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Author(s): Tiainen, Minna Katriina

Title: Solving the Surveillance Problem : Media Debates About Unwanted Surveillance in Finland

Year: 2017

Version: Accepted version (Final draft)

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Please cite the original version:

Tiainen, M. K. (2017). Solving the Surveillance Problem : Media Debates About Unwanted Surveillance in Finland. In W. J. Schünemann, & M.-O. Baumann (Eds.), Privacy, Data Protection and Cybersecurity in Europe (pp. 61-78). Springer International Publishing. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-53634-7_5

Solving the surveillance problem: Media debates about unwanted surveillance in Finland

Minna Tiainen

Abstract

This chapter examines the way surveillance is discussed in the leading Finnish newspaper Helsingin Sanomat after the revelations made by former NSA-contractor Edward Snowden. In 2013, Snowden provided journalists with documents that revealed the unexpected extent of surveillance conducted by security agencies such as the NSA. Drawing on Critical Discourse Studies and a Foucauldian view of discourse, this article understands media discussions following the Snowden revelations as discursive struggles where the legitimacy and future of surveillance are being constructed and debated. The article examines the ways the media formulates solutions to the problems posed by surveillance, and explores the way they contribute to the overall discursive struggle. The solutions appearing in the data are categorised into two main categories, next step solutions and direct solutions. Overall, it is concluded that solutions play a minor role in the news coverage as they tend to appear briefly and rarely as subjects of debate. This means that solutions do not make a substantial contribution to the discursive struggle over surveillance and, furthermore, leads to an understanding of surveillance as a practice that is difficult to change.

1. Introduction

The Snowden revelations, starting in the summer of 2013 and exposing a multitude of pervasive surveillance practices conducted by the US National Security Agency (NSA) and its partners, were the biggest intelligence leaks in recent history (cf. e.g. Lyon 2015). Around the world, heated media discussion, political conflicts and demands for reform followed the revelations. These surveillance discussions and especially the demands for change that were presented in them are the concern of the present article.

The rapid development and spread of digital technology have made surveillance unprecedentedly pervasive in recent decades (e.g. Mathiesen 2012: xix), but it took the Snowden leaks to make the issue the kind of global concern it is today (Lyon 2015: 13). The revelations can thus be seen as a key moment in the (global) societal awareness of surveillance. Understandably, the ensuing public discussion has become a site of struggle over the legitimacy of surveillance (e.g. Schulze 2015), that is, a place where vehement criticism meets staunch defence. Although such discussions take place on various societal platforms, the media can be considered a prime site for the struggle (see below). As part of the debate, alternatives and improvements to the current situation are sought, and change is demanded. In other words, the media discussion is also an important platform where solutions to the problem of surveillance are negotiated. This article aims to shed light on precisely this aspect of the media debate. It examines how solutions to the surveillance problem are constructed and debated in Finnish media coverage of the Snowden revelations and explores their contribution to the overall struggle over the legitimacy and future of surveillance.

To make sense of these debates, this article draws on insights from both surveillance studies and Critical Discourse Studies (CDS). It adopts the view from surveillance studies of the societal relevance of surveillance. Following, among others, Fuchs (2008) and Lyon (2015), I understand surveillance to have central societal power, including the potential to threaten some core democratic principles and essential civil rights such as privacy (also cf. Foucault 1977). Snowden's extensive surveillance revelations underline the relevance of these concerns. From CDS, the article leans on the understanding that meaning is discursively constructed in language and other semiotic modes, from

which emanates the societal significance of media discussions. I begin with the assumption that language use both shapes and is shaped by social factors and thus, for its part, contributes to the way societal power relations are organized (e.g. Wodak and Meyer 2016b; Pietikäinen and Mäntynen 2009; Foucault 1972). Established ways of discussing a particular matter constrain what can be said, imagined and considered possible (cf. e.g. Fairclough 1995: 56; Foucault 1972 for *discourses*), which means that the ways the surveillance debates construct possible resolutions of the situation are highly relevant for the future of surveillance.

As part of a more comprehensive research project that examines Finnish surveillance discussions post-Snowden, this article analyses media debates in Finland's leading newspaper, Helsingin Sanomat. Finland offers a rich site for the exploration of surveillance since it is a country that, on the one hand, prides itself on its technological sophistication and great respect for civil rights and, on the other hand, has outdated intelligence legislation which it plans to change in order to grant intelligence-gathering authorities a significantly broader mandate for surveillance. Additionally, the Finnish media are interesting since, as a platform for public discourse, they form the nexus of political, legal, technical and other relevant discussions about surveillance. The media play an essential role in bringing together key national and global actors and challenging (some of) them to take part in the surveillance discussion, which is particularly important considering the global nature of both the problems and possible solutions (as will become evident later; cf. Lyon 2015). I have chosen to analyse Helsingin Sanomat since it is the most respected Finnish daily newspaper and the only one claiming national reach. Its unique position in the Finnish media landscape guarantees that its "views and editorial decisions are often echoed in other media" (Kumpu 2016: 146).

