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The Populist Toolkit

Finnish Populism in Action 2007–2016

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Cover illustrations: Olaus Magnus (1555) *Historia de gentibus septentrionalibus* (History of the Northern Peoples), woodcut illustrations digitized and annotated 2007 by Lars Henriksson, available copyright-free at http://www.avrosys.nu/

Top: "Book 7, Ch. 17. A crowd of peasants are attacking the castle of a cruel bailiff. They are rolling two large burning stacks of logs against it. The favourable wind conditions are indicated in the upper left corner of the woodcut. The stacks of log will eventually set the castle ablaze and until this happens it protects the men which are rolling it forward."

Bottom: "Book 4, Ch. 2. Laps in the Finnmark are defending themselves against seafarers they believe are pirates. The fire on the shore is a trick to get ships to run aground."

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Abstract

Populism has often been understood as a description of political parties and politicians, who have been labelled either populist or not. This dissertation argues that it is more useful to conceive of populism in action: as something that is done rather than something that is. I propose that the populist toolkit is a collection of cultural practices, which politicians and citizens use to make sense of and do politics, by claiming that 'the people' are opposed by a corrupt elite – a powerful claim in contemporary politics, both in Finland and internationally. The concept of the populist toolkit has analytical utility, since it can separate a set of populist repertoires from others, for example that of exclusionary nationalism, and takes seriously the effect culture has on action, while avoiding cultural determinism.

I study four instances in which the populist toolkit was used in Finnish politics from 2007 to 2016. As data, I use party publications, a Voting Advice Application, newspaper articles and opinion pieces, and a large set of online media data. Methodologically, I employ qualitative text analysis informed by theories of populism, cultural practices, frame analysis and Laurent Thévenot's sociology of engagements, as well as topic modeling.

Article I argues that the state of the Eurozone in 2011 gave the Finns Party an opportunity to frame the situation as a crisis for Finland and to present itself as a righteous populist challenger to established parties. Article II shows that the Finns Party uses anti-feminist arguments to present itself as a populist alternative. Article III presents a theory of how populist argumentation can use familiar emotional experiences in bonding 'the people' together. Article IV tackles the populist epistemology: while populism can be critical of intellectuals and experts in general, the article shows that another populist strategy is counterknowledge, incorporating alternative knowledge authorities. This strategy is particularly employed by the populist radical right.

After the monumental success of right-wing populism in Western democracies, the next big question is whether left-wing or liberal actors will take up the tools of populism, or will they rather position themselves on the side of pluralism, democratic institutions and scientific expertise. This will have to be assessed by future studies.

Abstrakti

Populismia on usein käytetty kuvailevana käsitteenä poliittisten puolueiden, poliitikkojen ja joskus myös äänestäjien ominaisuuksista: onko joku populisti vai ei. Väitän, että on tutkimuksen kannalta hyödyllisempää ymmärtää populismi poliittisena toimintana, jossa erotetaan positiiviseen valoon asetettu kansa negatiivisessa valossa nähdystä eliitistä. "Populismin työkalupakki" on kokoelma kulttuurisia käytäntöjä, joiden avulla niin poliitikot kuin kansalaisetkin ymmärtävät ja tekevät politiikkaa kansan ja eliitin vastakkainasettelun kautta. Populismin työkalupakki on käsitteenä hyödyllinen, koska se erottelee populististen käytäntöjen joukon muista työkalupakeista, kuten kansallismielisyydestä. Se huomioi kulttuurin vaikutuksen toiminnalle, välttäen kuitenkin kulttuurisen determinismin.

Tutkin neljää tapausta, joissa populismin työkalupakkia käytettiin Suomessa vuosina 2007–2016. Aineistoina käytän Perussuomalaisten julkaisuja, *Helsingin Sanomien* Vaalikonetta, yleisönosastoa ja journalistista materiaalia, *Hommaforumin* keskusteluja sekä *MV-lehden* sisältöjä. Analysoin niitä käyttäen kvalitatiivista tekstianalyysia, jota ohjaavat populismin ja kulttuuristen käytäntöjen teoriat, kehysanalyysi ja Laurent Thévenot'n sitoumusten sosiologia, sekä laskennallista aihemallinnusta.

