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**Pia Mikander**

**WESTERNERS AND OTHERS IN FINNISH  
SCHOOL TEXTBOOKS**

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## **WESTERNERS AND OTHERS IN FINNISH SCHOOL TEXTBOOKS**

### **Abstract**

This study focuses on the worldview constructed in Finnish and Swedish history, social studies and geography textbooks in Finland. I have approached the textbooks from a postcolonial perspective. This means a focus on the descriptions of global power relations, more explicitly the descriptions of “Westerners” and “others.” Postcolonial scholars have shown that education has long been Eurocentric, particularly in school subjects such as history and geography. They have also pointed out that the outcomes of colonialism have both epistemological and material aspects. Learning about the world, as consisting of superior Westerners and inferior others, has gone hand in hand with aspiring for its domination. Today, the world no longer consists of colonial powers and colonies; however, researchers have suggested that globalization can be seen as ongoing colonialism. This has implications for education.

School textbooks reflect the dominant values of a society. Studying them is a way of clarifying how society constructs what is normal, suitable and ideal. The textbooks researched for this study include the history, social studies and geography textbooks (years 5-9) printed between 2005 and 2010 by all major Finnish textbook publishers. They were based on the 2004 curriculum, which states that the underlying values of basic education include human rights, equality and democracy. Meanwhile, research shows that prejudiced and racist attitudes are prevalent and increasing among young people in schools in Finland. This suggests that there is a particular need to study the descriptions of Westerners and non-Westerners in the textbooks. The purpose of this research is to explore discourses in history, social studies and geography textbooks, particularly concerning the construction of the concept of the West and its relation to the rest of the world.

Research question: How do the textbooks construct an understanding of the West and Western people as superior to others?

Some relevant analytical concepts from Laclau and Mouffe's discourse theory analysis have been used in the research. Based on these concepts, the textbook texts were organized in order to find central themes and to explore discourses. Laclau's and Mouffe's ontological assumptions, including the idea that what is considered objective can be seen as ideological, have also been important for the analysis.

The articles included in the thesis show how the hegemony of a superior West is depicted in different ways. This includes descriptions of historical events as well as current global relations. While most of the old stereotypes about non-Westerners have begun to vanish from the textbooks, there are other statements that work to strengthen the image of the West as superior to others. Western violence is hidden or justified in past as well as current conflicts. Values such as democracy and human rights are considered essentially Western. The articles also show how hegemony can work to make ideological claims into common sense. This includes subtle descriptions of ideological choices presented as neutral, even though they involve assumptions that clash with the principles of human rights and democracy. Examples of phenomena that are portrayed as neutral include the control of non-Westerners' migration, non-Western populations and a non-challenging attitude towards the structures of global inequality.

**Pia Mikander**

## **VÄSTERLÄNNINGAR OCH ANDRA I FINLÄNSKA LÄROBÖCKER**

### **Sammandrag**

Studien fokuserar på den världsbild som konstrueras i finländska (finska och svenska) läroböcker i historia, samhällslära och geografi. Läroböckerna synas ur ett postkolonialt perspektiv. Fokus ligger på hur globala maktrelationer, särskilt gällande "västerlänningar" och "andra" beskrivs. Postkoloniala forskare har visat att skolundervisningen länge varit eurocentrisk, särskilt i skolämnena som historia och geografi. De har också konstaterat att resultaten av kolonialismen har både epistemologiska och materiella aspekter. Att lära sig om världen som bestående av över- och underlägsna människor har gått hand i hand med strävanden efter dess dominans. Idag består världen inte längre av kolonialmakter och kolonier, däremot finns det röster som talar för att globaliseringen kan ses som en fortsättning på kolonialismen. Detta kan anses få konsekvenser för utbildningen.

Läroböcker återspeglar de dominerande värderingarna i ett samhälle. Att studera dem är ett sätt att tydliggöra hur samhället konstruerar vad som är normalt, lämpligt och idealiskt. Forskningsmaterialet i denna studie består av de sex största finländska läroboksförlagens läroböcker i historia, samhällslära och geografi (årskurs 5-9) som är tryckta mellan 2005 och 2010. Böckerna är baserade på läroplanen från år 2004, som betonar mänskliga rättigheter, jämställdhet och demokrati i sin värdegrund. Trots den tydliga värdegrunden visar forskning att fördomar och rasistiska attityder är vanliga och tilltagande bland ungdomar i Finland. Det visar att det finns ett särskilt behov av att studera beskrivningar av västerlänningar och icke-västerlänningar i läroböckerna. Syftet med denna forskning är att undersöka diskurser i läroböcker i historia, samhällslära och geografi, med särskild betoning på hur väst och västerlänningar samt dessas förhållande till resten av världen konstrueras.

Forskningsfråga: Hur konstruerar läroböckerna uppfattningar om väst och västerlänningar som överlägsna andra?

Avhandlingen använder sig av begrepp från Laclau och Mouffes diskurs-teoretiska analys. Baserat på dessa begrepp har lärobokstexterna organiserats för att få syn på centrala teman och diskurser att belysa. Uppfattningen om att det som anses objektivt kan ses som ideologiskt är en del av den ontologiska utgångspunkten för avhandlingens analys.

Avhandlingens artiklar visar hur hegemonin om västerlänningar som överlägsna avbildas på olika sätt. Som exempel används beskrivningar av historiska händelser såväl som nuvarande globala relationer. Medan de flesta gamla stereotyper om icke-västerlänningar har börjat försvinna från läroböcker, finns det andra uttryck som stärker bilden av västvärlden som överlägsen andra. Västerländskt våld är dolt eller rättfärdigat i beskrivningar av både historiska och nutida konflikter. Värden som demokrati och mänskliga rättigheter beskrivs som typiskt västerländska. Artiklarna visar också hur hegemonibegreppet fungerar genom att få ideologiska påståenden att låta icke-ideologiska, som "sunt förnuft". Med detta menas subtila beskrivningar av ideologiska val som presenteras som neutrala, trots att de innebär åtgärder som strider mot principerna om mänskliga rättigheter och demokrati. Beskrivningar av behovet av att kontrollera icke-västerlänningars migration och befolkningar men också en icke-utmanande attityd gentemot strukturella globala orättvisor är exempel på fenomen som porträtteras som neutrala.

**Pia Mikander**

## **LÄNSIMAALAISET JA TOISET SUOMALAISSA OPPIKIRJOISSA**

### **Tiivistelmä**

Tässä tutkimuksessa käsitellään sitä maailmankuvaa, joka rakentuu Suomen historian, yhteiskuntaopin ja maantiedon suomen- ja ruotsinkielisissä oppikirjoissa. Oppikirjoja on lähestytty jälkikoloniaalisesta näkökulmasta, mikä tarkoittaa sitä, että kuvaukset maailman valtasuhteista, erityisesti koskien ”länsimaalaisia” ja ”toisia” ovat olleet keskiössä. Jälkikoloniaaliset tutkijat ovat osoittaneet miten koulutuksen sisältö on pitkään ollut eurooppakeskeistä, erityisesti yhteiskuntatieteellisissä aineissa, kuten historia ja maantiede. On myös todettu, että kolonialismin seuraukset ovat sekä epistemologisia että materiaalisia. Samaan aikaan, kun ympäröivää maailmaa on pyritty hallitsemaan, on se ymmärretty paikkana, jossa jotkut ihmiset ovat arvokkaampia kuin toiset. Nykyisin maailma ei enää koostu siirtomaista ja emävaltioista, mutta on esitetty, että globalisaatio voidaan nähdä kolonialismin jatkeena. Tällä on vaikutuksia koulutukseen.

Koulukirjoissa heijastuvat yhteiskunnan hallitsevat arvot. Tutkimalla oppikirjoja voidaan ymmärtää, miten yhteiskunta määrittelee mikä on normaalia, sopivaa ja ihanteellista. Tässä tutkimuksessa tutkitut kirjat ovat kuuden suomalaisen kustantajan vuosina 2005-2010 ilmestyneitä historian, yhteiskuntaopin ja maantiedon oppikirjoja (peruskoulun 5.-9. vuosiluokille). Oppikirjat perustuvat vuoden 2004 opetussuunnitelmaan, jossa todetaan, että perusopetuksen arvopohjana ovat muun muassa ihmisoikeudet, tasa-arvo ja demokratia. On kuitenkin osoitettu, että enakkoluulot ja rasistiset asenteet ovat yleisiä ja lisääntymässä nuorten keskuudessa Suomen kouluissa. Siksi länsimaalaisten ja ei-länsimaalaisten kuvauksia oppikirjoissa on syytä tutkia. Tämän tutkimuksen tarkoituksena on valottaa historian, yhteiskuntaopin ja maantiedon oppikirjojen diskursseja, erityisesti koskien länsi-käsitteen rakentumista ja sen suhdetta muuhun maailmaan.

Tutkimuskysymys: Miten käsitys Länneistä ja länsimaalaisista ensisijaisena rakentuu oppikirjoissa?

Tutkimuksessa hyödynnetään Laclau ja Mouffin diskurssiteoreettisen analyysin käsitteistöä. Näihin käsitteisiin nojaten oppikirjatekstejä on analysoitu järjestämällä tekstit, etsimällä keskeisiä teemoja ja ilmeneviä diskursseja. Laclau ja Mouffin ontologiset oletukset, kuten ajatus siitä, että kaikki näennäisen objektiivinen voidaan käsittää ideologisena, on ollut keskeinen osa analyysia.

Artikkeleissa osoitetaan, miten länsimaalaista ylivoimaisuutta kuvataan eri tavoin. Tämä koskee niin kuvauksia historiallisista tapahtumista kuin kertomuksia nykyisistä kansainvälisistä suhteistakin. Vaikka monet vanhat stereotyyppit ei-länsimaalaisista ovat alkaneet kadota oppikirjoista, on silti löydettävissä ilmauksia, jotka vahvistavat mielikuvaa ylivoimaisista länsimaalaisista. Länsimaalainen väkivalta on esimerkiksi näkymätöntä tai oikeutettua, sekä historiallisissa että nykyisissä konflikteissa. Tiettyjä arvoja, kuten demokratiaa ja ihmisoikeuksia, kuvataan keskeisesti läntisinä. Artikkeleissa ilmenee myös, miten hegemonia toimii legitimoimalla tiettyjä ideologisia väittämiä tervejärkisinä. Näihin kuuluvat neutraaleina esitetyt kuvaukset, joissa sivutetaan esimerkiksi ihmisoikeuksien tai demokratian periaatteet. Esimerkkeinä tällaisista ilmiöistä ovat tämän tutkimuksen mukaan tarve kontrolloida ei-länsimaalaisten liikkumista tai väestöjä, sekä kyseenalaistamaton asenne maailmanlaajuiseen rakenteelliseen epätasa-arvoon.

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During the process of writing this thesis I have learnt many lessons. One is what a great supervisor looks like. Gunilla Holm, my main supervisor, has been extremely helpful during every step of my doctoral studies, from helping me articulate a research plan, through assisting me during the whole journey. Gunilla has always had time to give good advice and to point out new references and contacts. She has also clearly stood up for her doctoral students whenever this has been needed. Halfway through my doctoral journey I was fortunate enough to get Joron Pihl as my second supervisor. Joron has been of enormous help in my creation of an understanding of how discourses work. She has also given plenty of appreciated feedback on the third and fourth article, as well as the compilation. I also want to express gratitude to my pre-examiners, Susan Edgerton and Lynn Nations Johnson, for the incredibly valuable comments. They helped me improve the thesis and did something more, too: they made me feel part of an academic community.

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Sitomaniemi-San, Christa Tigerstedt and Tuija Veintie. Harriet Zilliacus has been like a mentor throughout my whole research process. Without her help and comments (and patience!), my research would be so much less scholastic. Since my friend Ida Hummelstedt-Djedou joined our academic community, working has become even more inspiring. Thank you! The impact of the JIPI-team has only seen a beginning.

Earlier in life I thought I would be working with completely different things, such as public administration. Luckily I somehow slipped into the world of education and teaching. The inspiration for this thesis is largely based on discussions I have been part of in classrooms and on sofas in teacher lounges during the years 2004 to 2011. I want to thank all the people I have met in the school world in Helsinki, particularly some teachers who have inspired my educational thinking and become great friends: Mia Falk, Maarit Gunnervall, Eva-Kaarina Kärpijoki, Annika Luther, Sara Razai, Malin Teir and Petter Wallenius. I also want to thank the students I have met in school. I have learnt so much from you. From the one who used to respond to boring lessons in the forms of sarcastic drawings left scattered in the classroom, to the cosmopolitan child who convincingly argued against the need for her to learn about differences between pine trees, to the teenager who rarely took much active part in the lessons but once noted that “there is no such thing as a normal nose”. This phrase is still among the cleverest statements I have ever heard.

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Pia Mikander

# CONTENTS

1 INTRODUCTION.....	15
2 POSTCOLONIAL PERSPECTIVES -CONSTRUCTING WESTERN SUPERIORITY .....	21
2.1. Postcolonialism: epistemological and material aspects .....	22
2.2. The ongoing nature of colonialism: an educational challenge .....	23
2.2.1 From Othering to the study of Westerners .....	24
2.2.2 A need to de-neutralize the concept of Western values .....	26
2.3. School textbooks that construct and reconstruct Western superiority .....	28
3 THE FINNISH CONTEXT.....	31
3.1. Eurocentrism and interculturality in school textbooks in Finland .....	32
3.2. The Finnish school textbook industry.....	33
4 HISTORY, SOCIAL STUDIES AND GEOGRAPHY EDUCATION AND TEXTBOOKS.....	37
4.1. History .....	38
4.2. Social studies .....	41
4.3. Geography.....	45
5 ANALYZING DISCOURSES IN SCHOOL TEXTBOOKS .....	49
5.1. Philosophical base .....	49
5.2 Analytical concepts.....	50
5.2.1. Hegemony .....	51
5.2.2. Articulations .....	51
5.2.3. Nodal points and floating signifiers .....	51
5.2.4. Discourses.....	52
5.3. Doing discourse theory analysis on textbooks .....	52
5.4. Research process .....	53
5.4.1. The textbooks .....	53
5.4.2. The start of the analysis – getting acquainted with the material .....	54
5.4.3. The second stage of analysis – identifying discourses .....	56
5.4.4. The third stage of analysis – examining discourses.....	57
5.4.5. Struggling with the term discourse .....	58
5.5. Subjectivity statement and credibility .....	58

5.6. Ethical reflections.....	59
6 THE RESULTS .....	61
6.1. Article I: Othering and the construction of the West: The description of two historical events in Finnish school textbooks .....	61
6.2. Article II: Constructing threats and a need for control: textbook descriptions of a growing, moving world population .....	63
6.3. Article III: Colonialist “discoveries” in Finnish school textbooks .....	64
6.4. Article IV: Globalization as continuing colonialism – critical global citizenship education in an unequal world .....	66
6.5. A summary of the articles .....	67
6.6. Limitations of the study and suggestions for further research.....	70
7 CONCLUDING DISCUSSION .....	73
7.1. Challenges for social science education .....	73
7.2. Widening the perspectives of knowledge .....	74
7.3. Teaching critical thinking .....	77
7.4. Challenging the hegemony of a superior West .....	79
REFERENCES .....	81

## LIST OF ORIGINAL ARTICLES

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- II** Mikander, P. and Holm, G. (2014). Constructing Threats and a Need for Control: Textbook Descriptions of a Growing, Moving World Population. *Review of International Geographical Education Online* 4(1), 7–25.
- III** Mikander, P. (2015). Colonialist “discoveries” in Finnish school textbooks. *Nordidactica - Journal of Humanities and Social Science Education* 4, 48–65.
- IV** Mikander, P. (2016). Globalization as Continuing Colonialism: Critical Global Citizenship Education in an Unequal World. *Journal of Social Science Education* 15(2), 70–79.



# 1 INTRODUCTION

Scholars today are aware, as most were not a few decades ago, that the empirical, factual beliefs of history, geography, and social science very often gain acceptance for reasons that have little to do with evidence. Scholarly beliefs are embedded in culture, and are shaped by culture. This helps explain the paradox that Eurocentric historical beliefs are so strangely persistent; that old myths continue to be believed in long after the rationale for their acceptance has been forgotten or rejected [...] (Blaut, 1993, p. 10.)

As anyone who has ever been a teacher knows, important topics can appear at any time in the classrooms and lead to new ideas in the heads of both students and teachers. When I was teaching 7<sup>th</sup> grade, a student once stayed after class and approached me, embarrassed and puzzled, and said “My grandmother is a racist.” Since the student clearly wanted some kind of explanation, I suggested that the reason grandma is a racist could be that she has been taught to be one. During her school years, one cornerstone of her education in Finland was probably to learn that white, Western people were superior to other people in the world. This was considered objective knowledge during grandmother’s school years. To a large extent, education about the world was Eurocentric, assuming Western supremacy, even to the extent that this education can be perceived as racist indoctrination (Baker, 2012), also in Finland (Paasi, 1998). School subjects such as history and geography have been constructed on the very basis of Eurocentrism (Willinsky, 1998; Blaut, 1993; Dirlik, 1999, 2000). The student and I agreed that school textbooks have changed since that time. However, what values are portrayed in today’s textbooks, keeping in mind Pinsent’s (1997) argument that it is always easier to see ideology in older textbooks than in current ones? Are the Eurocentric historical beliefs, which Blaut calls “so strangely persistent” in the quote above, still present in the textbooks and if so, in what forms?

