (on different levels) is to educate the public and to demonstrate the principle of how to tackle privacy protection issues.

Not only are the members of the platform to be empowered, but the technology that has been developed for it and the people behind that technology have also been flexing their intellectual muscle for the full powers of what cyber security can offer and to make this platform a stand-out option.

Geens.com uses the newest technology that has been recently developed together with the University of

Vilnius, one of the world’s top university centres on privacy and internet security.”

“The medical sector and new technology experts look for the newest concepts that are ready to use, so to become a full member of the platform is not a 1–2–3 process like creating an account on other social networks. That’s because we did think very carefully about how to protect privacy and because, after all, you’ll be a stakeholder of the platform itself,” says Jaak Geens.

“We think that a good platform has to give you total privacy, as nobody wants to share his or her deepest feelings, medical information or feedback if not absolutely sure that future technology will be able to filter out your past. Although lots of people surf forums on medical issues, only a minority share their own experiences, mainly because they don’t want to end up on a database that knows who they are and could start spamming.”

“Geens.com will therefore enrich the user forums, investigate and perform data mining, share the best opinions and value them with ‘frequent miles’,” says Jaak Geens. “As privacy – and that includes digital security – are key to the system, we are convinced that we can become a

“The platform is an environment that is totally yours; it is privacy itself, it is the anti-cloud”

very unique community on medical issues; but even in simple ‘brainstorming’ on a project, individuals do not want that their out-of-the-box thinking is misused afterwards. Privacy is also about the right to be forgotten.”

The platform also has the ambition to become a central point for other sites related to the human body or human interest, stating that case that whilst it is fine to use a wearable, that it is not necessary for the device company to know about your ‘night-time activity’. This kind of situation makes geens.com a solution for both individual and the wearable device company that isn’t keen on such private matters. Liability goes in two directions, and is also an issue for organisations.

“This is just a first step, as all kinds of medical institutions, blood centres, donor centres, dentists, doctors, pharmaceutical companies, DNA-investigators, universities and so many others will look for the right platform to guarantee patients absolute privacy,” says Jaak Geens. “Health is also not the issue of one specialist or symptom; there is the lack of a tool that brings all the expertise together. A pain in your chest

can mean so many things and needs expertise by way of several views.”

Social websites are nowadays also aiming for the ultimate goal of a complete medical profile. For them, however, the purpose is to sell it to the relevant industries. Geens.com has the same goal of complete medical profile in mind, but not driven by profit motives. Their new levels of cyber security ensure it will only be with your membership and full agreement, and that any concept of profits will be of the kind that are ultimately for your own benefit.

On the question of whether geens.com is like an alternative for the GDPR (General Data Protection Rules) of the European Commission: “Our governments – in this case our European institutions – are looking for general rules to protect the citizens. Let me use a metaphor here: GDPR pushes building owners to put strong locks and doors, blind some of the windows or explain a must to install cameras in the public hallway and garage, but forbid public cameras in the apartments. That is of course all excellent. Our platform on the contrary starts from the individual and provides a cocoon from where the user decides what window *where, when and to who*

will be open or closed to the external world.”

“If there is no bottom-up approach like this, a non-intentional effect of a ruling like GDPR will be that – and let us continue on this metaphor – no new forms of living together will be created or explored. Too many rules block new initiatives or approaches. GDPR should not be like a new *Year 2000* 2-digit issue, but become an opportunity to add value and therefore a marriage with the geens.com platform is a perfect win-win.”



PHOTO Sara Appelgren

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Cyber Security vs. PERSONAL SECURITY

SOME OF THE most important things right now in the world are how we can rely on our politicians, political institutions, global companies and governments. When using algorithms who know more about us than we seem to know ourselves, it's a hard time.

Facebook, Google, Instagram and Wikipedia are used in more absurd ways. The spam spreads over all widths in my mailbox. I claim to have ordered LED lights from almost all manufacturers in the world, getting dozens of fake invoices every day. My friends at Apple are alleged to send grotesque error message about my Apple ID at least three times each day.

Now is the time to improve online security. And create significantly higher security. Exit spam activists with a single click. It is time for higher cyber security. And we need it quickly so that we do not all get mad at all the trash that just continues to bombard us.

I was in Vilnius to work on our latest *Meetings International Business Intelligence Report* and I saw the light and I met the jump. Young ambitious high-quality IT professionals who are not only involved in game development, but there are companies that are at the forefront of technology,

perhaps even at the leading edge together with Israel, to develop cyber security.

I want to block incoming mail with one click today. I get 700 mail a day, of which 650 are fake, junk, or generally bad, with unusually badly written messages that have no significance for the world's development. A virtual private network (VPN) will be common. A VPN extends a private network over a public network, such as the Internet. It allows your iPhone or device with network functionality to send and receive shared and private network data as if the device was connected directly to the private network while taking advantage of the Privacy Network Privacy and Privacy Policy.

This should not be more different than that I want high personal safety around myself in my world in general. Just think if IRL was like online? Lots of people running around us all day long and screaming a lot of shame and unrighteousness that takes all our oxygen and destroys every working day. They call our door, claiming that we can no longer receive mail without having to ship it here and now. It's enough now. Let us lift cyber security to a whole new level. Let's start blocking sites that lie straight in our face and let us reveal all the lies that

surround us online. We have written about Safehotels Alliances for many years now. They are changing the world's hotels and meeting industry in terms of safety and security in hotels and meeting facilities. Let us help our friends in Vilnius to start seeing cyber security as something sustainable, environmentally friendly and extremely important. Help us stop the ever-increasing spam with meaninglessness that causes me to sit in front of the computer every morning for at least 30 minutes (soon it's probably an hour) and click away the junk before I can start working on the questions that take us forward. How we create better-designed meetings and events, and not least how we connect science and knowledge development. Let's simply create better conditions for cyber security that are as important as personal security. Now.