Artikkeli I osoittaa, että euroalueen talous vuonna 2011 antoi Perussuomalaisille mahdollisuuden kehystää tilanne kriisinä Suomelle, ja samalla itsensä oikeamielisenä populistisena haastajana valtapuolueille. Artikkelissa II näytämme, kuinka Perussuomalaiset käyttää feminisminvastaisuutta esittääkseen itsensä populistisena vaihtoehtona. Artikkeli III esittelee teorian siitä, kuinka populismi voi käyttää hyväkseen tuttuja tunnekokemuksia sitoakseen "kansaa" yhteen. Artikkeli IV käsittelee populismin tietoteoriaa: vaikka populismi on usein yleisesti asiantuntijakriittistä, toinen mahdollinen populistinen tietostrategia on tuottaa vastatietoa ja vasta-asiantuntijuuksia, ja tämä strategia sopii erityisesti oikeistopopulismiin.

Oikeistopopulismin länsimaissa saavuttaman suosion jälkeen on jatkotutkimuksissa olennaista kysyä, omaksuvatko vasemmistolaiset ja liberaalit toimijat jatkossa populismin työkalut, vai asemoivatko ne itsensä populismia vastaan; pluralismin, liberaalidemokraattisten instituutioiden ja asiantuntijatiedon puolelle.

Preface & Acknowledgements

I became fascinated with populism in 2010 at the University of the West of England, while attending an excellent lecture and seminar series by Dr. Nicholas Startin on the 'Rise of the Far Right in Contemporary Europe'. The (True) Finns Party was not yet a major player in Finnish politics and not widely known internationally. Thus, when other students and Dr. Startin eagerly questioned me for insight into the Finnish case during the seminars, I tended to downplay the significance of right-wing populism in Finland, both in terms of its prevalence and its radicalism.

The unprecedented success of the (True) Finns in Spring 2011 after the inclusion of anti-immigrant activists in the party – a monumental event in Finnish politics – proved how wrong I was. Since that was also the time when I had to decide on a topic for my Master's thesis, there was no other option in my mind than to start studying Finnish populism. This dissertation is the culmination of that research project, as the Master's thesis then left too many questions unanswered not to continue with a PhD. As the PhD is now complete, even more questions remain unanswered, as new ones have popped up constantly during this project. I now realize one could keep on studying Finnish populism forever.

Populism in Finland has been very much a moving target in the past few years, and each day researchers, journalists and laymen alike offer thousands of interpretations, analyses and opinions of it on various media. This has made it difficult to focus on producing an analytical, academic understanding of the issue without being side-tracked by heated public debates. This is the nature of populist politics: it is aggressive, polarizing, and incites dramatic responses on purpose, as it divides people into '*the* people' and its enemies. These enemies are the elite, who do not belong to the people, and in the case of nationalist populism, the Others, who do not belong to the nation.

The two woodcuts printed on the cover of this book, originally published in Swedish archbishop Olaus Magnus' 16th-century landmark work *Historia de gentibus septentrionalibus* (History of the Northern Peoples), illustrate these two facets. In the top picture, peasants are attacking a bailiff's castle, an image that in this context depicts *the people taking power back from the elite;* while in the bottom one, native Laps are throwing rocks at approaching ships they believe are pirates, to stop them from entering their

lands; *excluding Others from the nation.* While it would be anachronistic to claim the woodcuts depict Nordic populism in the 16th century, they do illustrate two central themes about 21st-century Finnish populism in action.

Some research on populism is conducted with the explicit aim of opposing populist politics, while some of it aims to facilitate populist mobilization. I have always believed we should instead try to keep politics and research separate, even if it is difficult. Perhaps this also relates to my conviction that sociology should be primarily an empirical rather than a theory-centric social science. My primary motivation as a sociologist is to understand the world. While as a citizen I disagree with many of the opinions of the people I study, as a researcher, I have always tried to approach their opinions, arguments and reasoning with an open mind, to try and understand them as a sociologist.