As cultural artefacts, school textbooks are in a particularly significant position. Found in the backpacks of whole generations of a nation, and legitimized by the schools, they make up an exceptional type of material. Since school textbooks reflect the dominant values of a society, they constitute important material for anyone who wants to capture societal ideology and its ideals concerning schooling (Pingel, 2010; Schissler & Soysal, 2005; Crawford, 2003; Selander, 2003; Apple, 2013; Loftsdóttir, 2010; Griffin & Marciano, 1979). Textbooks have been said to teach us to draw boundaries for what can be considered normal, suitable, ideal and

true. Even in countries such as Finland, where the state has not been involved in the revising of textbooks since the Cold War (Ahonen, 2008; Väisänen, 2005), textbooks are important for the construction of a national identity.

Research shows that prejudiced and racist attitudes are prevalent and even increasing in Finnish schools (Rastas, 2007b; Virrankoski, 2005; Souto, 2011; Suutarinen & Törmäkangas, 2012). Particularly young boys are reported to frequently exhibit racist views (Virrankoski, 2005) and groups with racist views are increasingly positively inclined towards the use of violence (Suutarinen & Törmäkangas, 2012). School education has been suggested as a reason for this. Virrankoski (2005, p. 314) points out that teachers tend to ignore racism. This is supported by Rastas (2007b). As many as 67% of those young people with racist views studied by Suutarinen and Törmäkangas (2012, p. 84) reported that they had never or rarely been encouraged by teachers to challenge their own views by discussing such issues with people of different opinions. The distinction between the core values in the curriculum and the reported attitudes among young people in Finland suggests that there is a growing breach between core values and students' views. There can be many reasons for this. One could be the Finnish political climate, which has assumed an apologetic attitude towards acts of racism. Another could be the trend in Finnish schools toward focusing on the individual rather than on societal structures in education (Tomperi & Piattoeva, 2005). In view of such considerations, what can we say about the impact of values in school textbooks?

School textbooks can be influential, and their content has been known to spark controversies within as well as between countries (Macgilchrist, 2014b). Some researchers suggest that the impact of school textbooks on student knowledge is questionable (Foster, 2011; Ammert, 2011b). On the other hand, Mikk (2000) argues that the influence of textbooks on the values of students can be considered even stronger than that of teachers, since students spend more time with the books than with teachers. Pudas (2013) suggests that one of the main reasons behind the negative attitudes among Finnish youth towards minority groups such as immigrants is the perspective represented in textbooks. Verifying the causality between textbooks and attitudes, however, seems nearly impossible. Mikk's argument can be questioned since the impact of a book can hardly be compared directly to the impact of a person, the teacher. Also, the manner in which a text is received is expected to vary greatly, depending on several factors. Still, school textbooks are discursive documents, which take part in constructing an understanding of reality. The fact that they are so widely distributed, and understood by students, parents and teachers as representing legitimate knowledge (Mattlar, 2014), means

that they deserve attention. It has been suggested that textbooks have rarely been researched systematically (Hiidenmaa, 2015); however, when they have, the focus has often been on appropriateness, or what makes a good or readable textbook (Wikman, 2004; Mikk, 2000; Reichenberg, 2013). There is abundant research about textbooks, however, it is a field of study that tends to be fragmentary (Macgilchrist, 2014b). There have been studies that aim to define a school textbook, that describe good and bad textbooks, or that point to the benefits and drawbacks of different formats such as digital or traditional material. In my research, textbooks are seen as discursive documents that portray what is considered relevant knowledge about the world.

It has been suggested that new media provides alternative educational approaches that do not rely on textbooks for teaching. Do textbooks really belong to the past? According to Fuchs (2011), one of the main deficiencies within textbook research is the lack of empirical findings on the usage of textbooks in the classroom. On the one hand, textbooks have been considered “as important as teachers in schools” (Mikk, 2000), and it is not hard to find research that supports the dominance of textbook use within teaching (Issit, 2004; Englund, 2011; Svensson, 2011; Heinonen, 2005; Atjonen et al., 2008; Mattlar, 2014; Wikman, 2004; Korhonen, 2014). On the other hand, it is not hard to find research evidence that downplays the role of textbooks, either. A substantial amount of the research that emphasizes the importance of textbooks is fairly old and refers to the time before ICT became accessible in classrooms. When students are more actively encouraged to find knowledge on their own (Wikman, 2004), and when the classroom provides unlimited web access, it is likely that the role of textbooks will be less dominant (Grenman, 2010). According to some Swedish researchers, particularly when it comes to history and social studies education, the role of textbooks seems to have diminished to the extent that it no longer determines the teaching (Lilliestam, 2013; Berg, 2014, Englund, 2011). Simultaneously, a fairly recent report from Finland suggests that 88% of teachers use a textbook “often or always” in history education and 85% use one “often or always” in social studies. The textbook was considered an important source of information for 81% of history and social studies teachers (Ouakrim-Soivio & Kuusela, 2012, pp. 35–38).

Research from different countries shows that more experienced teachers in particular choose to rely less on textbooks (Horsley & Walker, 2003; Watt, 2009; Nygren, 2009). Heinonen (2005) identifies four categories of teachers, one of which relies heavily on textbooks, while the three others use textbooks less in their teaching. Yet, there are ambiguities. Students and teachers seem to answer differently when it comes to

textbook usage: according to students, they are used more widely than is reported by teachers (Olsson, 2014; Hansson, 2010). Indeed, the usage of textbooks is considered as unprofessional, and less creative and progressive (Issit, 2004; Olsson, 2014; Ammert, 2011b), which might be the reason for teachers to downplay the importance of textbooks in their teaching. This would suggest that the textbook plays a more important part than what is reported.

When teachers are asked to describe the positive effects of using textbooks, they bring up different aspects. They see textbooks as timesavers that provide expertise and security (Pingel, 2010). Teachers find textbooks to have an advantage since they give the concrete context and the background to events, instead of only reporting about them as, for instance, the news media tend to do (Skolverket, 2006; Häkkinen, 2002). Providing students with background information, pedagogically related to the age of the reader, is something that textbooks can do better than other texts. When discussing the benefits of textbooks, teachers seem to focus on the fact that students can use them individually, for instance, if they change schools, have been absent from class, or need to study for exams (Häkkinen, 2002; Wikman, 2004; Olsson, 2014; Lilliestam, 2013; Svensson, 2011). In these situations, the textbook tends to be used individually, which strengthens its impact, since it is not discussed or challenged by the teacher or the other students in the classroom in the form of collaborative reflection.

Textbooks should all be based on the curriculum. The core curriculum that has been the foundation for the textbooks in this study (FNBE, 2004, p. 12) states that the “underlying values of basic education are human rights, equality, democracy, natural diversity, preservation of environmental viability, and the endorsement of multiculturalism.” The values of the 2014 curriculum, that has started to become implemented in 2016 (FNBE, 2016, pp.15-16) emphasize humanism and the search for truth, goodness, beauty, justice and peace. They also encourage students to adopt the perspective of a global citizenship that respects human rights and encourages them to act for positive change. These core values, which are the guidelines for all basic education, suggest that the content of education should be the opposite of Eurocentrism.

In this thesis, the focus is on the construction of a superior West. The research adopts a postcolonial perspective. It examines textbook descriptions about Westerners and the “others”, as well as different descriptions of relations between these groups, in order to analyze the worldview portrayed within history, social studies and geography teaching in Finland. Researching textbooks in three school subjects together amplifies the perspective on the textbook portrayals of Westerners and others. Addi-

tionally, the material includes textbooks in Swedish as well as in Finnish. The aim is to study how basic education textbooks in history, geography and social studies, printed in the years 2005-2010, address the relations between Westerners<sup>1</sup> and others.

The research question is: How do the textbooks construct an understanding of the West and Western people as superior to others?

The applied method of analysis, discourse theory, is based on certain ontological assumptions that make up a cornerstone of the research project. This includes the notion of objectivity as an ideological concept, as well as the idea that seemingly objective articulations relate to discourses and hegemony. There is a need to consider that any seemingly objective statements in the textbooks reflect the outcome of an ideological struggle. School textbooks are not generally perceived as ideological documents in the same sense as, for instance, news reporting. Thus, shedding light on the politicized nature of textbooks, particularly from the perspective of the construction of the West, is of special interest in this study.

The thesis consists of four articles and a compilation. The postcolonial perspective is presented in the initial theoretical framework. After a general introduction to the theoretical roots of the construction of a superior West, the discussion turns to the particular situation in Finland. This is followed by a discussion about didactical concerns and textbook research related to the three school subjects in question: history, social studies and geography. The methods chapter includes a more detailed discussion of the philosophical base of the discourse analysis as well as an account of the practical steps. Subsequently, the results presented in the articles are discussed, followed by a concluding discussion.

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<sup>1</sup> The concept of the West (and thereby Westerners and Westernness) is here considered as a constructed entity. It will be further discussed in the following chapter.



## 2 POSTCOLONIAL PERSPECTIVES - CONSTRUCTING WESTERN SUPERIORITY

Postcolonial theory is not limited to the study of the effects of colonialism. It can also be used for exploring the creation of structures and power hierarchies in the world, in past as well as current settings. A central theme of investigation is the epistemic construction of the West as something different from, and better than, the rest of the world. Therefore I adopt a postcolonial perspective in this thesis. It means that during the research process the focus has been on global power relations from colonial times to present, including both the material and epistemological aspects.

During the last few centuries, the image of the West was constructed as the birthplace of ideas, of knowledge and rationality, of civilization, and of good values such as democracy. This idea was strengthened by science as well as popular culture (Bonnett, 1999; Dyer, 1997; Dirks, 1992; Young, 1990, Hall, 1997). The concept of Eurocentrism includes the understanding that Western scientific knowledge is not only particular to the West but to be considered universal, omniscient knowledge. Western political philosophy and culture is also considered by many to be non-ideological or universal (Chakrabarty, 2003). Still, Western science has not been developed in a neutral space, but strongly connected with colonialist ventures (Kennedy, 2014). In *Orientalism* (1978), Said showed how the West, since the Enlightenment, constructed itself as superior by creating and naming the Orient as its opposite. The Orient stood for all the negative sides that the West was the opposite of. The Muslims/Arabs were constructed as essentially different, disregarding the borrowing and crossing over between Europe and the Middle East over centuries (Said, 1997; Hämeen-Anttila, 2006). The academic community played a special role in this. Scholars from different disciplines, many of whom had never set foot in the "Orient", took part in creating a scientific basis that served to justify the idea of Westerners as morally and intellectually superior to the people of the Orient. Descriptions of the seeming inferiority of non-Westerners took many forms, not least within the academic communities. By characterizing colonized people as dirty, lazy, dishonest, lacking history, ethics, culture, language and intellect (Pietikäinen & Leppänen, 2007, p. 181), people in the colonizing part of the world constructed themselves as the opposite: clean, hard-working, honest people living in the part of the world where culture, language and intellect existed. Western superiority came to be a central part of cultural expressions. This notion

brought along with it institutional and structural racism, ideas that have been constructed and solidified to such an extent that they are perceived as natural, and thereby hard to identify. This suggests that the idea of West as superior is hegemonic (Hall, 2002; Amin, 2011). The concept of hegemony, which plays a significant part in this research, will be further elaborated in the methods section.

### **2.1. Postcolonialism: epistemological and material aspects**

The work of Said should be seen as an analysis of power, since the proposed descriptions of the Orient served the concrete purpose of justifying the West's political and economic power in the region. Or, in his words:

Neither imperialism nor colonialism is a simple act of accumulation and acquisition. Both are supported and perhaps even impelled by impressive ideological formations that include notions that certain territories and people require and beseech domination, as well as forms of knowledge affiliated with domination (Said, 1993, p. 9).

The outcomes of colonialism have to be seen with regard to its epistemological and material aspects (Santos, 2007). There is an undividable totality between understanding the world and acting in it. One major achievement of postcolonial theory is that it has shown the power of discursive practices. These are not second to economics; instead, they are essential to the production and maintenance of colonial relations. Describing people in the colonies as inferior was closely connected to the venture of seeking power over their resources such as raw material, goods and labor. It was a way to normalize and justify economic dominance. Simultaneously, the conquests nourished the idea of the superiority of the conquerors. Mignolo (2010; 2012), as well as several other scholars from the Latin American "coloniality group" (Salvatore, 2010), emphasize the theft of raw material that followed the European conquest of the Americas. They see the incomparable pillage of capital resources such as gold (a minimum of 155 000 kg is estimated to have been taken from the American continent to Spain between 1531 and 1660) as pivotal for the relations between Europe and other continents (Mignolo, 2012, p. 57).

In addition to the acquisition of raw material, the colonial epistemology also worked to justify violence. Césaire has pointed out that Europe "is responsible before the human community for the highest heap of corpses in history (1972, p. 8)." One important aspect of postcolonial thinking is to make the violent nature of Western superiority visible. More often than not, the history of Europe is told only in terms of a success story, for

instance in education. Young (2004, p. 164) considers there to be a “strategic blindness and refusal to come to terms with the violence intrinsic to Western culture.” As an example of this, he notes that fascism and the Holocaust are often referred to as exceptional passages within Western culture, while it “took a Césaire or Fanon to point out that fascism was simply colonialism brought home to Europe (ibid.).”

Another material aspect that was deeply connected with colonial epistemology was the birth of scientific racism, particularly between 1850 and 1950 (Eriksen, 2010). Whole fields of science such as eugenics and statistics emerged from the idea that there were normal and non-normal populations (Davis, 1995). The academic community also supported voyages to map skulls, in the name of science, all around the world. This was accompanied by the assumed colonial responsibility to bring Christianity and civilization to all people, or what has been called the “white man’s burden.” The growing trade and successful imperial project - by 1914, European powers governed 85% of the globe - gave widespread legitimacy to Eurocentrism and its material aspects. The Europeans gave themselves the task and obligation to educate others and their “lesser” cultures (Aman, 2015).

## **2.2. The ongoing nature of colonialism: an educational challenge**

Now, a hundred years later, the official global power relations between the former colonial powers and the former colonies have changed. Economically, however, the situation in many cases is not that different. As Rizvi, Lingard and Lavia (2006) suggest, some people living in the former colonized areas might not easily distinguish between colonialist times and today’s economic globalization. The ongoing nature of colonialism is currently visible, for instance, in global living conditions, labor, trade, consumption and migration. Even though poorer countries have caught up with wealthier ones, global inequality, measured as inequality between all individuals in the world, is extremely high (Milanovic, 2007; Milanovic, 2013; Lindert & Williamson, 2003; Beddoes, 2012; Held & Kaya, 2007). Of course, not all people in Europe and the USA are rich, and certainly not all people outside these continents are poor, but most of the wealthy live in the West (Moore, 2015) and the structural implications of global trade benefit the richer countries (Stiglitz, 2006).

Many current phenomena require explanations that show how global power structures are, in fact, not very different from those of colonial times. These include the manufacturing of clothes and mobile gadgets, tourists and refugees meeting on the Mediterranean shores, and global flows of capital into tax havens. This would suggest that the notion of

globalization as continued colonialism is not just something tangible for people living in the margins, but very relevant to the rich in the West, too, even if this is not always made explicit at the receiving end. The fact that a fashion shirt can be bought for a few coins, with the shop benefitting from this even after the costs of designing, shipping, storing, advertising and selling, means that there is someone at the manufacturing end paying the real price for it. This phenomenon can be characterized as “ecologically unequal exchange” (Dorninger & Hornborg, 2015), which means that economically strong areas, the US, the EU and Japan, import more resources than they export, but also that people in Western countries are supported by non-Western people’s labor (Hornborg, 2015). This suggests that for an understanding of global structures there is a need for postcolonial analysis. Within educational research, postcolonial analysis has been suggested to bring light on issues ranging from the content of the curriculum (Burney, 2012) to the equal treatment of all students (Pihl, 2010). The word “post” in postcolonialism should not be seen as referring to something finished (Hall, 2002). Instead, postcolonial strategies can be used to analyze the continuities and discontinuities between colonialism and globalization. A challenge for education is to identify concepts that explain the ongoing nature of colonialism. The concept of ecologically unequal exchange is a suggestion; however, it needs to be unraveled and considered from social, historical and geographical contexts.