In the next section, I will elaborate on my understanding of surveillance and discourse studies. After this, I will discuss the data and methodology before turning to the analysis of the different kinds of solutions in section 5. Section 6 concludes with a discussion of the findings.

2. Theoretical background: Surveillance and media discourse

2.1 Surveillance

Following Lyon (2015: 3), I understand surveillance basically as "collecting information in order to manage or control". It can be conducted by many kinds of actors, predominantly states and private companies. NSA and other state-conducted surveillance is, thus, only one example of current surveillance, yet a particularly interesting one since the revelations "reflect [the] resort to surveillance in many contexts" (ibid.: vii) and, above all, exemplify the major and probably most invasive trends in surveillance today (c.f. ibid.; Mathiesen 2012). Besides, although this broad definition encompasses the possibility of surveillance being used in a socially beneficial way, it also involves significant risks, such as intrusions on privacy and other civil rights as well as the potential to contribute to societal inequality, many of which are already considered a reality by current surveillance scholars (e.g. Lyon 2015; Fuchs 2008). Thus, in this article surveillance is seen as a serious social power warranting proper oversight and critical scrutiny.

Moreover, surveillance is a constantly changing phenomenon. It has been increasing exponentially in recent decades, and as digital technologies develop, new methods of surveillance continue to emerge (e.g. Lyon 2015). This development does not take place in a vacuum but is open to influence by citizens (see e.g. Lyon 2015: 138–140), politicians and, more broadly, nation states (e.g. Gorr and Schünemann 2013: 40). This highlights the importance and reformative potential of public discussions about the future of surveillance.

2.2 Discursive struggles and the media: A critical approach

To understand the discursive construction of meaning and its social implications, this article draws on a Foucauldian view of discourse (e.g. 1972; see below) and contemporary insights from the field of Critical Discourse Studies (CDS) (e.g. Wodak and Meyer 2016a; see, for instance, Hart and Cap 2014, van Dijk 2013 and Wodak and Meyer 2016b for the usefulness of this name for describing the field as opposed to the earlier Critical Discourse Analysis, CDA). Foucauldian discourse analysis and CDS provide a useful starting point, because they have a long tradition of examining the relations between language use, power and the structures that produce inequality (e.g. Wodak and Meyer 2016b; Blommaert 2005; cf. Foucault 1972), thus corresponding to the critical view of surveillance underlying the present study (see Simone 2009: 4 for the usefulness of CDA in analysing constructions of surveillance, cf. also Foucault 1977). CDS's contributions to the analysis of text and, particularly, media discourse also make it a fruitful theoretical and analytical framework for this article (e.g. Fairclough 1995; Richardson 2007).

Following Foucault (1972) and the core arguments of CDS, this article understands language use as a type of situated action that has social conditions and consequences (see e.g. Pietikäinen and Mäntynen 2009; Richardson 2007; Wodak and Meyer 2016b). In any given situation and society, language use can both help change and stabilize the social status quo (e.g. Wodak and Meyer 2016b: 7). Media discourse, as a prominent and powerful form of language use, is particularly important for constructing societal change (such as reforms relating to surveillance) as thinkable or unthinkable, possible or difficult (see below; cf. Fairclough 1995). The power that language use has on specific matters at a given moment can be understood through the concept of *discourses*, which are seen here as relatively stable ways of signifying and legitimizing topics and practices from specific points of view (Foucault 1972; also e.g. Pietikäinen and Mäntynen 2009), therefore "systematically form[ing] the objects of which they speak" (Foucault 1972: 49). Multiple discourses about a particular topic can be in circulation concurrently; some may dominate and some may be drowned out, but these hierarchies are continually contested (see Foucault 1972 for *order of discourse*, also e.g. Fairclough 1995). Consequently, media debates can and often do become sites of *discursive struggle* (cf. Wodak and Meyer ibid.: 12; Blommaert 2005: 4). This makes it possible for the media to both contribute to the stabilisation of prevailing social relations and to be transgressive and provide alternatives to them. Since the present article focuses on the highly controversial topic of surveillance and specifically on the media construction of possible solutions to the problems it poses, the socially constitutive and potentially transgressive characteristic of media debates is at the core of the article.