To be clear, I do not claim to be 'objective' – a utopia in research on politics – but I do claim to have striven to separate my moral judgment from my analysis while maintaining a critical sensitivity to the nuances of political argumentation, in an effort to get *closer* to the truth, even if it remains perpetually out of grasp (Popper 1962). Moral condemnation is human, but as a basis of research it can only blur our vision, as psychologist Jonathan Haidt vividly describes in *The Righteous Mind* (2012). And as sociologist Max Weber put it in his lecture *Wissenschaft als Beruf* ('Science as a Vocation') in 1918: "Whenever the man of science introduces his personal value judgment, a full understanding of the facts ceases." (Translated by H. H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills, 1946.) Still, as we know, Weber was no naïve positivist, a believer in our ability to simply acquire 'scientific facts' about society – but instead a staunch supporter of *Verstehen,* understanding.

These are some of the principles that have guided me in this endeavour. Hopefully, my work will help others understand populism, regardless of whether they themselves oppose or support it.

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leagues at the Helsinki Research Group for Political Sociology have become my friends during our time working together: Risto Alapuro, Georg Boldt, Veikko Eranti, Antti Gronow, Maija Jokela, Lotta Junnilainen, Anna Kukkonen, Markku Lonkila, Tomi Lehtimäki, Niko Pyrhönen; and my totally awesome supervisor and mentor Eeva Luhtakallio. An important member of that research network is Tuomas Ylä-Anttila, who has become my colleague as well, but in the first place has always been my brother.

The part played by the rest of my family in me becoming a researcher has been considerable too, since they are all social scientists as well; my mum, dad and sister: Leena, Pekka and Anna.

Other colleagues with whom I have had helpful discussions with about this work – and thus deserve my gratitude – include Paris Aslanidis, Sophy Bergenheim, Jesse Haapoja, Juha Herkman, Antti Hyrkäs, Ann-Cathrine Jungar, Habibul Khondker, Juuso Koponen, Hanspeter Kriesi, Salla-Maaria Laaksonen, Tuukka Lehtiniemi, Mari Marttila, Dhiraj Murthy, Matti Nelimarkka, Cristian Norocel, Emilia Palonen, Takis Pappas, Nicholas Startin, Lasse Tarkiainen, Laurent Thévenot, Arho Toikka, Mikko J. Virtanen, Marjoriikka Ylisiurua, and numerous anonymous reviewers.

The pre-examiners of this thesis, Benjamin Moffitt and Suvi Keskinen, were both sufficiently critical, as they should, each from their own perspectives. I have taken their comments into consideration to the best of my ability, even though I did not agree with all of them – which highlights that responsibility for any mistakes is, of course, only mine.

During this project, something happened that is much more important than scholarship – I met my dear wife, Matilda Merenmies, whom I thank from the bottom of my heart for never-failing support and love, which I hope to return in full.

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Contents

List of Original Publications

This thesis is based on the following publications:

I   Ylä-Anttila, Tuomas & Ylä-Anttila, Tuukka. 2015. "Exploiting the Discursive Opportunity of the Euro Crisis: The Rise of the Finns Party." In: Hanspeter Kriesi & Takis Pappas (eds.): *European Populism in the Shadow of the Great Recession.* ECPR Press. Reproduced with permission of ECPR Press.

II   Ylä-Anttila, Tuukka & Luhtakallio, Eeva. 2017. "Contesting Gender Equality Politics in Finland: The Finns Party Effect." In: Michaela Köttig, Renate Bitzan & Andrea Petö (eds.): *Gender and Far Right Politics in Europe.* Palgrave Macmillan. Reproduced with permission of Palgrave Macmillan.

III   Ylä-Anttila, Tuukka. 2016. "Familiarity as a Tool of Populism: Political Appropriation of Shared Experiences and the Case of Suvivirsi." The final, definitive version of this paper has been published in *Acta Sociologica,* 26 December 2016, by SAGE Publications Ltd. All rights reserved. © Tuukka Ylä-Anttila. http://online.sagepub.com/

IV   Ylä-Anttila, Tuukka. "Knowledge and Contemporary Populism: Contesting Epistemic Authority in Anti-Immigration Countermedia." Unpublished manuscript, under review in *European Journal of Cultural and Political Sociology.*

The publications are referred to in the text by their roman numerals.