### **2.2.1 From Othering to the study of Westerners**

The world can no longer be divided into colonizers and colonized. Other concepts have been used, such as the First and the Third World, industrialized and developing countries, the global South and the global North, all of which are in some ways inexact or problematic. Within education, but also in the general debate, there is a need to rethink these concepts in a critical light. In this study, the concept of the West is used. It is in no way more exact than the First World, the North or the industrialized countries. However, it is referred to more than these in school textbooks and mainstream debate. It does not have a clear counterpart; textbooks refer to non-Western countries as developing countries, poor countries and sometimes the South. Because of this, I call this a study of Westerners and others in textbooks.

*Othering* refers to the idea that the world consists of essentially different groups: the superior “us” and inferior “others.” It is often associated with the discourses of colonialism, starting with Said’s *Orientalism* (1978). Othering is a social construction that is linked to power and hierarchies. It is a particular type of power, since it operates through culture,

the production of knowledge, images and representation (Hall, 1997). Dervin (2015) suggests that the question of which group makes up the other has differed from time to time. Differences in appearance, such as skin color, have not consistently been a cause for othering. According to Dervin's example, Africans were perceived as "pagans" in 16<sup>th</sup> century America, before being labeled as "negro" when the Trans-Atlantic slave trade increased from 1680 onwards. This could mean that the position of the Africans as others was more dependent on their position in society than their appearance. Another example of this is found in Ignatiev's (2009) study of how the Irish "became white." Upon their arrival in America, the Irish were seen as others, indeed as an inferior race, by early European settlers. The path of the Irish from essentially different others to becoming identified as "white" came to be a process that was tightly connected with the labor market and social class. By intentionally starting to work within sectors that were excluded from Afro-Americans, the Irish came to distance themselves from "black man's work," something that led to them gradually being accepted as white (ibid., p. 130). The message that these examples convey is that othering is related to particular contexts and power relations, rather than physical attributes.

The concept of othering includes as a significant part the notion that portraying others means constructing the self as its counter image. The portrayal of the self, particularly the "Western" self, is of interest in this study. The concepts of West, Westerners and Western values are widely used and seldom explained. In *The Idea of the West*, Bonnett (2004) traces the shifting meanings of this cardinal direction, which is often understood as Europe, the USA and various other countries where immigrants from these countries have become the majority of the population. He proposes that the idea of the West has always been fluent, both in its geographical and ideological scope. As one example, it would be difficult to define the borders of the West. Sometimes Japan is included, while Russia rarely is seen as Western. The frequent use of sayings such as countries becoming "Westernized" also means that the West is a constructed entity, not linked to geography as much as it is to ideology (see also Hall, 1992).

The logic of the West includes the mantra that Europe is the continent of progress. Problems are closely related to the populations of other continents (Maïche, 2015). Bonnett also points out that the constitutive elements of what being Western means are dependent on what entities are seen as its opponent. Right before the Russian socialist revolution, socialism and workers' unions were seen as the ultimate goal of Western civilization. After the revolution, during the Cold War, when socialism and the secular Soviet Union were considered the enemy, the links between

Westernness and socialism disappeared and the West came to be closely connected to capitalism and religion (Christianity). With the emergence of the Muslim world as the antagonist of what is Western, the non-religious elements of Westernness became highlighted again. Another characteristic of Western civilization is that its future has been considered at risk for as long as it has been around. It has been pronounced to be both all-conquering and doomed, both in popular culture and academic literature, for at least a hundred years (Bonnett, 2004). Today, the idea that Western values are threatened is often cited, for instance, in the news media. How does education respond to this? Topics such as migration and wars are perhaps particularly vulnerable to uncritical essentialist attitudes, such as explanations that point to Westerners and Westernness as being threatened by other people with radically different values. However, the discussion about the core of Westernness shows explicitly that there is no coherent definition of what Western values entail.

### **2.2.2 A need to de-neutralize the concept of Western values**

Perhaps the entire concept of Western values is in need of a deeper analysis. What does “Western” stand for? According to Lentin (2008), one part of being Western is the belief in oneself as tolerant and democratic, even antiracist. Critical whiteness studies have shown how whiteness works as a norm. Instead of focusing on racialized others in the study of racism, critical whiteness scholars analyze the hegemonic power structures that work to benefit white people in societies around the world (Ahmed, 2011; Mattson, 2004). Another related field of study is the study of privilege (McIntosh, 1998; Case, 2013). Privilege is seen as the upside of oppression. Instead of studying the exclusion of discriminated people, analyzing the inclusion of privileged people turns the focus to structures that uphold discriminatory practices. Critical whiteness and the study of privilege (as well as the study of white supremacy; see Bonds and Inwood, 2015) aim to politicize positions, such as white, male, heterosexual, middle class identities that have been perceived as neutral, and to examine how they reproduce political, social and moral power hierarchies. These theories have provided a way to turn the object of study around and to find new explanations for phenomena related to social relations.

In this thesis, the concepts of the West and Westerners are in particular focus. While it is hard to imagine Westernness without whiteness, Bonnett (2004) rightly points out that the concept of the West is not a euphemism for white. There is an inclusive mechanism within the West that is not included in the concept of white. Potentially, anyone could embrace a Western identity, while not anyone could come to be seen as “white.” Bonnett suggests that the concept of the West includes a set of

values that could theoretically be open for anyone; at the same time, however, it seems that the inclusiveness is not genuine: the whole world cannot become “Western.” The concepts of whiteness (as embodied experiences) and Westernness (an ideological identity potentially open for all) belong to different spheres. Simultaneously, whiteness studies and the study of the West share some common ground. While referring primarily to embodied experiences, the concept of whiteness has also had territorial and cultural/ideological traits. In other words, white refers not merely to skin color. Modernity brought with it the idea that there was a linkage between whiteness, Europeaness and Christianity (Bonnett, 1998). Mattson (2004, p. 124) considers there to be a “globally embedded imagination” that whiteness includes the idea that white people are connected through their ideological sameness. This suggests that whiteness is connected more to ideology than to geographical identification (see Latouche, 1996). What this ideological identification refers to today is not as much Christianity as an adherence to a vague set of values seen as essentially “Western.” Bonnett (2004, p. 15) has shown how the deliberate use of the term “Western” as a civilization was in fact a way to evoke “a set of principles and values that could be both cosmopolitan and subtly ethnocentric, potentially open to all but rooted in the experiences of a narrow social strata.” Non-Westerners acquiring Western habits would still be “theoretically indigestible” (ibid., p. 27). In my opinion, it is particularly the subtlety of this ethnocentricity that deserves attention. The term Western is a promise of an inclusivity that might never be realized. The term is closely connected to ideology: it includes a system of values, even the idea of a civilization.

The reason for referring to whiteness as a comparative concept to Westernness in this study is that it provides an incentive to examine the use of the concept of the West in a less neutral light. Before going any further, it is important yet again to be reminded of the constructed nature of “Western” as well as “white.” Even though whiteness (skin color) would seem to be a more concrete category than Westernness (belonging to the “West”), the above-mentioned discussion suggests that the blackness of the African Americans as well as the whiteness of the Irish have not been objective “facts,” as much as the object of ideological debates. “Western” is a social construction, but “white” is not detached from the socially constructed reality either. This is not to suggest that whiteness as an embodied feature would not carry privileges. A white person would probably be taken as a Westerner, complete with “Western values” regardless of his or her place of origin or personal ideology. A person who would not identify as white could be considered as “Western.” However, there are certainly limits to the inclusive character of Westernness since

this person might need to somehow prove his or her Westernness, referring perhaps to his or her ancestry, citizenship, education or personal ideology.

One major difference between the categories “white” and “Western” is the extent to which they are politicized. The concepts are perceived and used very differently. This includes mainstream media and to a lesser degree some of the academic debate, where “West,” “Westerners” and “Western values” are used extensively (Bonnett, 2004). Whether these concepts are defined, for instance, as including democracy and human rights, or simply left without definition, they mostly pass without much notice, not raising much concern. If, let’s say, democracy or human rights were referred to as “white values,” or if the news media reported about threats to the “white world” in the same ways as “Western values” or the “Western world” are mentioned today, most people would probably react with dismay. Yet there are rarely any such reactions towards the frequent references to Western values and Westernness. There is a need for this to be discussed within education, particularly within the school subjects that seek to explain the world.

### **2.3. School textbooks that construct and reconstruct Western superiority**

Apple (2013) calls for a deeper analysis of how certain power structures are reproduced within education. Some questions to ask the textbook texts are: Whose knowledge is included? Whose knowledge is of most worth? What are the claims of truth presented? What voices are heard? Who are the characters, heroes and villains (Apple, 2013; Foster & Crawford, 2006)? One role of postcolonialism has been to challenge current global power relations within education (Rizvi, Lingard & Lavia, 2006; Willinsky, 1998; Smith, 1999; Sleeter, 2010; Andreotti, 2014; Baker, 2012). This includes examining the epistemological as well as material dimensions of the notion of Western superiority in the world today. In the following, I present some international textbook research from a postcolonial perspective in order to give a background to the topic.

The production of knowledge in schools has traditionally been connected to national objectives (Crawford, 2003; Lozic, 2011). This implies that the content of school textbooks can be considered an arena for a struggle over what version of history or the present situation the state advocates. There has been a strong tendency in school textbooks, particularly in social studies, to legitimate the state and social institutions (Anyon, 1978; Foster, 2011; Lintner & MacPhee, 2012) and to introduce to students a quite specific historical, cultural and socio-economic order (Crawford, 2003). There have been calls, however, for textbooks to ques-

tion the authoritarian approach and include more perspectives (Schissler & Soysal, 2005; Paxton, 1999; Foster & Crawford, 2006; Rodriguez Rodriguez, 2011).

As early as after the First World War, one of the tasks of the newly-founded League of Nations was to search for ways to combat xenophobia and to help avoid stereotypes. Politicians as well as teachers reported that school textbooks tended to foster, rather than combat national prejudices and misleading stereotypes (Pingel, 2010). The groups that were described as inferior in textbooks ranged from minorities living inside the country to immigrants and aboriginal peoples. Even if there is plenty to learn from research about the stereotyped descriptions of different groups, the focus in this research is particularly on the concept of the West and the “othering process” that constitutes it. Research about how the West and its other are portrayed in school textbooks shows that the othering process can take different forms. In a Polish study, Kaim-Kerth (2013) provides an example from a contemporary mathematics textbook to illustrate how far from “multicultural awareness” a textbook can be:

There are 15 Christians and 15 Turks on a boat that starts to sink in the storm. The boat needs to be lighter in order to survive the storm so half of the people need to be thrown into the sea. One of the Christians suggested [sic] that all the people should form a circle and each 9th person will jump out. How should the Christians stand in order to let all the Turks die? (Kaim-Kerth, 2013, p.69)

The quote is reported to have caused understandable widespread discussion in the media. To me, this is an example that is completely out of the ordinary. In the reviewed studies and in my own material there are no similar descriptions. However, constructing Western superiority in the form of less explicit statements has been more common.

Textbook research from different countries about the relations between the West and the surrounding world has pointed out the extent of Eurocentrism in textbooks (Blaut, 1993; Paxton, 1999; Kamali, 2005; Andersson, 2010; Otto, 2013; Pinsent, 2012; Olsson, 2014; Nordgren, 2011; Lee, 2011; Macgilchrist, 2014a). Eurocentrism can take many forms, such as the omission of non-Westerners’ voices or stories in the texts. Non-Westerners might typically be portrayed in textbooks without names, as objects of the reader’s gaze (Rønningen, 2010). Also, textbooks frequently introduce non-Western people only in relation to their meetings with Westerners, for instance, in history (Loftsdóttir, 2010; Kamali, 2006; Nordgren, 2006; Palmberg, 2009).

Postcolonial and critical educational research has shown that there are more studies about the portrayal of “others” and fewer about the descriptions of Westerners. Pingel (2000), however, shows how Western history textbooks have given increased attention to the “clash of civilizations,” emphasizing differences between lifestyles and values in the West and in Islamic societies or in other non-Western societies. Europe is in the textbooks associated with concepts such as functioning democracy, wealth and a fair tax system. Other studies also point this out: Lee (2011) shows how Westerners are presented as law-abiding and effective people. As an example, Lee shows how Africans are characterized as failing to maintain the environment while Westerners are portrayed when they clean up the environment; their pollution of it is not mentioned. Westerners solve problems that people from other cultures cause, even in Lee’s material directed to South Korean students. This suggests that the hegemony of Western superiority is not limited to a Western context. As another example, Røthing and Bang Svendsen (2011) have analyzed how Western norms are constructed as superior through descriptions of sexual norms in Norwegian social studies textbooks. These studies show that there is an understanding of “Western” sexual culture as superior to that of non-Westerners’. From maintaining the environment to having the right kind of sex, the studies are examples of the wide-reaching implications of considering Westerners as superior to others in school textbooks. In the discussions about different school subjects, I will provide more references to textbook research, which serve as a background for the study. However, before this, there is a need to consider the Finnish context, including the Finnish national identity as Western, its reflections in the textbooks, as well as some background to the Finnish textbook publishing industry.

### 3 THE FINNISH CONTEXT

During its nearly one hundred years of independence as a country, Finland has sought its role in the international community. Geographically situated between Russia and the Nordic countries, the Finnish nation state has balanced between loyalties. The debate prior to Finland's EU membership in 1995 was to a large extent about whether or not Finland should be defined as belonging to the West (Harle & Moisio, 2000; Maïche, 2015). The past century has also seen an economic development which has taken Finland from a poor and remote corner of Europe, to one of the most affluent societies in the world, and then to a situation in which public spending is being cut due to government policy that emphasizes the need for austerity, not envisaging political alternatives.

As a Nordic country, Finland, too, has been perceived, and has regarded itself, in terms of *exceptionalism* (Loftsdóttir & Jensen, 2012). Nordic countries have been described as "... anti-imperialist, non-colonial, non-exploitative, peaceful, small and social democratic," and as having no responsibility for Europe's colonialism (Østergård, 1997, p. 25). The role of the Nordic countries has been seen to make up for the wrongdoings of their fellow Europeans towards the rest of the world. However, countries and people can be affected by colonialist times even if they were not colonizers themselves (Hall, 2002; Löytty, 2005). In fact, colonialism is deeply rooted in the Nordic countries in different ways. Jessen Williamson (2016) suggests that there has been a great denial of colonialism in the Nordic countries, and that people in the Nordic countries need to see themselves as part of colonialist structures. This can be considered from several perspectives. To begin with, the Nordic countries share an epistemic construction of Western supremacy with the rest of Europe (Loftsdóttir & Jensen, 2012; Lehtonen & Löytty, 2007). This construction, which has been part of education, culture and politics over hundreds of years, has been named colonial complicity, referring to participation in colonialism as a crime through shared hegemonic discourses (Vuorela, 2009). The idea behind the concept is to point out that the Nordic countries should not be seen as innocent bystanders in colonialism. Another argument that has been overlooked is the fact that Nordic countries took part in colonialism through trade relations, not just benefitting from, but even advancing the colonial project (Eidsvik, 2012).

Jonsson (2010) argues for yet another perspective: that colonialism can be found in the narrative of Nordic identities. He refers to how the Nordic understanding of the self relies on a construction of people who tame nature and create a civil society out of the wilderness. He sees this

as a reoccurring theme in Nordic literature, which would suggest that the very Nordic mentality would be tied to colonialist acts. This includes the bad treatment of the Sámi people, who were seen as “part of the wilderness” (ibid., p. 17). In Finland, the Sámi have been almost invisible in school textbooks, and when included, they have often been presented in stereotypical and derogatory ways (Kuokkanen, 2007; Pietikäinen & Leppänen, 2007).

Lately, Finland has seen an emergence of media reporting that favors racist attitudes, leading to a situation where the anti-immigration movement sets the agenda (Nikunen & Horsti, 2013). The anti-immigration agenda is often fueled by references to the threat to Finland as part of “Western civilization,” especially by migrants from Africa and the Middle East, particularly Muslims (Keskinen, 2013). Finland has been portrayed as an innocent nation that is confronted with the world’s problems in the form of an increasing number of asylum seekers and migrants. From a postcolonial perspective, it would be interesting if more media attention was given to the discussion about the role of Finnish companies, such as the Finnish paper industry or the extractive industries, and their actions in the South (Ranta-Tyrkkö, 2014; Kokko, 2008; Hakkarainen, 2013).