Although discursive struggles over surveillance can be found on various societal platforms, there is reason to claim that debates in traditional media platforms have special relevance for the present article. Firstly, even with the currently diminishing sales of newspapers worldwide, the media have retained a wide audience and can be considered a central institution exercising societal power (e.g. Burroughs 2015: 166; Richardson 2007). This means that Jäger's (2001: 49) contention that "the media regulate everyday thinking and exercise considerable influence on what is conductible and conducted politics" continues to be relevant. Secondly, although direct causal links between media coverage, institutions and society have been difficult to establish (McQuail 2007: 32; but see e.g. Resende 2013), there is plenty of research indicating that the media play an especially influential role in shaping public opinion and political decision making. For instance, research drawing on the agenda-setting theory has repeatedly shown how the media can focus public attention on specific issues and thus shape the political agenda (e.g. Graber 2007: 77). Thirdly, a connection between media coverage and policy has been established through interviews with policy makers (O'Heffernan 2007), and politicians' attempts to control the media also point to the political relevance of media discourse (e.g. Graber 2007). Fourthly, the media has also been acknowledged as an important

societal actor specifically in relation to the future of surveillance, for instance by David Lyon (1994: 44, 177), who identifies journalism as a possible site of resistance to surveillance (see also Lischka 2015). As (some) traditional media platforms have been central actors in giving a voice to whistleblowers and making information in the Snowden documents available to the public, this contention seems to hold[1] (though see McGarrity 2011 for the limitations to the media's ability to perform its fourth estate role in the counter-terrorism context). Lastly and perhaps most importantly, previous research has highlighted the relevance of the media particularly for the types of questions explored by the present study: it has been concluded that among the most important ways the media can influence society are the media's abilities to direct attention to specific problems and solutions (McQuail 2007: 33), to function as a channel for persuasion and mobilisation (ibid.) and to narrow policy choices available to public officials (Graber 2007: 291). All of these insights, then, highlight the central role of media discussions for studying struggles over (and solutions to) surveillance.

Earlier research provides valuable insights into discursive struggles over surveillance and, therefore, into the premises on which criticism and possible solutions for surveillance may take place. Previous studies have found both the affirmation and contestation of surveillance in public discourse, and both standpoints are connected to recurring perspectives on surveillance and its effects. Pro-surveillance discourses tend to emphasise the importance of surveillance for national security (see e.g. Lischka 2015 and Barnard-Wills 2011 for British media surveillance discourse and Simone 2009 for US government discourse; cf. Qin 2015 for media frames of Edward Snowden and Salter 2015 for media frames of Glenn Greenwald), a standpoint which makes criticism difficult or redundant. The contestation of surveillance, on the other hand, has tended to rely on references to the loss of privacy and other civil rights (e.g. Barnard-Wills 2011; Lischka 2015). Much of the previous research has concentrated on Anglo-American public discourse, but there is reason to believe that the attitudes outlined above can also be found in cultures with a different relationship to surveillance (see above); in a previous paper examining discourses that (de)legitimise surveillance in the Finnish press, I found similar depictions of surveillance (Tiainen 2017). Critical voices do seem to be more dominant in the Finnish media than in the British media at least, but my article also had to conclude (paralleling Lischka's, ibid., insights on the British press) that overall the media criticism of surveillance has been constructed on a rather abstract and general level. The task of the present article, then, is to examine more closely those moments when surveillance is contested in order to gain a deeper understanding of the possibilities and limitations that media criticism poses for the future of surveillance.

3. Data

The data consists of the first year of the Snowden coverage in Helsingin Sanomat, a time frame which includes the most heatedly discussed revelations (at least in Finland) and their aftermath. Since the newspaper puts its articles online, the data was gathered from its digital archive with its own search engine, in two rounds: first, using the queryterms *Edward Snowden*, *verkkovakoilu* (net espionage[2]) and *NSA*, thus collecting all articles referencing the NSA scandal. Then, after a preliminary analysis which gave an initial impression of the relevant solutions, another search was performed with additional terms to ensure that all articles clearly continuing this discussion without reference to the Snowden case would be included. The additional terms were *tietosuoja* (data protection), *tietoturva* (data security) and *tiedustelu* (intelligence). Here, it became apparent that the Snowden revelations were so topical that few articles omitted the connection, making the demarcation of the data simple.

[1] New media, of course, further enable dissenting voices to take part in public debates.
[2] Helsingin Sanomat uses various key words as identifiers in categorizing articles in its digital archive, and verkkovakoilu was a prominent one used in connection with articles referencing the Snowden case.

The final data set consists of 619 articles and covers a wide range of issues, from specific revelations (e.g. the Prism programme) to the resulting political controversies and Snowden's asylum. Of course, many articles concentrate on more tangentially related topics such as meetings between heads of state and Nobel Prize nominees (Snowden was one in 2014). Most of the articles are news articles, but opinion pieces (editorials, readers' letters and the like) also appear. Online reader discussions, while clearly relevant to the public discourse on surveillance, have been omitted from the analysis since they have a different production process and different expectations for consumption (cf. e.g. Springer et al. 2015); examining these is beyond the scope of this article.