1 Introduction

This is an empirical study of populism in Finland from 2007 to 2016, and a theoretical examination – based on that empirical work – of *the toolkit of populism.* Populism has thus far been most often understood as a description of political parties and/or politicians, who have been labelled either populist or not. Moreover, the term has been pejorative in connotation to many. But parties and movements all over the world increasingly often accept the label 'populist' not as an insult but as a badge of honour (Houwen 2011: 32). At the same time, claims about the supposed 'populism' of a variety of political actors on the left and right have become ever more commonplace (Houwen 2011: 28). As I will argue, it is more useful to conceive of populism in action: as something that is done rather than something that is. In this dissertation, I propose that it is a political practice – or, more accurately, a set of practices – that forms what we might call the 'toolkit of populism' (after Swidler 1986, also see e.g. Lamont & Thévenot [eds.] 2000; Silber 2003).

Political actors use tools from this toolkit whether rarely or more often, and this is determined not only by their inclination to do so – are they 'populists' or not, some might say – or which ideologies (see Stanley 2008) and 'deep stories' (see Hochschild 2016) they believe in.[1] Crucially, it is also affected by the situation they are in, broadly construed (Boltanski & Thévenot 2006: 16–17; Joas 1996: 132–133, Luhtakallio 2012: 203). The situation includes the political culture within which they act (Eranti 2016: 17–19), and what kind of and how much material and cultural resources they have at their disposal (Eranti 2016: 20–23). In the case of political parties, one often mentioned situational variable affecting their use of populism is whether they are in government or in opposition: when in government, parties tend to use populist tools less (Kriesi & Pappas 2015: 9; Rooduijn, de Lange & van der Brug 2012).

I have never cared much for disciplinary boundaries, and as such, this transdisciplinary work spans – at least – the fields of political and cultural sociology, social movements studies, political science, and political communication. Still, my training as a political and cultural sociologist is undoubtedly evident in many preconceptions and methodological choices.

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[1] On the value-basis of action, see Vaisey 2008, 2009, 2010.

Luckily, the field of populism studies – previously largely dominated by political scientists – has recently seen a resurgence of perspectives that can be deemed 'sociological' (see e.g. Hawkins 2010; Jansen 2011; Moffitt 2016), whether or not their authors identify as sociologists (which is not important).

If the conception of populism as a cultural toolkit was the first sign of my sociological perspective on populism; the second is the position that politicians and parties are only one instance of those doing politics. Breadth is the hallmark of a sociological conception of politics. Politics is something citizens do in social movements, labour unions, social movements, party organizations and everyday discussions (Boltanski & Thévenot 1999) – in addition to what politicans do in campaigns and parliaments. This is true of populism as well: not only politicians use the toolkit of populism.

That is why this dissertation – despite taking Finland as its case – not only deals with the (True) Finns Party,[2] identified and studied by political scientists as a populist radical right party (e.g. Arter 2010), but also populist acts by politicians of other parties, non-affiliated activists, and ordinary citizens in newspaper opinion pieces and online discussions. These empirical studies, published in academic books and journals in 2015–2017, are printed in this volume after this introductory and summarizing section. They each investigate a specific research setting related to the overarching research question of this dissertation: **How was the cultural toolkit of populism used in Finnish politics from 2007 to 2016?**

In the next chapter (2), I will more comprehensively introduce 'the populist toolkit', followed by a brief history of Finnish populism in chapter 3. Then, in chapter 4, I will present the research design, including research questions, and how to answer them in terms of data and methods. After summarizing the four empirical articles in chapter 5, I will wrap things up in chapter 6 with a discussion of the implications of this work for the study of populism.