### **3.1. Eurocentrism and interculturality in school textbooks in Finland**

Maïche (2015, p. 12) has studied how the concept of West is used within political discourse in Finland. He considers the idea of West to include a “narcissist feeling of superiority and a historical Eurocentrism.” This, he suggests, has become a fixed part of everyday language. Maïche includes an analysis of history textbooks and finds similar results. There have not been many studies about Eurocentrism in Finnish school textbooks compared to other countries, such as neighboring Sweden. Research on the subject includes some examples, particularly about the history of stereotypes in textbooks. Even though overtly negative and racist stereotypes have indeed started to disappear from Finnish textbooks (Hiidenmaa, 2015), some stereotypes have persisted. This includes the discourse of Europeans as the good and valuable people of the world (Rinne, 2011). Rinne notices how those from outside Europe are still often portrayed in a negative light in school textbooks. She observes a discourse of European identity which divides the world between the good and valuable people in the West and their opposite, the outside world. Lampinen (2013) has noted that the terms used to describe minorities, such as migrants and people of other cultures, are not always relevant or factual. She also considers the use of images in textbooks as sometimes enhancing stereotypes

of other cultures. In her dissertation, Pudas (2015) studies to what extent global education (a vague concept referring to intercultural as well as globally aware education) is part of basic education in Finland. She considers there to be a gap between the intended goals of national education and the ways these goals are addressed in textbooks. She also finds that teachers want more and better teaching materials to improve the global education situation. Reports suggest that the extent to which textbooks comply with the values of the core curriculum varies greatly. The lack of consistency is also mirrored in how textbooks portray interculturality. Interculturality in the textbooks is reported as including “confused and confusing ideas” about the meeting of people from different cultures (Dervin, Hahl, Härkönen & Layne, 2015, p. 169). Non-Western cultures are shown to be fixed and undynamic, and irrelevant to the students’ own society.

### **3.2. The Finnish school textbook industry**

One aspect that sometimes is left unseen when it comes to textbook research is the textbook publishing business (Foster & Crawford, 2006; Byrd Clark, 2015). I find it important to be acquainted with the textbook printing process since this makes it easier to understand why textbooks are written the way they are. Printers and booksellers work above all for profit, and there has been an increasing concentration of power in the text publishing business (Apple, 2013; Macgilchrist, 2014b). This goes for Finland as well. Since the beginning of this research, six school textbook companies have merged into four. WSOY and Tammi textbook companies have merged under the name SanomaPro (part of a multinational company) and the two Swedish-speaking companies Schildts and Söderströms have merged to become Schildts & Söderströms (Sanoma, 2011; Rundell, 2011). Concentrating textbook publishing to a smaller number of larger firms has implications for the content of the books. It could for instance mean a reduced tendency to take risks (Apple, 2013), such as experimenting with alternative pedagogies. Fewer actors would presumably lead to fewer voices being heard, too. Another aspect that is worth paying attention to is the fact that an increasing number of other organizations, including non-profit and for-profit ones, have started to publish educational materials (Macgilchrist, 2014b). So far, this development has not been particularly evident in Finland.

Generally, Finnish textbook publishing companies start planning new textbooks when there is no longer a demand for the old ones, or when a new curriculum has been developed, or if the publisher wants to increase its share of the market by publishing a new alternative to existing textbook series (Ruuska, 2015). School textbooks are usually written in teams

of three to six people, mostly school teachers. The reason for this is that school teachers are expected to have the best knowledge about the use of the textbook in class (Peltomaa, 2006). As writers of textbooks, the authors do not have work contracts with the publishing houses. This means that they do not receive a salary for their work, but they receive compensation afterwards from royalties from sales (Pudas, 2013). They usually write the textbooks during the school holidays (Ruuska, 2015). According to Långström (1997), textbooks that are written by teachers sell better than those written by researchers, even though researchers can be expected to be better informed about recent developments within the field. This explains why it takes time for research results to influence school textbooks.

State regulated revision of school textbooks in Finland was discontinued in 1992. Up to then, it was one of the responsibilities of the National Board of Education. Ahonen (2008) connects the revision to Finland's non-critical approach to the Soviet Union during the Cold War. By discontinuing the inspection of textbooks, the responsibility and authority that the NBE had was transferred to the publishing companies (Pudas, 2013). This has not always been seen as a positive development, since it suggests that practically anyone can start writing school textbooks (Kalmbach, 2012). However, according to representatives of the NBE, there is no longer any need for revision, since teachers can simply choose to use the textbooks that they prefer. Representatives of the NBE also report that teachers are in contact with the publishers when they encounter errors in textbooks (Mátyas & Skinnari, 2012; Myllykoski, 2013). Although in theory it seems ideal that teachers are free to choose among different textbooks for their teaching, the financial situation of the school and the municipality it is located in plays a role, and a teacher might very well have to reuse old textbooks (Dervin, Hahl, Härkönen & Layne, 2015). There is also a risk that textbooks do not always mirror the curriculum, particularly the values of the core curriculum (Atjonen et al., 2008; Mattlar, 2014; Lampinen, 2013; Pudas 2015).

Macgilchrist (2014b) reports that generally within the textbook publishing industry, a substantial amount of time in the textbook making process is devoted to issues other than education, such as layout. Considering that there are also pressing deadlines, this means that time spent on these questions is time not spent on discussing content. Reflecting on a long career within textbook publication in Swedish in Finland, Peltomaa (2006) recalls that some of the epistemological discussions that were part of textbook production in the 1990s have vanished in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. There is now a lack of questions such as what is the scope and form of knowledge, who decides the content and on what grounds? What

in the knowledge tradition do we want to convey to further generations (ibid., p. 98)? These are questions that can be time-consuming, but they would be important to consider.



## 4 HISTORY, SOCIAL STUDIES AND GEOGRAPHY EDUCATION AND TEXTBOOKS

Three school subjects are the focus of this research: history, social studies and geography. They set out to explain the world from different perspectives. Another school subject that can be seen to explain the world is religion. Finnish school textbooks in religion have been reported to include stereotypical descriptions of people from other religions and cultures (Schatz & Niemi, 2015). Textbooks in religion, however, were omitted from this study in the initial phase. The main reason for this is Finland's school system, which is based on the model of teaching students about their own religion (Zilliacus, 2014). Since students study different textbooks depending on their own religious identity, it would have been too complicated to include them in this study.

Textbooks in history, social studies and geography have different historical roots. Kennedal (2011, p. 119) suggests that their textbook texts have different styles: history textbooks tend to be narrative, geography textbooks descriptive and social studies textbooks discursive. This implies that comparing the textbooks can be difficult because of the expected different approaches. Ahonen (2000) has noticed a distinction between the subjects concerning the relation between the core values in the Finnish curriculum and the content of the textbooks. She suggests that geography textbooks are the most loyal to the core values, while history textbooks somewhat diverge from them. The distinction between the core values and the content of the textbooks is the most evident, however, in social studies. The reason for these differing relations to the core curriculum could potentially be explained by the different subject curricula and the degree to which they deviate from the core curriculum values.

History, social studies and geography are connected to different academic disciplines with different historical roots, and they study the world from different perspectives. They are also positioned differently in academia. History is the strongest academic subject, with the clearest object of study: human activity in the past. Social studies is not directly tied to any single subject. In Finland, social studies is described as connected to the academic disciplines of economics, political science, sociology, law and social politics (Löfström, 2002), while social studies teaching in other countries may include or emphasize other academic subjects, such as anthropology, geography or religion. In comparison, the school subject of geography is more clearly affiliated with the academic subject of geography. The division between physical geography and human (or social or cultural) geography, which is to be found in both school and academia,

might be considered a complicating factor since geography can be seen as part of either the natural or social sciences. There have been reports of deficient communication between academic geographers and geography educators in Finnish schools (Kaivola & Rikkinen, 2007).

Despite these perhaps “subject-cultural” related differences, the subjects of history, social studies and geography share some similarities, including the search to find explanations to social phenomena, or indeed, to understand the world. Together, they become part of a social science that, according to Wallerstein (1997, p. 93), “has been Eurocentric through its institutional history.” Many phenomena are treated in all three subjects; these include migration, poverty, economy, natural resources, communications, nations and international relations. Textbook analyses of these subjects provide a way to investigate politically sensitive subject matter on the relations between nations (Holmén, 2006; Otto, 2013). Since all interpretations of societal issues fall back on two dimensions, time and space, there is a need for both a historical and a geographical framework to fully understand the social (Karlsson, 2004, p. 313). As Pingel (2010, p. 7) puts it: “Through the teaching of history and geography we create a mesh of reference points in time and space. Where we come from, where we live, are we *allowed* or are we *entitled* to live there? History and geography textbooks attempt to explain our roots, how and why we happen to be living in a certain place and how that place can be described and characterized – in other words, who we really are.” In the following, I will reflect briefly on the nature of the three school subjects, including relevant references to the Finnish curriculum.

#### **4.1. History**

In any society, the education of history is a political act (Torsti, 2008). History teaching is a form of exercising power (Mellberg, 2004) since it is the keeper of ideas, values and knowledge (Foster & Crawford, 2006). Because of this, history textbooks are regarded as revealing more about the time in which they are written than the time they depict (Karlsson, 2011; Ammert, 2011a). History textbooks are seen as particularly important in creating the self-image of a nation (Loftsdóttir, 2010; Karlsson, 2011; Foster & Crawford, 2006). From a postcolonial perspective, history as a science has been dominated by the perspectives of the West (Dirlik, 2000). Young (2004, p. 2) even suggests that history writing is the West’s greatest myth. In this research, I see the subject of history as one important field within education where an understanding of the West and the surrounding world is constructed.

In Finland, history is normally taught in years 5 – 8, in chronological order. The 2004 Finnish curriculum, on which the studied textbooks are

based, understands the task of history instruction for years 5-6 as guiding students to become responsible players who know how to treat the phenomena of their own era and the past critically. Research suggests, however, that Finnish history teaching has been focused on facts, and overlooks different interpretations (van den Berg, 2007; Rautiainen, 2006; Rantala, 2012). For years 7-9, one of the tasks of history instruction is seen as familiarizing the students with other cultures and their influence. One of the 7-9 core contents is called "From East-West conflicts to the North-South confrontation." This includes "the division of the world into poor and wealthy states, and the resultant problems (FNBE, 2004, p. 223)." This formulation can be seen as a reason for the problem-focused view that Rinne (2011) suggests characterizes textbook texts. The 2014 curriculum (FNBE, 2016) is much more detailed than the previous one, and focuses more on particular goals and methods in the descriptions of the different subjects. There are also clearly different ideological stands. Instead of, as in the 2004 version, focusing on the division of the world into poor and wealthy countries and the resultant problems, the 2014 curriculum encourages students to explore the shared history of developed and developing countries, the origins of new kinds of political tensions in the world as well as solutions for them. Another clearly ideological distinction in the 2014 curriculum is to be found in the section "The Great War era (p. 447)," which includes the idea that wars should be treated from the viewpoint of ordinary people and human rights issues. Through teaching about wars, students are encouraged to learn about crimes against human rights, such as the Holocaust and other forms of persecution, as well as to promote human rights.

History education is connected with didactical concepts such as historical culture, historical consciousness and the use(s) of history (Karlsson, 2004; Nordgren, 2006). It is generally accepted that history education is not only about learning historical facts, but about personal identity development and skills training. What is important is not learning historical facts as much as understanding the nature of historical knowledge. This is something that Lozic (2011) suggests needs to be more emphasized. Research has shown that Finnish students of history have not had much training in historical empathy, or in identifying with people in the past (Ouakrim-Soivio & Kuusela, 2012). In a test question where ninth-graders were asked to explain the behavior of prison guards during the Second World War, there were many answers such as "in those days, people were cruel" (ibid., p. 86). This suggests that there is a need for greater historical consciousness.

History textbooks have been criticized for a lack of active agents. Events are often portrayed as simply taking place, not as caused by con-

scious actors (Paxton, 1999; Wineburg, 2001). In history textbooks, even when actors are referred to, they might be portrayed as anonymous groups of people, whose actions are “constructed as objective states of affairs or chains of events, through which the consequences of their actions are not subject to public assessment, for one reason or another” (Väisänen, 2005, p. 132). The perceived neutrality of history textbooks invites students to believe that there is such a thing as an objective reality, even though the history curriculum emphasizes that students should learn that historical information consists of historians’ interpretations. Roberts (2013) concludes that this can be challenged, for instance, by combining primary and secondary sources and discussing them openly in the textbooks. Repoussi and Tutiaux-Guillon (2010) have seen a change in this regard. Their research, analyzing history textbooks from twenty-six countries, suggests that there is an increasingly open narrative.

Calls have been voiced to diversify the content of history in order for it to better reflect the everyday life of students, particularly from the point of view of the multicultural society (Nordgren, 2006; Mellberg, 2004; Lozic, 2010; Bracey, Gove-Humphries & Jackson, 2011; Banerjee & Stöber, 2010; Levstik, 2000; Hammarlund, 2015). In Finland, Virta (2008) has made a pioneering contribution to the discussion about history didactics in a multicultural society. She finds that there is a need for teachers to challenge the content and values portrayed in their teaching in order to describe a multitude of historical perspectives. Riitaoja (2013) shows that students’ knowledge or experiences are seen as subjective, and consequently irrelevant, in the Finnish school. A study by Repoussi and Tutiaux-Guillon (2010) suggests that history textbooks nowadays take the perspectives of students into account more than before. This would be welcome since it has earlier been suggested that history textbooks presuppose that the same ideas about history are shared by students, teachers and writers of textbooks (Väisänen, 2005). Finnish history instruction has also been criticized for teaching students not to practice history themselves, but to learn about the “historical outcomes created by others (Rautiainen et al, 2012, p. 20).” Löfström (2014b) notes that Finnish secondary school history does not promote learning to use history or analyze how history is part of students’ own cultural and social identity.

Connecting history education to the student perspective is important for many reasons. In Sweden, Lozic (2011) notes that challenging the Eurocentric perspective of history textbooks is less important for textbook authors than it is for students. In Finland, the challenge would be to diversify the national narrative that characterizes history education. Within history, the image of Finland as an “ethnically uniform and often threatened nation state” has been emphasized (Suutarinen & Törmäkangas,

2012, p. 79). This is visible, for instance, in the portrayal of the indigenous Sámi people. Even though Lampinen (2013) found considerable differences between current book series, one history textbook did not mention the Sámi at all in the context of Finnish history. The idea of Finland as a threatened nation can be connected to the strong presence of wars in Finnish historical culture and education. Rantala (2011) suggests that this presence teaches young people to accept violence and to behave in accordance with warlike ideals.

Karim Maïche (2015) reports on how history textbooks have changed from the 1980s to the 2010s, with a particular focus on Finland as “Western.” He suggests that the West is a historical construction instilled in students’ minds already during the lower grades of basic education (ibid, p.94). Maïche notes that relatively few history textbook pages deal with early civilizations such as the Egyptians, Mesopotamians or Phoenicians. In the newest textbooks, the Phoenicians have disappeared altogether, while Ancient Greece and the Roman Empire are given about 40 textbook pages each. Maïche emphasizes that the question is not only about numbers of pages: most of the content about other continents is actually about how Europeans related to them. In the very latest books of the 2010s, Maïche sees a positive change; he considers that confrontation and separation have become less obvious. As an example of this, he suggests that the portrayals of the colonialist journeys of discovery (which are in focus in the third article of this thesis) are now more inclusive. He concludes that textbooks no longer cover up the brutality of colonialism, nor do they emphasize the previous idea that Europeans were the ones who “found” the savages of the surrounding world (ibid., pp. 103-104). As for the more recent history textbooks, Maïche is concerned about how the discourse of a superior West constructs and strengthens stereotypes, particularly about Muslims.

#### **4.2. Social studies**

The aim of the subject of social studies is twofold. It seeks to socialize students into civic engagement and into having a national identity, as well as to teach them how to become ideal citizens. At the same time, it aims to teach students to think critically about social and political issues (Virta, 2005). The nature of social studies teaching is quite different depending on which of the two aims is emphasized. Additionally, as Virta argues, the meaning of socializing students can be quite different depending on the society that the students are socialized into. Who is the ideal citizen? This question serves as a reminder of the fact that the subject of social studies should be seen as closely connected to ideological assumptions about the ideal society.

From an international perspective, the subject of social studies seems to have undergone a noticeable change (Buckner & Garnett Russell, 2013; Bromley, Meyer & Ramirez, 2011; Bromley & Mäkinen, 2011). Social studies textbooks from a worldwide range of countries are reported to be more focused on interconnectedness and the global perspective than history textbooks. They also focus increasingly on individual and human rights, and are now reported to focus less on the nation states. Bromley and Mäkinen (2011) see this change as the result of a new understanding of ideal civic behavior. They see society, reflected in social studies education, as “moving from the goal of constructing unquestioning loyal national citizens to the creation [of] active, empowered, and globally aware individuals (ibid., p. 36).” The large international study that Bromley and Mäkinen refer to includes a longitudinal analysis of Finnish social studies textbooks. It suggests that the emphasis on diversity in these is greater in Finland than in many other countries with more ethno-linguistic diversity.

