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Mass Surveillance and Human Dignity

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Introduction I

Swedish society has for a very long time had a great interest in science and technology. From Alfred Nobel, the inventor of dynamite and the founder of the famous nobel prize, to pacemakers and recently inventions such as Skype and Spotify.

The focus on new inventions and technology has also resulted in Swedish people becoming very attached to technology, for example due to mobile phones and people constantly being able to use internet.

Internet connections are easily found in Sweden. As recently as last week media reported that the Swedish internet connections are the best in Europe. (Korea have the best in the world). This resulted in Swedes constantly being online, always being connected to their phones, laptops, watches etcetera. Consequently Swede's use of internet has been recorded by various governments. Despite this, it wasn't until the Wikileaks files were revealed a discussion about public surveillance started in Sweden. The population has been, and is still is widely, very oblivious to who recording them. However the debate was not going on for very long and it ended without anything actually changing, although Swedes rights to personal integrity clearly had been violated.

Arguments II

Power of Surveillance

The internet is a place that everyone uses; it holds everything from silly facebook updates to credit card numbers. The information we publish won't ever disappear and it can easily be used the wrong purpose. It can possibly build up fortunes, but it can also start riots and terrible wars. Therefore, the power should be in the safe hands and under the right circumstances.

For example, the Nazi Germany used surveillance on their own citizens both by listening to phone conversations and hiring spies. Not only was this a method to send people to mass

executions but it also made the population feel like they were monitored, which in the end resulted in that not being sure whether you can trust your own friends and family or not.

The United States is also a great example for when the power of surveillance has gone too far. No one knew about this until the now famous whistleblower of the NSA files, Edward Snowden, released hidden information about what had been going on for years. One of the world's most influential countries, a country claiming that they fight for freedom, had actually been listening to other people's phone calls and also saving information from people's online activities. How is that fighting for the people's freedom? The US government could at any given moment look through all your emails, purchases and phone calls without you noticing - That is abusing surveillance power.

We can understand why the government would like to be able to do this kind of monitoring. But if the government has all this power it would make a bad society where people fear one another, just like in Nazi Germany. Edward Snowden once said "Giving a country the right to mass surveillance is the same thing as giving someone a gun and letting them point it at you as long they promise not to shoot". This is evidence of what could be a world filled with fear. Instead, in order to create a democratic world, we need to claim our liberty, which only will be restricted by surveillance. If one of the most democratic countries in the world abuses the power of surveillance, should we really trust them with our private information?

Double standards

Secondly, it's difficult promoting a liberal internet use out in the world, if we at the same time think that we as democracies have the right to monitor the online world. Why shouldn't dictatorships have the right to monitor the internet if we claim the right to?

Today free internet is a basis for democracy. This means that there will also be a security policy aspect of mass surveillance which definitely doesn't result in a better world.

Democracy includes freedom of speech and not being censored. Maybe the government won't censor its citizens, but the citizens will start censoring themselves because of the fear from what the government will do with the information.

Utilization of Mass Surveillance

Making big, long term decisions, on a large scale about the utilization of mass surveillance, will be difficult, partly because of the extreme pace of technological improvements. If decisions are made today that could be interpreted a different way in the future governments will be able to gain a lot of power. As technology improves continuously there will be both an increase of different types of data to collect and it will be significantly easier collecting it, due to technology improvements. Therefore it is vital that for the privacy of the citizens that regulation concerning monitoring is extremely controlled and continuously renewed to fit new scenarios.

The more mass surveillance, the less privacy. We won't know what they will use the information for, but that they have access to everything. Take the internet companies like google and facebook for example, who are notorious for monitoring and later reselling they have acquired to other companies.

Other more direct forms of utilization of surveillance can already be found in numerous different workplaces. Either through drones which oversee construction workers efficiency or through bracelets that measure heart rate to determine the worker's efforts. Moreover, there is

software constantly getting developed to analyze this data and use it to see the “worst” and “best” workers.

Prevention of Crime

A common argument in the discussion is that we through internet surveillance easier can catch criminals and for example prevent terrorist attacks from happening. But the thing is, that there is nothing that proves that terrorists can be stopped by internet surveillance, as many terrorists act on their own and avoid communicating online. If the terrorist or criminals need to communicate with one another, they'll find a way to do it, internet surveillance will not help! As may all of us know there's a war going on in Syria at the moment, with a numerous different countries involved. Most of the countries are fighting against the terror organisation IS (ISIS), but how do they recruit people?

Among other through the internet, and how does it come that countries that monitor its people haven't stopped the terror? Like The United States of America? Why haven't they stopped all terror attacks or an among of them, if internet surveillance really prevents it? Is it only a bad excuse for watching over they people and look into their private lives?

The things is that internet surveillance will not make it easier to catch criminals nor terrorist, people and countries who think monitoring is okay, are just using it for an excuse to spy on people's private lives.

Conclusion III

In conclusion, we need to avoid mass surveillance to be able to trust one another otherwise the world will be full of fear. If we can't trust the country who claim they fight for the people's freedom, how should we trust anybody if everyone had the chance using mass surveillance?

Secondly today free internet is a basis for democracy. Democracy includes freedom of speech and not being censured. Democracies claims the right of using mass surveillance, but it's not morally right, when they at the same time consider dictatorships inappropriate of doing the same thing. Because they're scared of what will happen, if the information about themselves or others ends up in the wrong hands.

And still there is no evidence for internet surveillance resulting in effectively preventing terrorist attacks, which some people and countries claims. USA one of the biggest countries, has monitored the people of USA and still haven't managed to set a stop for the terror attacks. We can therefore conclude that mass surveillance isn't the solution.

Finally, to keep up with the advancing technology, we need to discuss where to draw the line for what's right. As we've stated before, personal integrity is very important, which we need to be in charge of before someone else is.

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