All in all, I will claim that understanding populism as a cultural toolkit enables us to study populist practices not only of parties labelled as 'pop-

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[2] *Perussuomalaiset.* The first part of the party name, *perus,* refers to a fundamental ordinariness, with the latter part, suomalaiset, meaning Finns. They previously used the translation True Finns but adopted the official English name The Finns in August 2011, after receiving international media attention (HS 21 Aug 2011). Having clarified this, I will refer to the party as the Finns Party.

ulist', but everyday political actors including citizens participating in public debates, and politicians not necessarily considered explicitly 'populist'. Understanding populist practices, in turn, is critical to understanding contemporary politics, I argue. I will further empirically analyse four specific populist tools used in Finnish politics 2007–2016: I) creating conceptions of **crisis**, II) opposing hegemonic conceptions of **gender** equality, III) appealing to a familiar **emotional** experience and IV) questioning established **knowledge**. These tools have enabled political actors to claim they represent 'the people' against a corrupt elite – a powerful claim in contemporary politics, both in Finland and internationally.

2   Populism

> [D]emocracy as we know it in modern polities is an uneasy combination of two different strands, populist democracy and liberal constitutionalism [...] In a sense, then, the populists are right to see in contemporary democracy a conspiracy to keep power from the people, and they are dangerous precisely because they are right.
>
> (Canovan 2005: 67, 85)

Why is it important to study populism? After all, by choosing to do so, I have already used theory to delineate a piece of the social world to be studied. I have not, in this sense, followed Latour's imperative "to follow the actors themselves" (2005: 12), but imposed my own concept on them. Despite some political actors self-identifying as populists, my definition for the word is one based on scholarly tradition, explicated below, and does not necessarily correspond to the understandings of the actors themselves. However, I will defend the usefulness of the concept in this chapter.

In choosing 'populism', I have also made the choice not to frame what I study – at least primarily – in terms of 'the radical right' (Arter 2010), 'welfare nationalism' (Pyrhönen 2015) or 'anti-immigration activism' (Mäkinen 2016), concepts that others have used as their primary tools to analyse the same empirical things, partly even the same data. I will argue in this chapter that a focus on populism, particularly, *is* useful for understanding certain facets of contemporary Finnish and global politics.

2.1   A Contested Concept?

It is customary to start any treatise on populism with the assertion that it is a contested concept, even a convoluted and conflicted one. However, this is an exaggeration. The term has been given enormous attention by scholars in political science, sociology, social psychology and communication, among some others. But in all of these, as Houwen (2011: 35) as well as Mudde & Rovira Kaltwasser (2012a: 8) note, a remarkable number of authors have more or less agreed that the word denotes **politics that posits a positively connoted 'people' against a negatively connoted 'elite'** (e.g. Aslanidis 2015; Canovan 1999; Hawkins 2010; Jansen 2011; Laclau 2005; Moffitt 2016; Mudde 2004; Stanley 2008; Taggart

2000). What they disagree on is whether it is a logic (Laclau 2007), a discursive frame (Aslanidis 2015), a worldview (Hawkins 2010), an ideology (Stanley 2008), a mode of political practice (Jansen 2011), or a style (Moffitt 2016). Indeed, as Wiles (1969) put it early on: "To each his own definition of populism, according to the academic axe he grinds" (p. 166).

I would like to argue that this has to do mostly with the school of thought the author hails from, rather than any substantive analysis of *what populism is.* In an academic world of fragmented disciplines, it makes very little sense for a global group of scholars from various fields and schools to debate 'what something is', as the discourse theorist will always see discourses, whereas the scholar of ideology will see the same thing as ideology. (I am guilty of this as well, as someone who prefers the theoretical tools of pragmatic sociology, seeing most social things as practices, tools or repertoires – see Silber 2003.)

Rather than depicting a field in a hopeless state of disarray, I would like to suggest that the fact that scholars of such different persuasions can even agree that something like populism exists and is relevant – and that the word means a kind of politics that posits a positively connoted 'people' against a negatively connoted 'elite' – speaks for the assertion that populism is, indeed, a somewhat stable and lasting feature of politics, globally. Whether we should see it as a style, an ideology, a practice or something else altogether is secondary, and depends largely on the methodological tools we wish to use to analyse it, and some of these conceptions are more compatible with one another than others. I will argue that one of the merits of my 'toolkit' approach is that it can incorporate and utilize many of the other approaches, rather than attacking other schools of thought as inferior.