Despite the overall ease of data demarcation, one notable exception must be mentioned. The second search round brought out a scandal close to home—the spying on the Finnish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, most intensely discussed in late 2013. This sparked demands to extend Finland's own surveillance capabilities (which was already an ongoing process at that point), also at times constructed as a solution to the problems discussed in the Snowden coverage. In a few articles, this solution was discussed in a way that could be considered a response to both the NSA and the Finnish scandals, and these were included in the data. However, I decided to leave out articles where the topic was taken up only as a response to the latter. This was based on the observation that the two scandals were discussed in clearly different ways, with the NSA debate including lively contributions on the legitimacy of global surveillance and considerations ranging from international power relations to citizens' rights (which correspond to the concerns expressed by surveillance scholars, see below), and the coverage of the Finnish espionage affair typically displaying a much narrower perspective focused on preventing future espionage on Finnish political bodies. Thus, solutions referring solely to this scandal would have addressed an altogether different problem.

4. Method

My analysis is an application of CDS, especially drawing on approaches concerned with the media and social actors (e.g. Fairclough 1995; van Leeuwen 2008). Starting with the (above described) understanding of the media discussion as a discursive struggle over surveillance, *solutions* relate to and rely on discourses that contest the justifications of surveillance (e.g. Tiainen 2017; Lischka 2015; Barnard-Wills 2011); they draw their relevance from the ways that surveillance is delegitimised but shift the focus from the level of criticising the present to outlining preferable futures and ways of moving forward. Thus, whereas strategies of *delegitimation* (cf. e.g. van Leeuwen 2008: 105–123) are essential in constructing surveillance as problematic, a *solution* is indispensable for constructing it as something that can be changed (see below). Therefore, solutions, which necessarily construct or imply an alternative to the present surveillance situation, can be powerful assets for delegitimizing discourses, and when it comes to speculating on the possible (political and other) consequences of the surveillance debate, they are significant. This conception of the way solutions contribute to discursive struggles guides my analysis and underlies the interpretation of the results.

For analytical purposes, I define a solution to be either a state or a situation that is constructed in the data as better than the current one or, alternatively, as an action that is depicted as a tool for reaching a better situation. This means that a solution may be both a means and an ends for solving the problem posed by surveillance. This is a choice I have made because differentiating between the two would often be extremely difficult, and they both meet the overall research interest in how a society might alter and improve the situation exposed by the revelations. Thus, solutions constitute a varied set of proposals and (represented) actions that are united by the function they serve in the discursive struggle. Consequently, they can at least potentially be constructed through a myriad of textual and other elements, the identification of which is an important part of the analytical process. Furthermore

(and in accordance with the understanding described above of the connection between solutions and delegitimizing discourses), I will assume that an action or state of affairs can only be understood as a solution when the current situation is presented as problematic, meaning that the analysis focuses on articles where the surveillance revealed by Snowden is either implicitly or explicitly considered a problem by, at the very least, the actor responsible for evoking the solution (here, I will draw on previous studies concerned with delegitimation, e.g. Tiainen 2017; Lischka 2015). Lastly, although it would be tempting to include all kinds of (represented) critical reactions following the revelations as solutions—many of them can, after all, be expected to aim at some kind of change—I primarily understand a particular (re)action as a solution only when at least one actor in the article is depicted as considering it a way of improving the current situation. Without this delimitation, the analysis would unavoidably run into (for text analysis unanswerable) guesswork over the motives of the relevant actors.

Turning to the course of the analysis, I first mapped the data with the definition of 'solution' (described above) in mind and copied all occurrences, also noting how often they were presented as the main/starting theme of an article to get a sense of their overall prominence. It quickly became obvious that linguistic elements (as opposed to multimodal ones, e.g. pictures) were by far the most relevant for the analysis of solutions. The solutions were then categorised according to the type of change they proposed, and for an overview I also noted how often the solutions of each category appeared in the data and how they related to different types of actors (van Leeuwen's 2008: 23–25, sociologically oriented understanding of actors and agency was applied). This was followed by a close textual analysis of the relevant passages to investigate the ways solutions were discussed and how they related to the discursive struggle over surveillance. Finally, the possible societal implications of the results were explored (cf. e.g. Pietikäinen 2012: 420 for zooming in and out).

The next section is dedicated to the analysis. I will start with an overview of the way solutions generally appear and are constructed in the surveillance debate. After this, I will elaborate on the different types of solutions by dividing them into categories and subcategories. This is followed by an examination of the most relevant categories with examples[3], with the emphasis on factors that regulate the power that solutions may have in the discursive struggle.

5. Overview of solutions in the surveillance debate

As discussed above, for solutions to occur it is necessary for there to be something troubling about what Snowden revealed. The ensuing need for change gives the solutions their justification and relevance in the overall discursive struggle over surveillance, and it is therefore the backdrop against which the solutions must be understood and explored. In the current data, this (sense of) problem is linguistically articulated in many different ways (as will be shown in the example analyses below), but the underlying problem with surveillance remains the same across different types of solutions and throughout the news coverage. The solutions are related to an understanding of surveillance as a threat to citizens' privacy, to other civil rights and/or ultimately to democracy itself which, as earlier research has found (see below; e.g. Barnard-Wills 2011; Lischka 2015), is a common and powerful way of delegitimizing surveillance. In a previous analysis of Helsingin Sanomat, I called this logic the *discourse of threat* (Tiainen 2017). With such a rationale behind them, the solutions in this data can typically be understood as more or less convincing proposals for bolstering democracy.