Other studies about the development of social studies education in Finland partly show similar results. In a study of the development of social studies curriculum and textbooks from the 1960s to today, Arola (2014) notes that the image of the ideal citizen depicted in social studies changes along with overall societal change. This image has changed from being an active person to becoming more and more a part of the economic cycle. Löfström and van den Berg (2013) also criticize Finnish upper secondary school social studies curricula and textbooks for hiding political interests in their presentations of economic policy. They conclude that the textbooks say very little about the connections between politics and economic processes. Their concern is that teachers cannot provide the necessary analysis of how human choices in the manner of political decision-making are related to, for instance, the financial crisis, if the textbooks omit such discussions altogether. They have also studied exam papers and noted that students do not generally conceive of the economy as a playing field with human actors. Instead, in students’ descriptions of economic processes, there are remarkably few human agents, mirroring the textbook image of the economy as detached from human beings (ibid., p. 59-62). According to Ammert (2004), the risk of omitting the actors from descriptions of social processes is that they give students a deterministic or fatalistic image of how society is changed, and suggest that we cannot take an active role in how our lives and societies are being governed. In order to fulfill the aim of learning to think critically about social and political issues, it would be important for textbooks to also describe economic processes as the result of human, political, actors. Hiding the political nature of the economy can also undermine other val-

ues. Ahonen (2000, p. 20) suggests that the portrayal of the economy in Finnish social studies textbooks is based only on economic growth and international competition, thereby undermining the core value of sustainable development. Politicians are thereby not explained to be driven by ideological goals as much as by a technocratic attitude. In Sutela's (2015) study, half of the secondary school students considered that it was reasonable for politicians to give up their values if that was considered the "best thing for the economy". In this regard, I argue that it would be important for social studies to keep reminding students about the contingent nature of the social reality. Society is, necessarily, what the people living in it make of it.

In the 2004 curriculum, social studies is closely connected to the Finnish nation state. There are few references to the world outside of Finland. The EU is mentioned as a core content area, and foreign policy and the significance of foreign trade and the global economy are mentioned as contents; however, the subject areas are stated as consisting of "the Finnish society and economic life, and the European Union." The aim of instruction is to support the students' growth as tolerant, democratic citizens. The 2014 curriculum brings a noticeable change for social studies. The main difference is that social studies will be taught earlier (starting in grades 4-6). This will bring a challenge to teacher education, which has not sufficiently focused on social science education (Hansen, 2016). In the curriculum for years 4-6, ethical evaluation skills related to different human, societal and economic questions is listed as one of the objectives of instruction. Human rights are mentioned specifically for both years 4-6 and years 7-9. For years 7-9, "global issues" are specifically mentioned as part of social studies.

Some research has been conducted on ideology in social studies curricula and textbooks, particularly on what the Finnish identity portrayed within the subject stands for. Suutarinen (2000a, p. 117–118) finds that the Finnish national identity constructed in social studies teaching is portrayed through the presence of a foreign threat, something he considers might favor racist attitudes. Mietola's (2001) analysis of social studies textbooks confirms that racism is portrayed only as a criminal act, not as connected to Finnish societal structures. This is echoed in the attitudes among young people in Alemanji's and Dervin's more recent research (2016).

Piattoeva (2009) notes that the use of the term "national" has decreased in the descriptions of social science, but that a new national identity is camouflaged in the language of culture and cultural identity. Referring to Finland's EU membership, she suggests that the "Finnish authorities seem to be less concerned with the political sovereignty of the nation,

but they have increased attention to its cultural vitality” (ibid., p. 733). This is an interesting result that calls for further analyses about the values that are implicit in the curricula and textbooks. It seems that teachers cannot rely on the textbook to provide space for an education that would diversify the understanding of Finnish society. It also suggests that Finnish social studies textbooks differ from, for instance, social studies textbooks from Sweden, since Lozic (2011) reports that these social studies textbooks show an explicit aim to counteract anti-immigrant views by pointing to the positive effects of immigration. This is something he sees as a difference between Swedish social studies and history textbooks, where there are no similar, clear attempts. Löfström (2014b) reports that Finnish teachers would like the social studies curriculum to provide them with more time for discussions about values. This seems to be needed in order to deconstruct the notions of a “threat” towards Finnish society and the essentialist view of Finnish culture.

Social studies has had a particularly weak role in Finnish basic education. Social studies issues have long been in the shadow of the subject of history (Löfström, 2012). In an international comparison, social studies teaching had less instruction time in Finland than in any other OECD country (Suutarinen, 2000b) up until recently, when more instruction time was added with the specific aim of increasing education about the economy (Berg & Löfström, 2011). However, Suutarinen also notes other obstacles. Social studies is not understood to be a central part of basic education in Finland. Student groups have tended to become larger than in other subjects, and teachers are reported to say that their subject is being discriminated against, to the advantage of, for instance, languages and religion. Social studies textbooks have been considered among the most problematic for students because of their abstract and conceptual language (Saario, 2012; Slotte-Lüttge & Forsman, 2013). Social studies teaching has also been reported to have a teacher-centered tradition (Virta, 2002, p. 23), even if it would be possible to use more discussions in the classrooms, which has been shown to increase political knowledge among students (Nurmi, 2002). There have also been concerns over the fact that 74% of social studies teachers report that they never or very rarely take their class out, for example, to museums or businesses (Ouarim-Soivio, 2014). This is indeed something that calls for a change, since studying society without taking the class out into society is like studying biology without going out into nature – simply ill-advised. There have also been concerns about the role of social studies since most teachers who teach the subject have studied it only as a minor. Perhaps this is a reason why one third of social studies teachers could not name the aims and criteria of the social studies curriculum, leaving the question unan-

swered or clearly stating that they did not know them (Ouakrim-Soivio & Kuusela, 2012).

### **4.3. Geography**

Geography teaching has been connected to creating hierarchies and stereotypes between peoples and spaces (Paasi, 1998; Loftsdóttir, 2010; Mignolo, 2012). Historically, it has always been controversial. Ideologically, it has been linked to the social, economic and political agendas of the powerful (Mitchell, 2013, p. 236). During the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, geography modeled itself as a positivistic, value-free science, objectively describing and explaining the world. This objectivity, however, included supporting Western imperialism, colonialism and industrialization, together with other ideological claims which were seen as morally neutral at the time, such as racist practices and Western superiority (Morgan, 2011, 190-191). For long, the “white man” was the invisible spectator of the world, observing other “ethnic groups” (Bonnett, 1997; McGuinness, 2000).

Riitaoja (2013) suggests that Finnish geography teaching has been a tool for creating naturalized borders and a notion of hierarchies between spaces, for as long as there have been state-supported schools. Still, it can be argued that geography has been the Finnish school subject that has gone through the biggest epistemological change in the last 80 years. In the 1930s and 1940s, teaching about race in geography was seen as objective knowledge. Pre-war textbooks, which included race theories, were reprinted until the 1960s. Depictions of the Russians as an inferior race, however, were deleted earlier by the revision committee, after the Continuation War (1941-1944) (Kivioja, 2014). In the 1960s, the geography textbooks still encouraged students to see the voyages of discovery as proof of the superiority of the white race (Isaksson & Jokisalo, 2005). Anssi Paasi (1984) has researched the role of geography in the construction of stereotypes, and the image of others in geography textbooks. He notes that foreign people considered Western have always been respected and accepted in Finnish geography textbooks, while people from Eastern and Southern Europe, and particularly those from outside of Europe have often been presented in a negative light. Paasi confirms that the world Finnish children were socialized into through geography textbooks was a “world of national stereotypes” (Paasi, 1998, p.19). Radically racist expressions started to diminish after the 1960s. In 1968, after the UNESCO conference on racial prejudices, a Finnish geography textbook explains through lengthy quotes that there is no such thing as human races within science (*ibid.*, p. 16). Geography teaching in Finland has changed drastically even in the last decades (Kaivola & Rikkinen, 2007). Teachers have

had a fairly free hand to choose which regions to focus on, which has led to the dependence of geography education on geography textbooks (ibid., p. 323).

In the 2004 curriculum, the objectives of geography instruction included expanding the student's world view. One aim of teaching was to create a foundation for intercultural tolerance and internationalism (years 5-6) and to increase students' abilities to understand the diversity of human life and living environments around the world (years 7-9). The objectives included learning to appreciate and take a positive attitude towards other countries and their peoples and cultures (years 5-6 and 7-9). The 2014 curriculum, which lists geography as one of the environmental and natural sciences up until year 6, includes reinforcing global understanding as one of the key content areas of teaching. One of the objectives of instruction for the years 7-9 is for the student to "appreciate his or her regional identity as well as the diversity of nature, human activity, and cultures and to respect human rights in all parts of the world (p. 414)."

Research about values in Finnish geography textbooks shows that some stereotyped ideas of Finnish people and culture, as well as the national characteristics of other peoples, can still be found (Tani, 2004). Tani's research shows that this varies between textbooks. She still considers that the textbooks fulfill the educational aims of the curriculum by emphasizing intercultural understanding. Tani also suggests that geography textbooks have highlighted Finland's European identity and belonging to "Western civilization", particularly since Finland joined the EU (ibid., p. 16). In addition, Tani finds some critical undertones in geography textbook texts. In her study of textbooks printed around the year 2000, she notes some sharp criticism of the effects of Western colonialism on the present situation in Africa. She also finds critical accounts of how indigenous peoples have been treated.

Lampinen (2013) sees a more uneven and inconsistent picture in geography textbooks printed around 2010. She finds negative stereotypes about nations as well as people particularly in the presentation of Africa. While some textbooks portrayed colonial times in a nuanced way, Africans were mostly portrayed as in need of help while Europeans were the ones helping (ibid., p. 26-27). Lampinen found the interplay between texts and pictures to portray a positive and realistic image of different countries and cultures. Simultaneously, she was struck by how migrants were portrayed as a work force and as natural forces, with words such as floods to describe people (ibid, p. 28).

Even though geography no longer classifies people, it still creates and reinforces divisions through drawing borders between cultures (Bagoly-

Simó, 2012). Different countries or regions might be marked with different colors, although on the ground the differences between places are much less visible. Geography teaching is to a large extent tied to maps, which tend to focus on borders rather than interconnectedness. Otherness can thereby be seen to be embodied through teaching about the world as consisting of regions. Schmidt (2010) argues that just as students are taught to read texts in language class, students are taught to read the world in geography class. The problem, as she sees it, is that it is still taught through a particular lens, such as the colonizer ideology. Drawing borders between regions is a way to reinforce the Western, colonizing lens (*ibid.*, p. 43). Emphasizing differences between cultures rather than within them is another way (Schuermans, 2013). The Mercator map, which places Europe on top and in the middle of the world, has also been considered a tool for Eurocentrism (Rabasa, 2003). Postcolonial theory provides a way to reveal the colonial discourses that have been common within geography (Bonnett, 2003; Martin, 2011). It has also been suggested that postcolonial theory could benefit from the study of geography, since geography could provide examples of material analyses, something that has partly been lacking in classical postcolonial works (Amberntsson, 2012). This would include the study of raw materials and how they are being exported or imported between regions, and at what cost. Geography education, which has a colonial past, also has potential for postcolonial analysis.



## 5 ANALYZING DISCOURSES IN SCHOOL TEXTBOOKS

School textbooks have to be seen as inseparable from the surrounding society. They construct an understanding of what is relevant knowledge, but they are also influenced by the social settings. This suggests that the study of textbooks benefits from a discursive approach. Discourse analysis focuses on the use of language to portray the social, including power relations and structures. I have chosen discourse theory analysis, developed by Laclau and Mouffe (1985/2001) as the main source of inspiration for the discourse analysis conducted in this research. Laclau and Mouffe's version of discourse analysis has been called discourse theory analysis (Torfing, 1999; Winther Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002). In this chapter, I describe some relevant aspects of Laclau and Mouffe's approach to discourse analysis before focusing on the adaptability of their theoretical concepts into more practical guidelines for my analysis. After this, I discuss the material and explain my research process.

### 5.1. Philosophical base

Analyses of school textbooks can be described as being about registering differences, identifying patterns and making comparisons (Nicholls, 2005). Which differences to register, which patterns to identify and what to compare, however, is up to the researcher. What the researcher sees as significant is always dependent on the underlying philosophical assumptions. Nicholls suggests that textbook researchers should spend more time discussing the very constitution of knowledge.

While no research can be free of political aspects, the works of Laclau and Mouffe (2001) should be seen as explicitly having both an analytical and a political character. They emphasize that thinking in terms of hegemony is highly needed in current times, since politics is presented not as ideological struggles but as "good" and "bad" policies (Mouffe, 2008). Mouffe (2013, p. 45) suggests that their approach to discourse theory is anti-essentialist. Anti-essentialism has both political and analytical implications. Politically, it would suggest that the world cannot be expected to follow a certain pattern, nor that, for instance, the working class plays a central part in societal changes (Laclau & Mouffe, 1985; Gustavsson, 2008). Analytically, it would mean explicitly rejecting the essentialist idea that the world consists of a reality that needs to be uncovered in order to be understood. Instead, Laclau and Mouffe see us constantly creating objectivity. This process of creation is what should be at the core of the analysis.

According to Laclau and Mouffe, all objects and actions take place within a discourse. This should not be seen as a contribution to the debate about whether or not a material world exists. In the debate about idealists against realists, Laclau and Mouffe can be considered "radical materialists" (Howarth 2000, p.112). Discourses consist of more than language and opinions; they also have materiality. Discursive patterns are visible in acts of language as well as actions. As an example, a school assignment urging students to draw borders between regions of the world is an expression of discourse (see Schatz & Niemi 2015, p. 98), but how the students choose to draw the borders is also an expression within a discourse. Laclau and Mouffe consider there to be an inseparable totality between language and actions.

Within Laclau's and Mouffe's discourse theory, there is fluidity between the concepts of objectivity and ideology. Anything that is perceived as objective can become seen as ideological, and ideological accounts can become seen as objective (Winther Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002). Laclau and Mouffe want to show that objectivity is always the historical outcome of political processes. The idea of objectivity as ideology is also relevant for Gramsci (1999). He suggests that the idea of objectivity in metaphysical materialism would mean that objectivity could exist even apart from human beings; however, "since we know reality only in relation to man, and since man is a historical becoming," he considers that there cannot be anything objective that is not ideological (Gramsci, 1999, p. 808). For the study of textbooks, the notion of objectivity as ideology is highly relevant, since it provides examples of seemingly objective truths that have later been considered merely ideological. In the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, race theories and Western superiority were seen as examples of objective knowledge in geography textbooks. Believing in these "facts," or in the idea of Western superiority was considered correct, also for people who saw themselves as unprejudiced (Blaut, 1993, p. 9). In much the same way, the statements in the current textbooks are mostly taken to be non-ideological facts.

## **5.2 Analytical concepts**

The analysis proposed by Laclau and Mouffe revolves around a number of key concepts. Together they describe a world where nothing is predetermined or permanent, a world in which what is perceived as real depends on the actions and words that are used to describe the world. In the following, some of these concepts, those that are meaningful for this research, will be presented.

### **5.2.1. Hegemony**

Hegemony can be seen as naturalized power relations that hide political interests. This includes notions of facts that are “common sense.” Ideological claims that are seen as common sense are hard to question. In the hegemonic process, the educational, economic and social world that is portrayed becomes the only possible world, and the ideology presented becomes common sense, or the only knowledge that counts (Apple, 2004). Laclau and Mouffe’s version of discourse analysis sets out to deconstruct the hegemonic, or the power relations that are perceived as natural. By doing this, they make the claim that hegemony is contingent – things could always be otherwise (Winther Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002; Sjölander, 2011). While seemingly objective claims can later be considered ideological, it is noteworthy that there are also examples of the reverse side of this development, as in ideological claims becoming considered objective knowledge. When school textbooks present ideological views as depoliticized, objective claims, this is an example of hegemony (Winther Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002, p. 37). Apple (2004) points out how intellectuals such as educators might take part in this development by presenting school education as neutral, thereby hiding its implicit ideology.

### **5.2.2. Articulations**

According to Laclau and Mouffe, articulation is a practice that attempts to create meaning. Each piece of writing, speech or social action can be seen as an articulation. In this analysis of school textbooks, texts, pictures and assignments in the books are seen as articulations. Articulations become meaningful within a discourse, but they can also be seen to both reproduce and construct discourse (Holmberg, 2015). Some articulations carry more meaning than others, thereby either strengthening or attempting to deconstruct the hegemony (Laclau & Mouffe, 2001).

### **5.2.3. Nodal points and floating signifiers**

In the practice of articulation, nodal points are constructed (Laclau & Mouffe, 2001, p. 113). A nodal point is a privileged sign around which other signs are ordered. It is in the relationship to the nodal point that other signs get their meaning. Depending on the discourse, different signs become nodal points. The nodal points are located in the center of the discourses. Some nodal points are called floating signifiers. They are the signs that different discourses try to give content to in a struggle to fix their meaning. Floating signifiers are important for the analysis of discourses since they reveal struggles between discourses. In the process of analyzing the textbooks, some topics could be seen as nodal points. Their floating nature was shown in how different textbook articulations at-

tached different meanings to them. This, then, seemed to be important for the entire tone of the debate. Some topics struggled for hegemonic discursive formations to a particularly large extent, such as Islam and Western values. These could be considered to take on the status of floating signifiers.