As such, I am proposing that something called 'populism' does exist in a form stable enough to be studied – in the form of continued usage of populist practices in contemporary political spheres (see also Hawkins 2010: 8). Paradoxically, this may be at least partly the result of the extensive scholarship on populism: we know that the Finns Party chairman Timo Soini wrote his Master's thesis on populism (Soini 1988) before founding the party, and that leading members of both Syriza in Greece and Podemos in Spain have been strongly influenced by the work of Laclau (Judis 2016). Thus, the scholarly concept of populism and the populism of "the actors themselves" (Latour 2005: 12) have long ago been 'cross-bred'. Still, populism survives, with astonishing tenacity.

2.2 The Populist Toolkit

A *practice turn* (Schatzki, Knorr Cetina & von Sevigny [eds.] 2001) can be discerned in contemporary cultural and political sociology. Instead of the previous paradigmatic orientation of conceiving culture as "the entire way of life of a people" or a provider of "the ultimate values toward which action is oriented", a practice-oriented approach sees culture as "the publicly available symbolic forms through which people experience and express meaning"; that is, "such symbolic vehicles of meaning, including beliefs, ritual practices, art forms, and ceremonies, as well as informal cultural practices such as language, gossip, stories, and rituals of daily life" (Swidler 1986: 273).

These practices, which can also be called *cultural tools,* both constrain and facilitate the social actions of people by providing a set of ways to communicate with others (Eranti 2016: 14–26; Luhtakallio 2012: 12). Collections of these 'tools' form 'toolkits', which are recognizable orientations towards the social world. Populism, for example, is such an orientation towards politics. Others include ideologies such as liberalism or socialism, but also everyday "styles of action" (Lichterman & Cefaï 2006), like demonstrations, unionization, disobedience, voluntarism, activism, advocacy, or campaigning. Political cultures are collections of such cultural toolkits, and as such, the ability of citizens to understand politics and participate in it depends on the availability and diffusion of these toolkits.

2.2.1 Why 'toolkits'?

This view makes it possible to take culture seriously, as culture does indeed constrain and enable social actions, but at the same time, prevents cultural determinism and gives weight to the free will of the actor. We as citizens do not act the way we do simply because 'it is in our culture' to do so, even though culture does guide our actions to an extent. The 'toolkit' view of political culture has been employed in recent political sociology particularly in studies on social movements. It has helped to understand the different resources groups of people may have for political organization, because they have been taught different tools of participation (Baiocchi et al. 2014). And it has shed light on the effect of national political cultures on citizenship and protest (Luhtakallio 2012). More broadly, it has given rise

to a new field of comparative cultural and political sociology (see e.g. Lamont & Thévenot [eds.] 2000). Understanding populism as a set of cultural tools helps us explain its sustained re-emergence across history and the globe, despite geographical differences and historical changes (Jansen 2011; Moffitt 2016; Swidler 1986: 277–278).

The toolkit perspective is not in conflict with the concept of ideology, since ideologies are "explicit, articulated, highly organized meaning systems" (Swidler 1986: 278); that is, particularly well-defined (if rather abstract) cultural toolkits. For analysing populism theoretically or empirically, it is most often unnecessary to determine whether populism fulfils this criteria of 'ideology' (see e.g. Aslanidis 2015), since it does not often matter for the political actors using the tools of populism. In some cases, it may be an ideology, whereas in others it may be used as a more habitual toolkit.[3]

Moffitt (2016) has previously taken a rather similar view to populism, drawing mainly on the writings on 'political style' by Hariman (1995), Ankersmit (2002) and Pels (2003), as well as notes on the performativity of populism by Laclau (2005; 2007). He argues, likewise, for moving "from seeing populism as a particular 'thing' or entity towards viewing it as a *political style* that is performed, embodied and enacted across a variety of political and cultural contexts" (Moffitt 2016: 3, emphasis in original). For him, this *style* refers to "the repertoires of embodied, symbolically mediated performance made to audiences that are used to create and navigate the fields of power that comprise the political, stretching from the domain of government through to everyday life" (p. 38). Moffitt himself notes that this resonates with what he calls "the turn towards social action in political sociology" (p. 38) – my attempt here is to more explicitly integrate the literature on populism, mostly written by political scientists, with that of contemporary political sociology.