[3] The excerpts have been translated from Finnish into English by the author.

However, on the whole, solutions are not utilised in the data as a significant resource for challenging surveillance practices. This can already be seen in the position and space given to them in the newspaper articles: of the 619 articles that refer to the Snowden revelations, a solution constitutes the main/starting theme in only 39. The number is remarkably small compared to, for instance, the 130 articles that centre on Snowden's person and attempts to get asylum. When solutions are not a major theme in their respective articles, their content is frequently described in only a few sentences that appear in positions that are not very prominent (e.g. Fairclough 1995: 82). Further, they are often mentioned only vaguely and almost incidentally, not constructed as topics of ongoing societal or political debate in a way that would accumulatively deepen and specify the scope of the discussion (more below). Consequently, the way solutions are discussed often reduces their potential for providing credible alternatives to the present situation.

5.1 Solutions categorised

The solutions discussed in the data can be divided into two categories, according to how directly they address surveillance practices. I will call the first category *next step* solutions. Such solutions are presented as preferred ways of moving forward from the current situation, without entailing any attempt to implement immediate change in practices directly related to surveillance. These include, for instance, expressing criticism of the USA or demanding clarification of Snowden's claims. The second category, which I will call *direct* solutions, covers solutions that do address practices relevant to the functioning of the surveillance process (e.g. legislation, using encryption), such as recommendations to create "Europe's own internet" or demands to stop espionage altogether.

To illustrate the range of solutions that appear within these two categories, I have further divided them into subcategories according to the type of action they discuss/ suggest. These are listed in Table 1, with simple and/or representative examples of each subcategory to give an indication of their realisations in the data.

Table 1

Solution category 1: **Next step solutions**	**Solution category 2** **Direct solutions**
Action: Acquiring/demanding further information **Example:** "European institutions should immediately demand an explanation [on British surveillance practices]." (Statement attributed to German Minister of Justice Sabine Leutheusser-Schnarrenberger.) (Pullinen 2013, June 24)	**Action:** Changing rules or regulations **Example:** "The [German] Chancellor suggested a joint European data protection law as a solution [to US espionage] (---)." (Kerola 2013, July 17)
Action: Having a societal/political discussion on surveillance **Example:** "Finland must actively participate in the international discussion on how to reconcile them [intelligence operations and the right to privacy]." (Limnéll 2013, June 13)	**Action:** (Working towards) Modifying or ending surveillance practices (no explicit references to legislative changes) **Example:** "It must be possible to control them [intelligence agencies] using parliamentary means, by the data protection authorities." (Statement attributed to Finnish Minister of the Environment Ville Niinistö.) (Halminen 2013, June 16)
Action: Criticizing or reprimanding the surveillants **Example:** "Finland, the European Union and other countries should (---) tell the United States that we do not want them to be our big brother." (Viiri 2013, July 8)	**Action:** Using technical means of protection or otherwise improving security in technology use **Example:** " (---)[I]n the era of electronic surveillance, everyone should use encryption on the internet and in cell phones." (Statement attributed to Jacob Applebaum.) (Sillanpää 2014, May 5)

Before moving on to detailed analyses, a brief overview is needed of the relative prominence of these categories and their connections to particular actor types in the data. Out of the two main categories, *direct* solutions is clearly the most prominent. Such solutions appear approximately three times as often as *next step* solutions, and they also occur more frequently in articles where a solution is the main theme. The subcategories overlap and converge to an extent that makes (quantitative) comparisons fruitless. Solutions overall are definitely brought up most often by journalists or other writers (e.g. in readers' letters), politicians, or interested parties (often experts; e.g. professors, civil servants). The global nature of the surveillance debate is strongly reflected in the assemblage of politicians and interested parties voicing solutions, with key actors such as Edward Snowden, Angela Merkel and Barack Obama prominent among them. *Next step* solutions are proposed by all three actor types relatively evenly, whereas there is substantive variation in direct solutions according to subcategory. Interested parties, prominently technical experts, are behind many of the suggestions concerning *technical protection*, whereas *rules and regulations* as well as *modifying or ending*

surveillance practices are dominated by politicians. The rare cases in which citizens appear in any capacity relating to solutions are concerned with technical protection. The relevance of these observations for the discursive struggle will be discussed below.

5.2 Solution categories and the discursive struggle

The two main categories have different (potential) implications for the discursive struggle. *Next step* solutions give the actor suggesting them more leeway to leave the goal of the action/suggestion unspecified. Although these solutions can certainly constitute discursively powerful and practically useful tools for challenging surveillance (cf. e.g. Allmer 2012: 141; Lyon 2015: 138–140 for the importance of raising awareness and pressing for change), they also allow indefiniteness and finally evasion, which can reduce the transgressive potential of the delegitimizing discourse they relate to.