#### **5.2.4. Discourses**

Within Laclau and Mouffe's version of discourse theory, power and knowledge are united in the discourse (Howarth 2000, p.4). Discourse is an analogy between linguistic and social systems (ibid., p. 102). In a discourse, the signs seem fixed, not allowing other meanings. Analyzing discourse is not just about showing what is possible to say and do, but also about what is not possible (Winther Jørgensen & Phillips 2002). The discourse normalizes actions or sayings so that they are perceived as natural, even if they involve, for instance, repression. It also hides the political origins of what is seen as objective. Still, discourses should be seen as more than just ideologies. Each social action becomes meaningful in its discourse. Laclau and Mouffe use the metaphor of kicking a ball: doing this in the street or inside a crowded stadium is an example of how two actions that are physically the same acquire different meanings depending on how they are related to other objects in discourse (Laclau & Mouffe, 1987). Discourses are thereby more than ideas; they have a material dimension and articulate hegemony (Macgilchrist & Christophe, 2011; Howarth, 2000).

### **5.3. Doing discourse theory analysis on textbooks**

Even though *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy* is not a manual for research, the object of Laclau and Mouffe's theory includes a methodological aspect (Payne, 2015, p. 232-233). Most discourse theory analyses have been about researching political processes, relying on a wide range of different data. Torfing (1999), however, welcomes the use of discourse theory as a tool for analysis of not only political processes but of any phenomena that affect people's daily lives. To a certain extent, discourse theory analysis has lately been used to analyze school textbooks (Ideland & Malmberg, 2014; Macgilchrist & Christophe, 2011; Nordmark, 2015). Something that the different approaches to discourse theory analysis have in common is the interest in power inequalities, political processes and a broad understanding of what Mouffe (2005) calls "the political" (Gunnarsson Payne, 2012). In my case, I see the worldview portrayed in textbooks as an arena for ideological struggle, thereby suitable for discourse theory analysis.

Considering Laclau and Mouffe's philosophy, that there is no truth out there to be found and uncovered, provides an interesting point of departure for school textbooks, which are both widely distributed and legitimized by officials. How can the world be described if there is no objectivity that is not ideological? In other words, what are the objectivities/ideologies of our time and place? For the analysis of discourses in textbooks it is therefore important not to focus primarily on whether or not the articulations in the text are considered accurate, but rather on their discursive meanings and how they construct hegemonic understandings. Even though the articles of this thesis all analyze the textbooks discursively, they contain plenty of references to accurate and relevant facts, particularly article II, where the argument is that population growth and migration are presented largely through outdated facts. These include ideas about population growth that do not reflect relevant research or statistics.

In my view the discursive approach is not incompatible with a discussion about accuracy. The question of whether or not objectivity should be seen as ideological does not, I argue, contradict the idea that textbook texts should refer to accurate facts. Textbooks can, and should, reflect the idea that truth is a changeable concept. Much of what was true during grandmother's time is not considered true today. Textbooks can still do the job of portraying the world, but there is a need for a humble attitude towards knowledge and new research as well as providing a range of perspectives.

## **5.4. Research process**

In the following, I outline the methods more closely. After a description of the material that was analyzed, I explain the choices that were made to include and exclude certain texts, as well as the different steps of analysis.

### **5.4.1. The textbooks**

During the summer of 2010, I sent out requests to the six major school textbook publishing companies in Finland. I asked for a copy of each of their textbooks and assignment books for grades 5-9 in history, geography and social science. I also asked for copies of grades 3-4 environmental and natural science textbooks, a part of the material that I subsequently decided to leave out of the analysis since they did not cover topics that related to descriptions about Westerners and others. All six publishing companies (Edita, Tammi, Otava, Schildts, Söderströms & WSOY) responded positively and sent me the requested copies. The textbooks were all printed between 2005 and 2010. Peltomaa (2006) suggests that

the copyright year carries more weight than the printing year, since new editions can be printed without much editing, and since the copyright year determines when the book was originally written. In this study, the years 2005 to 2010 refer specifically to the printing year, not the copyright year. It means that some of the textbooks might have been written years before 2005. The fact that they have been re-read and revised for publication is here still considered as reason enough to include them in the research. However, in addition to the textbooks that were sent to me, I had acquired a few before, and as long as these were printed between 2005 and 2010, they were included in the material, too. Thus, for example, I had two different editions of two geography textbooks, and was able to make a (albeit very limited) comparative inquiry about how textbooks can change from one edition to another. My material includes almost all of the textbooks that were reported to be the most used textbooks in history and social studies in a study by Ouakrim-Soivio and Kuusela (2012).

Most of the textbooks were in the Finnish language (78%); however, 22% were in Swedish. Geography and history are introduced as school subjects in the fifth grade. Social studies is taught in grade nine, replacing history, which is taught only in grades five to eight. Table 1 summarizes the distribution of the material.

**Table 1:** Textbook sample distributed on school subjects, grade level and language (F= Finnish, S = Swedish)

Subject	Grade 5	Grade 6	Grade 7	Grade 8	Grade 9	Total books
History	7 F 3 S	6 F 3 S	6 F 3 S	6 F 3 S		37
Geography	6 F 1 S	7 F 1 S	4 F 1 S	4 F 2 S	4 F 1 S	31
Social studies					7 F 1 S	8
Total	17	17	14	15	13	76

#### **5.4.2. The start of the analysis – getting acquainted with the material**

As mentioned, Laclau and Mouffe do not offer a clear model for their discourse analysis; however, researchers can use their concepts in order to analyze their own material. Translating discourse theory into discourse analysis requires adapting the discourse theoretical framework to the empirical phenomena in question. This must be done in close concordance with the empirical data (Winther Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002; Torfing, 1999). In my work process, the data was always in the forefront. To a considerable extent, I would describe the research process as what Alve-son and Sköldberg (2009) call abduction, meaning starting from the em-

pirical data (textbook texts) with only limited theoretical understanding, moving on to search for more sophisticated theoretical explanations, and finally going back to the textbooks to see how the further empirical data can be organized.

During my initial reading of the textbooks, I asked the texts questions that resembled what Sleeter and Grant (1997) call story-line analysis, focusing on “analyzing which group gets the most attention (whose story is being told), which group(s) resolves problems, how other groups appear, the extent to which these other groups cause or resolve problems and who the author intends the reader to sympathize with or learn most about” (p.283). However, I also kept other questions in mind, such as: What are the values portrayed? What kind of knowledge is considered rational or normal? What is explicit, what is implicit in the descriptions about Westerners and “others”?

In my analysis, I examined all the books, focusing particularly on themes that referred to the relation between the West and the surrounding world. Although there were plenty of passages that either directly or indirectly touched upon relevant topics, some parts of the books were not included in the analysis. In grade 5 and 6, the subjects of biology and geography are integrated into the same textbooks. The biology parts of these books were disregarded. Passages about strictly physical geography (geology) were also omitted from the analysis. History textbook passages about, for instance, life in rural Finland in the 19<sup>th</sup> century would perhaps seem to be uninteresting from the point of view of the research question. However, ideologically powerful formulations about Westerners and “others” appeared even there, as the following quote suggests:

In the agrarian society, choosing who to marry had nothing to do with love. The adults decided which two should get married. The decision was made mainly for economic and social reasons: that a girl or boy would marry within his/her estate. This approach to building a family is common still today within certain Muslim communities in the Nordic countries. It has created conflicts between the parents and their adult children who have been influenced by the liberal habits of their Nordic peers (Ahlskog & Sandholm, 2008b, p. 9).

This troubling example shows that in order to capture the values transmitted in a textbook, there is a need to look not only at the more obvious parts that can be expected to include what the researcher is looking for. The passage quoted above is from a chapter called “Family life in the 19<sup>th</sup> century” under the sub-headlines “The agrarian family” and “The relation

between the family members.” Since the chapter focused only on Finnish society at that time, I could easily have overlooked this part if I had not read the text line by line. In his study of politics in school textbooks, Holmén (2006, p. 47) found something similar when he noted how not only obvious sections about society were receptive to the changing political climate. Seemingly uninteresting themes were also affected by geopolitics, albeit in subtle ways. Whether a river is described as “large” or “huge” could be seen to make a difference in the understanding of a country’s political influence. For me, reading the textbooks required staying alert even while going through seemingly irrelevant passages.

During the reading, I wrote down any pieces of texts, assignments and pictures that were relevant to the research question. Even though short and simple texts, such as textbook quotes, carry both descriptive and normative claims about the conditions of reality (Oxfeldt, 2013; Wreder, 2007, p. 34), there is a need to see the textbook articulations in context to make sure they have been understood correctly. However, it should be noted that students rarely read the textbook from cover to cover; instead, they work with shorter pieces of text at a time (Ammert, 2011a). In a document, I wrote down my initial comments next to the documented pieces of texts which I came to see as articulations. During the gathering of data I also categorized the pieces of text according to themes, which I came to see as nodal points. The number of nodal points grew as I read through more texts, finally adding up to 35, and ranging from “crime”, “poverty”, “migration” and “war”, to “colonialism”, “trade”, “tourism” and “culture.”

#### **5.4.3. The second stage of analysis – identifying discourses**

Having read through the 76 textbooks, I had close to 900 articulations recorded from the textbooks, categorized around nodal points. My reading of the textbooks showed how certain nodal points carried more meaning than others considering the world view and relations between the West and the surrounding world.

Some of the nodal points were analyzed in more detail and described in the articles. The first article was based on the nodal points “war” and “Islam/Muslims”, the second on “population,” “migration” and “urbanization,” the third on “colonialism” and the fourth mainly on “global trade/economy.” The analyzing process was more or less the same for each of the articles. All the articulations that were recorded within the category were re-read in their contexts. The articulations were organized according to their approaches to the topic. In this way, I could find different discourses. The discourses shared some common descriptions which made it possible to pinpoint them, such as similar understandings of a

phenomenon or concept. Mostly, one or a few articulations about a certain topic called for an additional reading of the other textbooks within the same subject and grade to see if and how they had approached the same question. Many times I realized that I had missed interesting passages during the initial reading. It became evident that, for instance, some historical events, such as Columbus's journeys or the 9/11 attacks in New York were described very differently in different textbooks, something that inspired me to further investigate the discourses.

#### **5.4.4. The third stage of analysis – examining discourses**

The research proceeded by further analyzing the discourses. What did they include, what did they exclude? In what ways did they construct meaning? How did they relate to the curriculum, particularly to its core values? In the articles, I studied the construction of the hegemonic project of the superior West as relying on certain articulations that make up discourses. This concretization of how articulations, discourses and hegemony relate to each other is my understanding of the descriptions of hegemony as articulated through discourses, and discourses as the result of articulations (Macgilchrist & Christophe, 2011; Howarth, 2000; Torfing, 1999; Torfing, 2005).

For me, examining discourses meant that I had to keep reminding myself that there are no neutral descriptions of the world; instead, what is understood as common sense could be examined as ideological. Since anyone who conducts research is also embedded in a reality where discursive struggles over meaning take place (in the street, in the media and over coffee tables), it is important to be reflective. I would suggest that this is possible, however, often far from easy. One particular example serves as an example of how discourses normalize statements so they are perceived as natural. It consists of three map assignments from one history assignment book (Hanste, Probst, Aarras-Saari & Juutinen, 2010). On page 34, the assignment is to point out on a blank map of the Mediterranean “where all the Greeks lived”. Later in the book, referring to the Roman Empire on page 72, there is the same map, urging the students to color the Roman Empire “when it was at its greatest.” Even further on, on page 93, the topic is the Muslim conquest of Spain, and there is one more blank map of the same sea, with the assignment stated as “Color the map areas that the Arabs conquered.” Together the three assignments show that “enhancing one’s territory in the Mediterranean area” as a group is described differently if they are perceived as having the right to be there or not. The Greeks simply “lived” in places, the Romans “were at their greatest” while the Arabs “conquered.” However, as I have had to remind myself, nowhere on the bottom of the Mediterranean does it say which

ethnic group has more right to be there than others. Regarding Romans as having more right to the Mediterranean than Arabs had can be seen as a form of “common sense.” It hides the political origins of what is seen as objective. Shedding light on this process is, in my opinion, what examining discourses is about.

#### **5.4.5. Struggling with the term discourse**

During the initial process of writing, the term discourse seemed at the same time too delicate as a concept, and too widely used without reference (see Simola, 1995). The relation between the key concepts articulation, discourse and hegemony were especially difficult to disentangle. Additionally, it seemed that Laclau and Mouffe, while introducing the term discourse, still chose to talk more about the term discursive formation (1985, p. 105). The first article, therefore, introduces the concept of construction as a way to describe the level of thought systems between the concepts of articulations and hegemony. After the publication of that article, more thorough investigations into the concept of discourse led to more clarity concerning its use and it became clear that the introduction of “construction” was unfavorable since it can simply be substituted by the term discourse.

### **5.5. Subjectivity statement and credibility**

In this study, I have aimed to keep an open and critical mindset. I have taken into account the ethical norms of the human, social and behavioral sciences (TENK, 2012). According to Tuomi and Sarajärvi (2013), the concepts of validity and reliability were originally developed for quantitative studies and are not always easily applicable for determining the credibility of qualitative research. To determine the validity of qualitative research, the focus is on the quality of the craftsmanship of the process, or on the choices that are made throughout the research process to make the study consistent, transparent and valid (Kvale & Brinkman, 2009). Ensuring this has been my aim.

I have attempted to treat all the textbooks in my material equally. I have not left out any major publisher or any particular book series or books. I do not personally know any of the authors of the textbooks in my material. However, it should be stated that I have a particular relationship with some of the books in my material since I have used them in my own teaching. These are the textbooks in history and social science, grades 7-9, from the publishing houses Schildts and Söderströms (which merged into one in 2011). This means that I was already familiar with some of these textbooks before I conducted the actual analysis. More than anything, I think that this experience inspired me to conduct a fur-

ther analysis. There was a need to contextualize textbook texts that I had seen as problematic during my teaching and to analyze them together with other textbooks.

In the 2014 curriculum, social science is introduced earlier in schools (years 4-6). This means that the publishing companies have had to write all-new textbooks. During 2015 I took part in the textbook production process by serving as one of the advisors of one such textbook for the publishing house Schildts & Söderströms. This gave me some personal insight into the different stages of writing a textbook. By this time, the analysis had been conducted and most of the results were documented. I do not consider this experience to have any consequences for the analysis in this research.

For me, one way to strengthen the credibility of the study has been to constantly remind myself that there needs to be consistency between the research question, the philosophical base of the theory, the methodology and the empirical work. The preliminary findings during the process have been presented at different seminars and conferences to an academic audience. The feedback received has given me plenty of guidance for my analysis, which can be seen as a factor that contributes to credibility (Tuomi & Sarajärvi, 2013).

## **5.6. Ethical reflections**

In any research, there is a need for critical self-reflection. Here, I turn the focus to two separate critical questions. Firstly, I ask to what degree my research question “feeds itself,” or in other words, to what degree it seems that I find only what I have set out to look for. Secondly, I discuss the responsibility of the researcher in aiding to construct social reality while trying to analyze it. To what degree does my research strengthen, rather than challenge, the image of a superior West?

To some extent it would seem that a researcher who is interested in the portrayal of the West as superior to others always finds answers to support this idea. If this means overlooking other statements that question this hypothesis, it means not taking the research seriously. I have found several articulations that in different ways attempt to deconstruct the hegemony of a superior West, even some that effectively do so. These have been reported in the articles. However, the articulations that work to strengthen and naturalize the idea of Western superiority have been given much more attention. The reason for this is that I have not primarily been interested in weighing these struggling ideologies with each other, rather in looking more closely at *how* the discourses that support Western superiority *work*. This, to me, is one of the main contributions of this

research: the analysis of how even seemingly insignificant articulations make a difference in an understanding of hegemony.

No researcher can stand on the side of social reality and merely describe it. Writing a thesis which focuses on the portrayal of Westerners and non-Westerners undoubtedly aids a strengthening of the dichotomy between an “us” and a “them.” The impossibility of finding concepts to describe the relations between different global power nodes is a reminder that the world is too complex to be described in categories. As simple examples: the “industrialized world” is no longer where industries are located, and the “developing world” is not always developing for the better. The global South could potentially include the world’s fastest growing economies as well as the poorest places. The West, as discussed, is a particularly troubled concept, which is not able to be pinpointed either geographically or ideologically. My aim has been to deconstruct, not strengthen the hegemony of a superior West. I believe that a truly open and critical examination of different meanings that are given to a concept that is often taken for granted, such as the “West”, is one step on the way (see Vuorelma, 2016). I suggest that postcolonial theory and a critical analysis of discourses in textbooks have the potential for emancipatory actions.

## 6 THE RESULTS

This thesis includes four articles. Articles I and III are strictly focused on particular historical events that appeared in all the textbooks for a particular year. Articles II and IV resemble each other by focusing primarily on particular nodal points, which means that they include references to textbooks in all subjects and different grades. This is most clearly the case with the article II about population and migration. As mentioned in the methods section, the articulations that were recorded around a particular nodal point were further analyzed in context and organized according to their approach to the topic. This showed the different discourses that were to be found. In this chapter, I summarize the articles and discuss the results more generally. Finally, I discuss the limitations of this study.