Moffitt does note that the word 'style' he uses may have a connotation of superficiality, which he does not intend to convey. Instead "[s]tyle and content are interrelated, and style can generate, affect and interact with content" (2016: 49). This is one reason I prefer to use the vocabulary of 'cultural toolkits' rather than that of 'style' – to avoid the notion of superficiality – in addition to explicitly connecting my work with Swidlerian

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[3] One may imagine research settings in which the distinction between populism as organized ideology and populism as 'merely' habitual tools would be relevant – party institutionalization, for example.

cultural sociology. Like 'style', 'toolkits' should also be generally intelligible to scholars and laymen alike, avoiding sociological jargon.

Understanding populism as a style leads Moffitt to focus on populist leadership (2016: 51–69), whereas my understanding of populism as a cultural toolkit leads me to focus on the use of populist argumentation by ordinary citizens, particularly in Articles III and IV. This discussion dovetails with the notion in political sociology of ordinary citizens imbued with critical capacity, taking part in moral and political debates in everyday situations (Boltanski & Thévenot 1999).

What *is* problematic about 'tools' as concepts, however, is that they may be confused with the view that populism is a demagogic vote-maximizing tactic or strategy (e.g. Betz 2002; Weyland 1996; 2001). This is not my intention, because in the Swidlerian view, actors do not necessarily use these tools strategically as means to particular ends, but more importantly, the tools give their action meaning. In other words, they use the tools to make sense of the world, as frames (Goffman 1974), not (just) for political gains. Or, as Hawkins (2010: 29) puts it, populism is about "what politics should be and what democracy is for. This includes causal beliefs about how the world operates but also normative ones about how the world *should* operate." The 'tool' metaphor may, unintentionally, somewhat obscure the fact that values and worldviews do have effects on action.[4]

In fact, Hawkins' approach of 'populism as a worldview', cited above, is quite compatible with the one employed here as well, because it is a middle ground between discourse theory and a realist philosophy of science: "the argument that our shared language 'constitutes' or creates our identities and accompanying roles gives too little causal force to our genetic makeup and the material world around us [...] On the other hand, discourse theorists are absolutely right in arguing that we cannot easily disentangle ideas and language" (Hawkins 2010: 31–32). The notion of cultural toolkits nicely captures this idea of the role of culture: actors have agency, but it is somewhat limited (if also made possible!) by the cultural tools available to them. Moreover, the way the 'toolkit theory' is developed and operationalized in the work of Boltanski & Thévenot (2006) and Lamont & Thévenot (2000) explicitly emphasizes that cultural tools are not purely discursive, but dependent on the material environment (as shown

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[4] For a thorough critique of the Swidlerian school based on this assertion, see Vaisey 2008, 2009, 2010.

in Article III) – something that Hawkins (2010: 242) argues should be noted in future research into populism.

2.2.2 What's in the populist toolkit?

Since the key definition of populism is that it posits a positively connoted *people* against a negatively connoted *elite*, its key task is to define 'the people'. It is always a subset of the population, since 'the people' as a population-wide entity with a general will is a myth (Canovan 2005). This construction of the people happens in contrast to the constitutive outside formed by the elite (Laclau 2005; 2007), and in the case of exclusionary nationalist (right-wing) populism, *Others* – typically immigrants – as enemies of the people, which the elite unfairly prioritizes over the people, it is claimed (e.g. Sakki & Pettersson 2016).