To exemplify how the indefiniteness of the *next step* solutions can function, I will briefly analyse an example from the subcategory of *public/political discussion* (see Excerpt 4 for an evasively used solution). It is also a good example to start with because, consisting only of one sentence, it illustrates the brevity and incidental nature of the solutions as I mentioned above (see Excerpt 3 for further discussion). This excerpt comes from an article that describes the British political debate after MI5 Director-General Andrew Parker criticised the Snowden revelations.

Excerpt 1

[Then Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills Vince] Cable said in a BBC interview that political discussion is needed about the intelligence services' operations (Vasama 2013, November 10).

Here, the existence of a problem to be solved is implied with the verb *need*, and *political discussion* is identified as what is needed to improve the situation. The solution clearly belongs to the *next step* category since it would not necessarily have any impact on surveillance itself and the desired outcome is not defined (although a wish for change is implied). Typical of this subcategory, the passive verb, *is needed*, omits the actors responsible for making the change happen and thus "removes a sense of specificity from the clause" (Richardson 2007: 55), further highlighting the general and open-ended nature of the remark.

Since *direct* solutions necessarily involve some kind of change relating to surveillance itself, they require the purpose of the suggested line of action, or the nature of the desired situation, to be more clearly defined. In this sense, they have more potential for contributing to the struggle against surveillance, and their relative prominence in the data is an indication of the transgressive potential of the surveillance debate (there are limitations to this, though, as will be seen below). In fact, many of the solutions in this category are in line with suggestions that surveillance scholars have made to limit surveillance (cf. e.g. Lyon 2015: 140, 129). To introduce the category with an excerpt that exemplifies this transgressive potential, I will next present a solution that belongs to the subcategory of *technical protection* and is (unusually) specific about its motivations and preferred line of action. The excerpt comes from an article about Glenn Greenwald and his then newly published book about the Snowden leaks, No Place to Hide. It appears towards the end of the article and constitutes its only solution; therefore, although it clearly relates to the discursive struggle differently than the vague Excerpt 1, both exemplify the general tendency of solutions to be brief and rather inconspicuous.

Excerpt 2

Greenwald is confident that change will come through the internet companies and ordinary people taking precautions. He promises that when millions of people begin to use encrypted pgp emails, the NSA's resources will run out (Niskakangas 2014, May 28).

Here, the solution consists of both the means (people using encryption) and the desired end (NSA's resources running out). The existence of a problem is not stated explicitly in this excerpt, but the rest of the article (which is too long to include here) and Greenwald's widely broadcast criticism of the intrusions of surveillance on privacy and civil rights make it evident that surveillance is considered troublesome. This is also signalled here by the juxtaposition of positive words such as "confident" and "promise" with change and, concretely, encryption.

This example is typical of *technical solutions* in that it constructs a way for citizens to privately act against surveillance. Where it differs from most solutions in the data is in the element that gives it most strength in the face of a societal problem like surveillance: the suggestion that individual action can accumulate into collectively induced social change. In fact, in the subcategory of *technical protection*, meaningful private action and, therefore, solutions involving citizens as actors constitute about half of the data, although they rarely promise much more than protection for one individual's private email correspondence or something similar, along the lines shown in Excerpt 2. Thus, in characteristic occurrences in this subcategory, citizens are constructed as guardians of their own information but not as political actors (see example in Table 1), and so both action and goal tend to be limited to the private sphere. Consequently, the scope of the surveillance problem is also easily reduced to technical issues and attention is diverted from the social and political nature of the problem (cf. Lyon 2015: 134).

The tendency to exclude citizens as actors is even more pronounced in all the other subcategories, where citizens and normal net users are rarely mentioned at all. Citizens also seldom appear as actors making suggestions or demands in any category (cf. e.g. Fairclough 1995: 49 for the limited role of "ordinary people" as sources of information in the media generally). Since they nevertheless do appear in the data in other contexts, for instance as the unwilling targets of surveillance, this corresponds to what van Leeuwen (2008: 29) calls *backgrounding*, that is, the de-emphasising of specific actors in relation to a particular action. Altogether, this form of exclusion attributes a passive role to citizens and contributes to an understanding of the Snowden case as rather a spectacle for readers to follow than a societal issue to which they might contribute. Connected with the broader discursive struggle where precisely the societal importance of surveillance, such as its effects on civil rights, is emphasised, this role for citizens reduces the force of the transgressive discourse.

Solutions in the *direct* solutions category also lose power in other ways. Especially solutions from the often-overlapping subcategories of *rules and regulations* and *modifying or ending surveillance practices* tend to be discussed vaguely and sporadically, leading to their proposed plans of action often being little clearer than those in the next step category. This can be illustrated with the next example, representative of both subcategories and of their contribution to the discursive struggle in the data. The excerpt comes from an article discussing Finland's then foreign minister Erkki Tuomioja's speech at an annual gathering of Finnish ambassadors, where he defended Snowden and spoke against surveillance.