### **6.1. Article I: Othering and the construction of the West: The description of two historical events in Finnish school textbooks**

The first article is a study of how the concept of the West is constructed as opposed to its *other* in the school textbook descriptions of two historical events. The events in question are the ancient Greek-Persian battle of Thermopylae and the New York 9/11 attacks, including the subsequent Afghanistan and Iraq wars.

In the article, I suggest that the core values of the curriculum, including equality, human rights and democracy, are in contrast with the portrayal of Westerners as superior to other people. I consider this portrayal to be hegemonic. In the article, this is shown in the way people's lives are valued. Judith Butler's theoretical concept of ungrivable lives (2009) works to explain how some people are seen as having authentic and grievable lives, while the lives of other people constitute living forms of threats. Destroying these people's communities therefore becomes the destruction of a threat, something that justifies the killing as rational. The concept of ungrivable lives becomes relevant in the study of how Western violence is portrayed, in my case particularly in the descriptions of the recent wars in Afghanistan and Iraq.

The article begins by looking back 2,500 years in history. The first event analyzed, the Greek-Persian battle of Thermopylae, is a topic that is covered in the 5<sup>th</sup> grade history. The textbooks provide plenty of space for the Greek city-states of Athens and Sparta and connect the Athenian democratic ideals with European values. Spartan ideals, such as physical strength and military discipline, are not described to be part of these values. The battle of Thermopylae is given more attention in some textbooks

and less in others. One book emphasizes the event to an exceptional degree, both in terms of its scope and its suggested relevance. It refers to the Greek victory as decisive, since it suggests that not only would the way of life in the Greek city-states have been over if the Persians had won, but that the thought of democracy and the right to think and speak freely would also have been forgotten (Hanste, Probst, Aarras-Saari & Juutinen, 2006, p. 74). I suggest that the idea that democracy, freedom and human rights could only have been developed by the Greeks is a way to express the message that these values are essentially Western. The Greeks are constructed as the original Westerners and the Persians, in the East, are constructed as the threat towards their lifestyle. I also show how differently the Persians are portrayed in two textbooks: one follows the pattern of classical orientalism (Said, 1978) and another deconstructs similar statements about opponents in war.

The second part of the analysis focuses on the most recent events in the history textbooks, the 9/11 attacks in New York and the following wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. These are described at the end of the grade 8 textbooks. All the textbooks describe the attacks on New York, some in great detail. Some textbooks portray the 9/11 attacks as mainly a problem for the USA, not for “us,” while others construct a connection between the reader and the event, by referring, for example, to what Finns were doing when the twin towers were attacked. The textbooks commonly present the West as threatened by the Arab/Muslim other. The victims of the 9/11 attacks are counted and lamented in the textbooks, while the people who are being killed by Western forces in Afghanistan and Iraq are practically invisible. There are no mentions of the consequences of Western military attacks in any of the textbooks. There are also differences in how people are described: the victims in New York are often called “ordinary” or “innocent” while there are no comparable descriptions about people in Afghanistan and Iraq; they are referred to using dehumanizing terms such as “political factions of Islam” and “fanatical Muslims”.

In their descriptions about the assumed motives for the 9/11 attacks in New York, some of the history textbooks go further in their speculations than others. One textbook suggests that the attacks could be seen as “one part in a long campaign against mainly Americans and Jews and with a total destruction of Western culture as its final goal” (Ahlskog & Sandholm, 2008a, p. 267). In my analysis of this quote I suggest that it can be seen as an expression of islamophobia, since it suggests a Muslim conspiracy that has the intention to crush Western society. I refer to this as remarkably different from the core values of the curriculum.

## **6.2. Article II: Constructing threats and a need for control: textbook descriptions of a growing, moving world population**

In this article, written together with Gunilla Holm, we focus on textbook descriptions of population growth and migration. The article departs from the idea that the world population is growing and moving. We take a close look at relevant facts concerning population growth and migration before analyzing the textbook descriptions of these phenomena. The facts challenge many understandings that are common, for instance, in media reporting. Migration has been fairly stable during the last 50 years, and migration between different countries in the South is almost as common as migration from the South to the North. Most refugees never reach Europe. We also note that concerns about population density rarely refer to the most populated continent, Europe. Figures show that the number of children in the world has stopped growing, even though having multiple children is typical only for women in the poorest or most conflict-ridden areas of the world. Although migration and population questions are two different issues, textbook descriptions of these are analyzed together in the article since they point to the related philosophical questions of people's right to live. Who has the right to live in the world? Who has the right to be in this part of the world? The article also includes descriptions of urbanization, since they deal with the comparable question: Who has the right to live in the city?

In our opinion, the rapid population growth of Europe prior to industrialization is seen as positive, while the population growth of other countries is often exaggerated and exclusively seen as a problem. In terms of mobility, the rights of Westerners to travel and move is seen as self-evident, while limiting the freedom of movement of non-Westerners is constructed as rational. In urbanization, we see different descriptions of people depending on their economic status.

Two discourses are explored in the article. The first is about non-Western population growth and mobility portrayed as natural forces. The chapter includes examples of population growth, such as "Settlements press forward all the more deeply into the untouched rain forest" (Arjanne et al., 2006, p.92), and about migration, such as immigrants "flooding" into Germany (Leinonen et al., 2010, p. 96). The discourse is also visible in the descriptions of urbanization in the South, suggesting that a city can be "choking" due to the crowds of arriving migrants (Arjanne et al., 2010, p. 88).

The second discourse is about the need to control "their" populations and mobility. It explores how the forced control of non-Westerners' population growth and migration is constructed as rational or as the only

option. We show how this is done, for example, by the use of the passive voice, in the following example about the Sahel area: “There have been attempts to slow the advancement of the desert by planting trees, and nomads have been transferred to new areas with new sources of livelihood” (Leinonen et al., 2010, p. 123). We suggest that a passage like this should be opened up and discussed critically. The second discourse explores descriptions about class divisions in cities. We discuss how some urban citizens are called “ordinary” while slum dwellers are portrayed as the opposite, people who need to be controlled.

The textbook descriptions include both outdated facts and discourses that work against the core values of the curriculum, mainly equality, democracy and human rights. Some quotes can be considered as both factually wrong and promoting negative attitudes about non-Westerners. As an example, one geography textbook suggests that “China’s problems are air pollution and a population that is growing too fast” (Arjanne et al. 2005, p. 96). As noted in the article, the fertility rate of China is 1.6 children per woman (UNFPA 2012). The formulation “too fast” is normative and suggests that the supposedly growing population of China is in itself a problem. On the topic of population growth, we also argue that there is a need to be more explicit in the textbook about the scientifically agreed-upon, and ethically sustainable, theory that the way to a more moderate population growth is to develop healthcare and education to assure that fewer children die early, and not to suggest that high child mortality would hinder population growth.

We conclude that the hegemony of a superior West is prevalent in the textbooks. The worldview that is portrayed suggests that there are too many people in non-Western areas, and that their movement and urbanization is uncontrolled and threatening. We argue for a more critical global power analysis, such as that suggested by Andreotti and de Souza (2012), which is to point out structures and power mechanisms that privilege white Westerners.

### **6.3. Article III: Colonialist “discoveries” in Finnish school textbooks**

This article starts by challenging the myth that the Nordic countries were and are innocent bystanders regarding colonialism. It uses examples to show that the epistemic construction of Western or white supremacy has been part of Nordic, including Finnish, culture and politics. I discuss how the resistance towards letting go of racist symbols particularly shows that there is a need to challenge the idea of Nordic exceptionalism.

There is also a comparable kind of resistance towards letting go of the image of the hero in the history textbooks about colonizers such as Co-

lumbus. The first discourse explored in the article revolves around the characterization of the colonizers and the colonized peoples. Words such as “courageous” are extensively used when describing Columbus and other “discovery voyagers.” Readers are expected to empathize with the colonizing voyagers through assignments such as writing their journals, tracing their journeys and describing the ships and the hardships of the journey. Nordic explorers are also portrayed in a solely positive light. The colonized people of the Americas, called Indians in all the textbooks, are often portrayed in different stereotypical ways. They are portrayed as background details, as aggressive tribes or as objects that were brought home. One book in the material includes a story told by an Aztec child, the only American indigenous person who is given a story and a name.

Three different textbook descriptions of the same event show how different perspectives can be provided simply by changing a few words. Describing a situation when Columbus returned from his journey, one textbook mentions that he brought with him “Indians, golden jewelry, plants and even parrots” (Kyllijoki et al., 2010, p. 93). Another textbook mentions the “Indians, that Columbus called the Natives he had brought” alongside with parrots and colorful feather head dresses (Eskelinen & Troberg, 2008, p. 99). A third textbook (Varis, Hurme & Alhainen, 2010, p. 41) writes that Columbus was received as a hero when he returned, and that he brought with him “imprisoned people, gold, tobacco plants...” I suggest that the last description is a sobering reminder of the violent nature of the “voyages of discovery.” It not only casts a shadow on Columbus, as a kidnapper, but also on the people who greeted him as a hero.

The second discourse, coined genocide and the justification of colonization, refers to American research about the invisibility of violence in the portrayal of colonization. Finnish textbooks include descriptions about the horrors that met the colonized peoples. However, I suggest that the texts about violence are often accompanied by statements that explain or justify the violent acts. This is done, for example, by referring to the belligerent nature of the Aztecs. The violent acts of colonization are sometimes mentioned using formulations that refer to war between two equals instead of colonizer and colonized. On the other hand, I also point to textbook quotes that challenge this discourse.

The third discourse refers to Western knowledge as the only relevant knowledge. It looks at descriptions of knowledge about the world at the dawn of the Modern era as well as the way the textbooks portray the lessons of colonialism. In descriptions of the beginning of the Modern era, some textbooks seem to imply that the word people generally meant Europeans. I further suggest that some of the more general questions included in the textbooks urge the students not to learn from the horrors of

colonialism, but rather to develop colonial techniques. The following assignment question serves an example: “If you were to find a new culture, which has been living in isolation from the modern world, what thought or thing would you teach the people?” (Kyllijoki et al., 2010, p. 101).

I suggest teaching about the “journeys of discovery” using a more analytical and critical approach, which includes examining globalization as continuing colonialism (Rizvi, 2007), and by asking global power analysis questions such as suggested by Andreotti and de Souza (2012). I recognize the inclusion of stories about the lives of the “Indians” before colonialism as a step towards developing a more critical understanding of the past; meanwhile I ask whether it is really possible that these stories can coexist with the portrayal of the colonizers as heroes, a label that seems difficult to challenge.

#### **6.4. Article IV: Globalization as continuing colonialism – critical global citizenship education in an unequal world**

In this article, the focus is on globalization, the global economy and global inequality. It departs from the notion that global wealth is extremely unevenly spread, with 62 people owning as much as half of the world’s population (Oxfam, 2016). The majority of the wealthiest 1%, who own half of the world’s wealth, live in the USA and Europe, while the world’s poorest mainly live in the global South (Moore, 2015). I relate the discussion about global economy to the descriptions about decolonial struggles for liberation in the history textbooks, as well as to geography textbooks discussing the roots of global inequality and, most explicitly, to social studies textbook articulations about current global power relations.

The results of the analysis shows, once again, that different textbooks can provide different ideological approaches to the same phenomena. Two history textbooks were quoted, one of which (Kohvakka, Ojakoski, Pönni & Raassina-Merikanto, 2009, pp. 166-167) emphasized the problems that the old colonial powers caused in Africa around 1960, when several African states declared themselves independent. The textbook continues to state that even though these states are now independent, the big companies of the West have taken the place of the old colonial powers, suppressing the nations economically. This suggests conveying the idea that colonialism should not be considered as something placed in the past, but instead as something that affects the construction of current global relations (Andreotti, 2007). The other history textbook quoted portrays a completely opposite picture. It suggests that the former colonial powers did what they could to meet the demands of the colonies, but that these nonetheless chose independence. The resulting wars are seen as a consequence of the former colonies not being prepared for inde-

pendence, not as the responsibility of the former colonial powers (Lapalainen et al., 2006, pp. 322-323).

The geography textbooks quoted as examples also show examples of how today's global inequality can be described with little or no reference to colonial times. It includes a passage about the Democratic Republic of Congo, which is described as a country with more natural riches than many other countries. It is suggested that the reason the country is poor despite its natural riches is that "so much money is used for wars and fighting within the country" (Palenius & Ulenius, 2008, p. 96). I refer to this passage as an example of a need for more critical analysis. The chapter about the DR Congo completely ignores its history, including its exploitation by Belgium's King Leopold. Here is a reason why teaching only within the distinct spheres of the subjects fails to give students a more coherent understanding. If the situation in the Democratic Republic of Congo were taught as an entity, including its history, geography and current state, students would be able to get a better understanding of it.

Focusing mainly on the textbooks of social studies, the article continues with their descriptions of the structures in the global economy, global labor arbitrage and role of the West. Some social studies textbooks refer to colonialism as one of the reasons for the prosperity of the West. However, globalization is presented as a de-politicized phenomenon. Students are encouraged to take part in creating a more equal world mainly by consumer choices, such as buying fair trade products, rather than by challenging the system politically.

The article goes on to present alternative approaches to the teaching of global inequalities. These include critical global citizenship education, critical literacy and the study of privilege. The idea is that these approaches could invite the students to learn to question their own role and the role of their own society, including the contents of their education, in the reproduction of inequalities. It also suggests that learning to ask critical questions can provide students with tools to challenge the ruling assumptions of global inequality as something necessarily static.

## **6.5. A summary of the articles**

The following table summarizes the articles. It gives an overview of the nodal points that were in focus in the different articles, as well as which textbooks were the main focus. However, all articles include textbook examples from more than one subject. This is because the nodal points that the articulations are organized around have been the primary focus, not the textbooks in a particular subject. The results column reports on the discourses that were active. All the articles have separate suggestions for educational implications; these are summarized in the table as well.

**Table 2:** Summary of the articles: titles, nodal points, textbooks in focus, results and educational implications

Ar- ticle	Nodal points	Books in main focus	Results	Educational implications
I	war, Islam/ Muslims	history	Western lives are described as more grievable than others. Democratic values are considered essentially Western. The Eastern other (Muslims/Arabs) are in some books constructed as a threat against the West and Western values. Western violence is invisible in the descriptions of the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq.	A need to anchor the descriptions of historical events in the values of the core curriculum and to develop critical literacy.
II	migra- tion, popula- tion, humans as threats	geo- graphy	The population growth of non-Western countries is often exaggerated and seen as a problem. The mobility of non-Westerners is sometimes referred to as natural forces. A forced control of non-Westerners' population growth and migration is constructed as rational.	A need for a more critical global power analysis, and for updating outdated facts that project stereotyped misconceptions about population growth and migration.
III	colonial- ist dis- coveries	history	Even while the atrocities of colonization are now included in the textbooks, the colonizers are still portrayed as heroes. The readers are expected to empathize with them. Texts about the violence committed by the colonizers are often accompanied by statements that explain, or justify the violent acts. The lessons learnt from colonialism are questionable.	A need for a more analytical and critical educational approach to teaching about the "journeys of discovery," for instance, through examining globalization as continuing colonialism.
IV	poor- rich, trade and economy	social studies	Reasons for the structural economic inequality are portrayed differently. Some describe colonialism as decisive for the current unequal structures, others hardly mention it. Globalization is generally presented as a depoliticized phenomenon. Students are encouraged towards individual consumer choices, not political engagement, as a response to global inequality.	A need for a more integrative understanding of globalization: historical and geographical knowledge needed to understand current global power relations. Suggesting tools for education about global inequality: critical global citizenship, critical literacy and privilege deconstruction.

The results of the articles show how the hegemony of a superior West works to make ideological claims into common sense. The second article points out how the idea that control over non-Westerners' migration and populations is natural, non-political. In much the same way, the structures of global economic inequality are naturalized in the textbook descriptions analyzed in article four.

While all the articles refer to the relations between the West and the rest of the world, and to the hegemony of a superior West, the themes of the articles cover a wide range of issues. Some tendencies are visible in more than one article. The editor of the *Journal of Social Science Education*, Tilman Grammes (2011, p. 2), has suggested that school textbooks are starting to leave the Eurocentric colonial perspectives behind. To some extent, this argument is supported by the textbooks. Old stereotypes about non-Westerners, such as derogatory characterizations have mostly begun to vanish. On the other hand, the descriptions of current global relations do not consistently adhere to the core values of equality, democracy and human rights. In the researched descriptions of conflicts, past as well as current, Western violence is systematically hidden. There is also a tendency to portray the West as essentially democratic and egalitarian (for further discussion, see Mikander, 2015).

