

A Symptomatic Reading of the Vastaamo Case

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The article presents a case study of the hacking of private psychotherapy centre Vastaamo, wherein the privacy of tens of thousands of therapy clients in Finland came under threat in October 2020. The case is considered not as an isolated data breach but as a cautionary tale with much to say about the negative effects of surveillance capitalism and datafication of health infrastructures. A symptomatic reading of the case directs focus to the ways in which the event connects with “platformification of psychotherapy-as-a-service”, which has rendered sensitive personal data more vulnerable than ever before. In contrast against ongoing policy reforms and public discussion of the Vastaamo case, with their focus on data protection and cybersecurity-based means of preventing such breaches, this article offers critique of the prevailing ideology of “technocratic solutionism” and urges more critical understanding of the collection, archival, and management of sensitive personal data. The conclusion is that more effective regulation of health care providers could advance protection of vulnerable populations’ privacy not only from data breaches but also from the extraction-oriented logics of surveillance capitalism and the digital platform economy.

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