Excerpt 3

'The European Union, whose citizens and institutions have evidently also been the targets of illegal and inappropriate data collection, must act here clearly and openly in every direction to end and prevent the violations', Tuomioja said at the annual gathering of ambassadors.

According to him, intervention in the violations of data security calls for strict international norms (Huhta and Raeste 2013, August 27).

Here, the existence of a problem needing a solution is clearly expressed by the negative words referring to surveillance, such as "inappropriate" and "violation". It would be possible to understand the recommendation to "act here clearly and openly in every direction to end and prevent the violations" in the first paragraph as a solution, indicated by the word "must" and belonging to the category of *modifying or ending surveillance practices* (similar suggestions appear elsewhere in the data and have been thus categorised). However, as this recommendation is directly followed in the next paragraph by a reference to the more concrete need for "international norms", I would rather interpret the latter as clarification for the former, assigning the entire solution segment to the subcategory of *changing rules or regulations*.

Although this solution includes both an ultimate goal (ending inappropriate surveillance) and consideration of how to achieve this (international norms), its formulation leaves the actual course of action open. The first paragraph only refers to indeterminate (yet "open" and "clear") "action", while the second constructs the "norms" as a type of mid-way goal that is "called for" in order for the aim to be reached, thus omitting both the process by which the change should be achieved and the actors responsible for making it happen. The vagueness about the necessary course of action is a recurring characteristic of discussion relating to international regulation, possibly a reflection of the difficulties involved in any such change, which would require cooperation among a very broad range of perhaps unwilling international actors. In any case, it makes alternative societal realities more difficult to imagine.

Moreover, Tuomioja's statement is presented as isolated. Neither he himself (as represented) nor the writer of the article embeds the comments into an ongoing discussion about regulation, although similar suggestions have been made by several prominent politicians (cf. Table 1 for an example), also covered in Helsingin Sanomat. In this particular case, the isolation can partly be explained by the article's focus on Tuomioja's speech at the ambassadors' meeting; however, the isolated presentation of solutions runs throughout the data, particularly with regard to politicians' suggestions (cf. Excerpt 1). Thus, the same suggestions keep reappearing—international regulation is a good example—but the discussion rarely proceeds from generalities to the actual steps that need to be taken. This keeps the discussion on a superficial level and therefore reduces the suggestions' credibility.

I have now briefly discussed both the main solution categories and some recurring characteristics that have consequences for their power to contribute to the discursive struggle. This section will be concluded with one more example which shows the interplay of various solutions and elaborates on an earlier (briefly) mentioned characteristic of the *next step* category, that is, the potential to be strategically used for maintaining the impression of disapproval towards surveillance while actually discouraging action. The example comes from an article in which then Prime Minister Jyrki Katainen is interviewed about the revelation that the NSA has been tapping Angela Merkel's cell phone. I quote those paragraphs which are relevant for solutions, the first one coming from the beginning and the others forming the middle of the article.

Excerpt 4

1. None of us knows the truth about the matter. But of course every nation and also Europe as a whole considers this kind of news worrying, Katainen said to HS [Helsingin Sanomat] in Meise, outside Brussels, today, Thursday.

2. The free trade negotiations are terribly important for Europe, for our employment situation and economic development. I hope that (the suspicions) will not have (an impact), because Europe has an interest in getting the free trade agreement.

3. But of course we must get a full explanation of what has happened and we also need to be sure that this will not happen again, if it has happened.

4. According to Katainen, it is mainly up to Germany and the United States to sort this out.

5. The espionage scandal has also increased the EU's willingness to push forward new data protection legislation that is already being developed, which would improve the protection of personal data online.

6. A good question is how much it can affect espionage. Be that as it may, in all European countries people must [be able to] trust electronic services, electronic communication. These kinds of suspicions always shake this trust (Kähkönen 2013, October 24).

The clearest solution in this excerpt is getting "a full explanation" in paragraph 3, marked as an improvement by the expression "we must" and belonging to the main category of *next step* solutions and the subcategory of *acquiring further information*. This kind of demand is a recurring political reaction to the revelations in the data (cf. example in Table 1). Typically for its category, the solution does not involve a goal that would affect surveillance practices (also demonstrated in Excerpt 1), but one of sorts is given in the subsequent call for the "need to be sure that this will not happen again". However, the conditional "if it has happened" indicates that this is not relevant right now and highlights the need to wait, which is also prominently underlined both in the first sentence of paragraph 1 and by the repeated use of the hedging expression "suspicions" with reference to surveillance (paragraphs 2 and 6). This kind of caution can also be seen in the data in other politicians' statements; it could be interpreted as reflecting the difficult position countries face in confronting and attempting to solve a problem linked to a superpower like the USA.