These results call for a challenge to the hegemony of a superior West within education. The challenge is posed to teachers as well as other school officials, teacher educators, curriculum developers, textbook authors and publishers. It also challenges researchers to question the hegemonic understanding of West as superior. The nodal points that have been analyzed here reflect topics that are expected to be discussed within different subjects and in different years in school. While the topic of colonialist discoveries might not be visible in the media, their importance for the constitutive role of the West is unquestioned, or as Kennedy (2014, p. 2) suggests: "Exploration became a triumphalist symbol of the energy, enterprise, and inventiveness that Europeans and their overseas offspring regarded as the key markers of difference between their own societies and those found elsewhere around the world". These key markers of difference bear an importance today. They can also be considered to reflect on the themes that are discussed in the other three articles, which are extensively debated in society, in the conventional as well as social media. Not a day goes by without media references to war, Islam, migration questions, or references to poverty, wealth or global economy. Since children and young people follow the debates in the media, it is relevant that teachers as well as textbooks authors and publishers do what they can to provide students with the tools for a critical analysis of

how these themes are portrayed in the mainstream media, in order to help challenge, not strengthen, the idea of a superior West.

## **6.6. Limitations of the study and suggestions for further research**

In this research, the focus is particularly on knowledge production in the school textbooks, not on how the text is understood or received by students in the classroom. As mentioned, textbooks might be more important in education than what teachers report. It would be important to study the impact of textbooks further. However, the aim in this research has not been to focus on subjective interpretations, but rather on the discourses of knowledge production in the textbooks.

The limitations of the material meant that discourses in textbooks in other subjects were not part of the study. I suggested earlier that ideologically powerful statements were found in the textbooks, also outside of the sections where they were expected, such as the stereotypical description of Muslims in a chapter about life in rural Finland in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. This means that there would probably be relevant textbook articulations to analyze in textbooks of other subjects, too, such as science or mathematics. Also, a more thorough analysis of pictures and illustrations in the textbooks could have brought more dimensions to the research. The articles do include some descriptions of non-textual articulations, but the texts are in focus.

A common reaction to my research during the whole process has been the question: Who wrote this book? The identity of the authors has not been a prioritized issue during any stage of the analysis. Obviously, the team of authors and the editors at the publishing company are responsible for the texts they write. Meeting these teams for a discussion about why they have written the way they have, such as has been suggested to me, would most probably bring some more understanding to the phenomenon. However, since the hegemonic idea of superior Westerners is such an integral part of society, including the authors and publishers, it would not seem reasonable to point them out as the “root of the problem.” That is not, on the other hand, to say that textbook authors or publisher are without responsibility. When, for instance, media reporting reproduces information that is biased, there is a need for textbooks not to mimic these discourses, but to stick to the values of the core curriculum, such as equality, democracy and human rights. Consequently, one task of the authors and editors should be to develop sensitivity to these issues.

The basic education textbooks in history, geography and social studies include a vast range of topics. Several of these can be considered to somehow contribute to the construction of the West. In the process of

writing the articles for this thesis, several themes that were considered nodal points had to be overlooked, at least for now. These include, for instance, texts and pictures that related to global tourism. An analysis of these is planned in the future. It would also be possible, and interesting, to take part in the debate about whether textbooks should be considered conservative or politically sensitive (Holmén, 2006; Machgilchrist, 2014a). A further analysis of the particular question of the relation between Westerners and others could contribute to this. One way would be to describe the changes that have been made in different editions of the same textbooks. Comparing attitudes in textbooks in Finnish and Swedish is another possible project for the future.



## 7 CONCLUDING DISCUSSION

This chapter contains a discussion about the further implications of the results of my research. I bring up challenges for social science education, particularly regarding different views on knowledge. This leads to a discussion about the potential role of critical thinking for the necessary challenge to the hegemony of a superior West.

### 7.1. Challenges for social science education

There is a dilemma within education that concerns social sciences more than other subjects. How do we explain social reality, when teachers have learned to understand the world using old concepts, and students are supposed to acquire skills to live in (and improve) a world situation that does not yet exist? What, then become the most relevant things to learn about the world?

One social studies textbook (Back, Sandholm, Sourander & Stolpe, 2009) makes the dilemma at hand explicit. It includes an introductory text targeted at the students, suggesting that:

Much of what you learn in social studies will have changed when you are an adult. Municipalities will have merged, the child allowance will have risen and our political decision makers will have changed. Still, it is important for you to understand and absorb how the situation is today; that way it is so much easier to understand changes in society (p. 3).

The text adds a welcome meta-discussion about why studying society is important. Still, the social studies textbooks include texts that at most can be considered remains of older times. It is understandable that a textbook cannot be expected to keep up with all the changes in society. What should education about the future global society entail?

The dilemma suggests a need for a more humble attitude towards knowledge within schools. In today's classrooms, the notion that students possess knowledge that the teachers or the textbook authors know nothing about is not acknowledged enough. In Riitaoja's ethnographic research in Finnish schools (2013), the knowledge that students had acquired outside school was seen by the teachers as secondary knowledge or not knowledge at all. The students were guided towards "real" knowledge and skills, as the knowledge of the teacher and the school textbooks. Mansikka and Holm (2011) have found that Swedish-speaking teachers have a positive attitude towards cultural diversity, but that cul-

ture is not something that they have to take into account in their teaching. This suggests that teachers need to challenge their own perceptions.

Overall, there seems to be a need within education for a discussion about what should be considered relevant knowledge. This discussion should be grounded in the notion that what is seen as objective facts is in fact ideological. There is a need for teachers to become more aware of this. When teachers have been asked about their preferences regarding textbooks, they emphasize readability and accurate facts, not values (Gullberg, 2010). This suggests that teachers should ask questions such as: what is considered relevant knowledge? What are the epistemologies that the school advocates for? Where is knowledge constructed? Whose perspective is considered relevant? Through reflections on these kinds of questions, the assumed neutral character of school knowledge can be challenged. There are several ways that teachers can approach this. One could be through the perspective of understanding children as curriculum makers (Huber, Murphy & Clandinin, 2011), which proposes ways for teachers to deal with tensions between the different contexts that students live in. Another way could be to emphasize the use of imaginative thought (Greene, 2000). Imagination is, Greene suggests, what makes empathy possible. It is also a way of breaking with hegemonic understandings about what is considered objective knowledge.

## **7.2. Widening the perspectives of knowledge**

In the articles, I have discussed educational approaches that can work to challenge the assumed neutrality. These include critical global citizenship education, critical literacy and privilege deconstruction. These approaches can be used to deconstruct not only relations between Westerners and non-Westerners, but other hegemonic understandings, too. For instance, textbooks could be analyzed from the perspectives of class or gender. The textbooks analyzed here do not focus on these power relations, but there seems to be a need for more awareness of the perspectives in a broader meaning. If history textbooks describe a people as “having slaves”, they immediately assume the viewpoints of slave owners. It would of course be possible to use descriptions such as “In those days, people were slaves” instead of “In those days, people had slaves.” As Lampinen (2013) suggests, it is important that all readers can position themselves through the texts. This, she notes, means that it is not enough that those belonging to minorities are included in textbook images; there is a need to examine how they are portrayed in the language, too.

However, this discussion could easily be referred to as relevant only from a researcher’s perspective, on a theoretical basis, and not relevant for the reality in the classroom. If the perspectives on knowledge were

truly open, what would be left of the school subjects? What would history education without a focus on national identity, geography education without a focus on borders, social studies education without a focus on civic virtues look like? Many pages in the textbooks would need to be rewritten and old “truths” would be questioned. Simultaneously, it could be argued that the 2014 Finnish curriculum includes several descriptions that push the education of social science into this direction. Meanwhile, it is likely that the alternative focus has not yet been developed. To take the subject of social studies as an example: What would, say, *social studies consciousness* entail (Löfström, 2014a)? It would need to be a broad understanding of societal structures, probably focusing more on lessons from sociology and social psychology than what it emphasizes today. A considerable part of the social studies textbooks today focus on social policy and law – the rights and duties of citizens. The heavy emphasis on economy, especially a de-politicized one (Löfström & van den Berg, 2013), hardly increases social studies consciousness. There would necessarily be a need for students to learn to examine power relations, locally as well as globally.

It could be argued that what I advocate is looser disciplinary boundaries within education. This is something that is also being promoted in the 2014 curriculum. It suggests that teaching be based more on interdisciplinary phenomena, and less on subjects. This would seem to bring a better understanding of phenomena such as migration, wars or economy, which are already a part of all social sciences, but also relevant for other school subjects such as languages and art. Perhaps one should not be overly optimistic about the educational outcomes of teaching based on phenomena, however, since the boundaries between disciplines are not easily disregarded. Yet, if teachers were able to really do this, the possible benefits might be unexpected since the subject borders might restrict our social scientific thinking (see Wallerstein, 2003, and the idea of world-systems analysis).

Connecting the knowledge within school subjects more closely to that of academic disciplines could be a direction for schools to follow. The connections between school subjects and academic disciplines, however, have so far been anything but straightforward. While school subjects have declared ideological goals, listed in the curriculum, their academic counterparts do not (Magnusson, 2010). Textbooks in history, geography and social studies tend to present history and society as facts, even though the events are often subjected to intense debates among historians and social scientists (Loewen, 2007; Seixas, 2000; Crawford, 2003). Finnish researchers have seen a similar trend in Finland: textbooks often present information as stable knowledge rather than as related to ideo-

logical struggles (Virta, 2002; Ahonen, 2008; Tani, 2011). In subjects where the relation to academic disciplines is complex, and where social changes bring new issues for the school subjects to deal with, the role of the textbook becomes particularly important (Börhaug, 2011). On the other hand, what would a textbook look like if it accurately reflected all the academic debate, including its conflicting ideas and interpretations? According to Ruuska (2015), who works with textbook writing, it is excessive to ask that a textbook include all the voices that can be heard within a subject. She uses the metaphor of a child who learns to eat first with a spoon and only later with a fork and knife, suggesting that a school textbook cannot teach everything at once, since it has to start by focusing on the “basics” (ibid., p. 20). Nonetheless, it should not be impossible for a school textbook to guide students to reflect on knowledge and learn facts at the same time. The idea that students should first learn to uncritically accept certain “basics,” and only later to criticize them, is not particularly convincing. As Hyytinen (2015) shows, learning factual knowledge and learning how, as well as adapting the willingness to, utilize that knowledge ensures a deeper understanding of school knowledge. I therefore agree with Virta (2002), who suggests that it would be consistent if history and social studies textbooks more accurately showed conflicting interpretations, since that could develop students’ skills to handle conflicting information and help them understand how the same thing can be seen from different perspectives.

In the Finnish history textbook *Kronikka*’s (Lähteenmäki & Troberg, 2007, p. 72) section about Nazi terror in Germany, there is the following sentence:

Fear drove the Germans to support the Nazis and to close their eyes to the violence that these carried out. According to the most recent research, the Nazis also had real supporters, who accepted the persecution of the Jews and who actively took part in it. They reported on their neighbors and sent thousands of fan letters to Hitler.

Referring to the most recent research in the text not only keeps history textbooks such as these credible and up-to-date, it is also a possible way of increasing students’ interest in history as a science. After reading this, the students know that historical research can make a difference. In this particular case, it is relevant not only for the study of the past but for the understanding of the present, too, since racism as a structural phenomenon is not challenged in the political debate. School textbooks in social sciences could include more references to recent research. The above-

mentioned textbook *Kronikka* starts with an introductory text that presents the challenges concerning writing a textbook about recent history, including the vast amount of historical sources to draw from and the difficulty of writing about events that are taking place right now: “When we wrote the first edition of this book, nobody had any idea that there would be a war in Iraq. The number of events increases from day to day. This forces [us] to make new choices and omissions” (p. 3). This example of humble attitude to historical research adds an important message to the textbook readers.

### **7.3. Teaching critical thinking**

Critical thinking has been endorsed by the Finnish National Board of Education as a way to enhance education of democracy (FNBE, 2011). It has also been suggested to foster freedom and autonomy (Holma, 2015). Critical thinking is emphasized in both the old and the new curriculum in the subjects of history, social studies and geography. Particularly within social studies, but also within history and geography, which all use a variety of teaching materials such as mass media and different webpages, teaching critical thinking is seen as of utmost importance. In a Finnish study of history and social studies skills, achievement among grade 9 students was fairly poor, particularly in assignments requiring a critical interpretation of information, statistics and graphs conveyed by the media (only 38 % were reported to perform well or very well) (Ouakrim-Soivio & Kuusela, 2012, p. 12). One reason for this could be that Finnish social studies textbooks are reported to present society in factual ways, without problematizing or endorsing critical thinking (Virta, 2000). The same is reported for geography textbooks, which have tended to portray knowledge as single-voiced and without problematizing (Karvonen, 1995). The content chosen for geography textbooks has been limited to views that are undeniable and proven, leaving little room for students’ own interpretations or judgments. Jokisalo (2009) sees a need for Finnish history teaching to change in order to take on a more critical and analytical role. In his view, the current history curriculum does not take into account the interrelations between concepts such as slavery, racism and the theories of race that were seen as scientific not too long ago.

Van den Berg (2007) considers that it would be possible to teach history in Finland in a way that focuses on training students to think critically. Rautiainen (2006) calls for a more active political and ideological role in the teaching of societal subjects, if the curricular aim of critical thinking is to be endorsed. The development of history education from emphasizing facts towards skills is reported as a slow one (Rautiainen et al., 2012). It seems teachers want the students to be critical, but in the

end to adopt the same version of truth that school history endorses, for the inherent value of school history education to be achieved. This, Rautiainen et al. consider to be a way of misleading students (*ibid.*, p. 19). Researchers have called for societal issues to be presented as truly open and conflictual; in other words politicized (van den Berg & Löffström, 2011).

What would it mean for social science education to truly teach critical thinking? According to Wineburg (2001, p. 83), teaching students to “read historical texts different from their driver’s education manuals” calls for a more substantive change of lesson plans and textbooks as well as teacher education. Virta (2005) suggests that school textbooks still mainly socialize students; what has changed is the nature of the society students are socialized in. She suggests that the school textbooks do not support critical thinking as much as they could be expected to. In Børhaug’s (2014) study of Norwegian social studies textbooks, there are sections that encourage critical thinking. Yet, they do it only selectively. Students are guided in some directions, such as towards conditions in other countries and towards less powerful groups in Norway; but not towards Norwegian power centers.

In my view, teaching students to really approach information critically requires that teachers, but also textbook authors and publishers, are aware of and comfortable with the notions of ideology and hegemony. It is understandable that teachers would not want their students to “question everything” and resist all learning. However, teachers should not let this be a reason to take an authoritative stand towards knowledge. As an example, it should be possible even for fairly young students to learn that certain facts are more ideologically charged than others. In my work as a teacher, I have learned that students tend to consider textbooks more reliable than what they read online. I would suggest teaching students early on about how certain matters are more open to ideological debate than others. Today, knowledge about history is often understood to be the same kind of knowledge as language grammar. I would encourage a different approach to knowledge in schools. For instance, information about a certain spider’s anatomy or about the etymology of a verb is probably trustworthy whether it is presented in a textbook or on a website. This is because it is not likely that there are any ideological interests behind that particular information. If a student, on the other hand, were to research the events of the civil war in Finland, or the borders of Kurdistan, there would be a need to approach both textbook texts and online texts with precaution, since there are clearly different ideological interests that want to portray their version of the truth as objective. (However, there is a need to understand that even information about a spider can

become political, if, let's say, there is a fight over a natural park and the spider is considered unique and endangered. This is a bit more difficult to understand, but not impossible to disentangle.) Students would learn to consider knowledge as ideological and different kinds of knowledge as less or more ideologically charged. What we are in fact then teaching is discourse theory. If students can understand this, they can learn to find nodal points. Lozic (2011) as well as Saada (2014) have suggested discourse analysis of historical documents as a didactic method for history teaching. It would be interesting to consider to what degree this could be used also for teaching social science at large. The textbooks could become objects of inquiry themselves (Helgasson, 2010), but the method could also be used to analyze other media. By posing different questions, the teacher could guide the students to become aware of the discourses in the texts. Together with the students, teachers can analyze the orientation of the teaching materials, including reformulating pieces of texts. Students can also be allowed to do their own historical research in order to learn about history writing and critical thinking. It seems that the teacher's role in teaching critical thinking is crucial (Reichenberg & Skjelbred, 2010). The biggest challenge, however, is to revise the concept of knowledge within social sciences.

#### **7.4. Challenging the hegemony of a superior West**

Revising the concept of knowledge within social sciences would necessarily mean challenging its connection with the hegemony of a superior West. The fact that many of the more explicit colonialist images and texts have started to disappear from the textbooks in social sciences is not in itself sufficient. It cannot be assumed that postcolonial analysis has gained ground in textbooks and curricula. The representations of Muslims discussed earlier serves as an example. The development in certain European countries, with history textbooks downplaying the Holocaust for example, serves as another. In this regard, the latest Finnish curriculum is promising. Students are expected to take an active role in creating a more just and peaceful world, where democracy and human rights are respected. This is a description that calls for a challenge to unjust power relations and structures that reproduce them. The hegemony of a superior West is an example of this. It needs to be recognized and actively questioned in order to fulfill the aims of the curriculum. Teaching for a more just world might be difficult, but it is nonetheless necessary.



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