Prime Minister Katainen's recurring emphasis on waiting not only justifies his call for more information but also implicitly deems any immediate action hasty, something that can also be seen in the way other possible (re)actions are discussed. In paragraph 5, "push[ing] forward Europe's data protection legislation" evokes what is a commonly appearing solution in the subcategory *rules and regulations* (cf. Merkel's suggestion in Table 1), although it is not clearly articulated as a solution here. In line with his reluctance for immediate action, Katainen questions the usefulness of the legislation (paragraph 6) and swiftly brings the discussion back to an abstract level with a generic remark about the importance of trust. Moreover, a far clearer rejection of any reaction (which is here not discussed as a solution, although elsewhere in the data it is) occurs in paragraph 2, where Katainen expresses a wish that the TTIP negotiations will not be disturbed by the revelations. The depiction of Katainen as prioritising the trade negotiations over acting on the surveillance scandal is particularly conspicuous because of the very specific account he gives of the importance of the TTIP agreement in stark contrast to the evasiveness with which problems related to surveillance are addressed. Furthermore, his desire not to let the surveillance scandal jeopardise the TTIP negotiations is interesting because, at this point, there has been concern that the USA had used its intelligence to put the EU at a disadvantage in the negotiations. Katainen's comment disregards this possibility and therefore reduces the scope of the problem that might have to be solved (cf. Barnard-Wills 2009: 336–337 for the relevance of occluding linkages between surveillance practices).

The preference for refraining from action is also strengthened by the way Katainen is depicted as distancing himself (and thus, it could be argued, Finland as a nation) from the situation. While the international nature of the problem and, consequently, of probable solutions makes an emphasis on a joint answer from the European community understandable, the strategies that Katainen uses could be considered less a call for collective action than an attempt to shift responsibility. The distance is constructed in many ways: in paragraph 4, Katainen states explicitly that it is up to Germany and the USA to solve the problem. Paragraph 1 quotes Katainen saying "[n]one of us knows (---)", where the

"us" establishes the problem as a general one, not something concerning Katainen as an individual (politician). In the following sentence, the expression "[b]ut of course every nation and also Europe as a whole…" further highlights the international scope of the problem. An additional level of distance is also constructed in the expressions "this kinds of news" (paragraph 1) and "these kinds of suspicions" (paragraph 6), which set the surveillance scandal in broader categories rather than constructing it as unique. Altogether, these portray Katainen as not responsible for suggesting or acting on solutions to surveillance. Similar if less conspicuous evasion can of course be interpreted in those demands for international action and regulation that fail to specify the actors and actual steps of proceeding (as in Excerpt 3).

Summing up, Excerpt 4 shows how a preference for the *next step* solution of *acquiring further information* is suggested, highlighted and complemented with a sense of distance in a way that makes concrete demands for action difficult and even unnecessary. This means that even a solution can function in ways that serve the status quo of surveillance instead of contributing to a discursive struggle to contest it.

6. Conclusion

Overall, the most conspicuous characteristic of the solutions appearing in the Helsingin Sanomat news coverage is that they tend to be brief and generic and are rarely the point of the article, therefore relatively seldom becoming subjects of constructive debate or critical evaluation. In other words, the dissenting voices in the surveillance debate focus more on criticizing the existing situation than finding alternatives to it. It can thus be said that the solutions, as voiced in the media, do not make a substantial contribution to the discursive struggle over surveillance.

The way different actors relate to the discussion of solutions may also restrict the potential of the criticism of surveillance. Citizens, and thus the expected readers of the newspaper, are rarely attributed an active role in finding a solution. This contributes to an understanding of surveillance as out of reach, as difficult to change. This is reinforced by the relative passivity of the Finnish political elite (at a level of societal decision-making the typical Helsingin Sanomat reader can influence by normal political participation). Politicians' suggestions for solving the situation tend to be (presented as) isolated comments rather than as parts of a political discussion aiming at change, and repeatedly these solutions are expressed with a lot of caution and hedging. The potential of political influence for setting limits to surveillance (cf. Gorr and Schünemann 2013: 40) therefore comes across in the data as restricted or remote. All of this further contributes to an understanding of surveillance as perhaps a negative societal power but a phenomenon that is beyond the normal sphere of societal and political decision-making, especially in the Finnish context.

The relatively superficial discussion on solutions in this data can perhaps be explained by Helsingin Sanomat being a general newspaper in which readers would not expect to find, for instance, detailed technical information. Besides, there are surely good reasons for the sense of distance and difficulty that characterise the potential attributed to Finnish citizens and even politicians to influence NSA surveillance. Nevertheless, these characteristics of the discussion consolidate the view of surveillance as distant and difficult to change and, especially due to the superficial level of discussion, restrict the extent to which readers can evaluate solutions and use the media discussion to make informed decisions, something which could be considered a central function of the media (e.g. Richardson 2007). This correlates with the conclusion of earlier studies that media discussions on surveillance often fail to go into the fundamentals of the problem, and tend to keep the discussion on a general level (Lischka 2015; Greenberg and Hier 2009; cf. Tiainen 2017).

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