This central concept of 'the people' in populism is rather flexible: for example, in left-wing populism, the people is often defined in terms of class, whereas in right-wing populism it is often defined in terms of nation (Mény & Surel 2004: 172–196). But Taggart (2000) notes that despite this, what the concept does always imply is that 'the people' are "numerous and in the majority [...] so confer greater legitimacy on those who speak in their name" (p. 92). Using the populist toolkit, claims are made to represent "the silent majority", who are "working, paying taxes and quietly getting on with life" (Judis 2016: 93), and have "no natural inclination to become involved with the minority (elite) pursuit of politics" (Judis 2016: 93) – they are "reluctantly political" (Taggart 2000), and as such "it is the mass citizenry who represent the heart of the population and indeed perhaps the very soul of the country" (Judis 2016: 93). This is who populist argumentation claims to represent. The Finns Party is named accordingly: in *Perussuomalaiset*, often translated as the 'True Finns', 'Ordinary Finns' or 'Basic Finns', the prefix *perus* refers to fundamental ordinariness as a virtue, similarly to expressions such as 'down-to-earth' or 'straightforward'.

The populist toolkit is a culturally shared interpretive framework that defines and valorizes the people, against the elite, and allows this distinction between the people and the elite to be used to understand society and do politics. Posing the people against the elite is the central tool.[5] Some of the most typical supplementary tools

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[5] By 'against', I mean both that the people is discursively constructed in contrast to the constitutive outside of the elite (in Laclauian terms), and that it is claimed to be in an antagonistic relationship, politically, with the elite. However, by 'discursively' I do

used to achieve and ground this central distinction include defining and denigrating Others who are to be excluded from the people, appealing to the people's familiar experiences and emotions as a source of (moral) knowledge in various ways, and denouncing expertise. I will turn to these next.

2.2.3   What's in the Finnish populist toolkit?

In the Finnish case, studied here, examples of the populist toolkit in action include the othering of Southern Europeans to construct a unified nation (Article I), 'common-sense' views of 'caring' womanhood against 'elite' feminists (Article II), invoking emotional belonging via nostalgic familiarity (Article III), and denouncing knowledge authorities (Article IV). In all these cases, a line was drawn between the people and its enemies. But these cases by no means constitute an exhaustive list of uses of the populist toolkit in Finland, 2007–2016, merely four notable examples. And these examples are indeed somewhat specific to the Finnish case and the studied instances of political actors, most of whom can be defined as nationalists in their ideology. For example, the othering of Southern Europeans in the context of the Eurocrisis was only possible because of Finland's economic and political standing in the Eurozone, and particularly suited for a nationalist flavour of populism, which the Finns Party turned to. Demonizing 'elite' feminists was particularly salient because of the Finnish discourse of 'achieved' equality, and particularly suitable for a right-wing conservative value base. The nostalgic familiarity evoked in the case of Suvivirsi was made possible by the Finnish tradition of singing the hymn. And regarding knowledge, valorization of experiential knowledge seems specifically compatible with rural populism, whereas counterknowledge is more suited to anti-immigration populism. (All these will be elaborated in chapter 5.)

Still, all of these tools could be adapted and employed elsewhere by other types of populist movements, with certain modifications: the othering of *Northern* Europeans *was* conversely used by Greek populists during the Eurocrisis (see Aslanidis & Ylä-Anttila 2014). Antifeminism is a noted feature of the populist radical right (Keskinen 2013). Shared experiences of singing emotional songs have been used to cement nationalist populist

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not mean that this construction would happen *purely* discursively, irrespective of the material world, as I explained in 2.2.1. I will also come back to this in 2.4, as well as Article III.

sentiments in Russia (Oushakine 2011), arguments appealing to emotion have been noted to be typical to populism (Berezin 2001, 2002, Canovan 1999, Demertzis 2006, 2014), and anti-intellectualism is an age-old populist trope (Hofstadter 1962, Saurette & Gunster 2011).

In other words, while the particular cases are specific to Finland, the forms of action (Simmel 1971), the populist tools, seem to be somewhat shared cross-culturally. They can thus be used by populist movements globally, according to the particular affordances granted by their context. Populism is global, even though there are variances between local populisms. Or, as Luhtakallio (2012: 12) puts it in her comparison of French and Finnish political cultures: "[T]here may be a hammer in both French and Finnish kits, although not an identical one."

2.2.4   Populism and other political toolkits

Finally, to help us further understand what the populist toolkit is, let us briefly compare it to some other political toolkits. First of all, in terms of modes of participation (Ekman & Amnå 2012), I mentioned before that many of the toolkits political sociology recognizes are tools of informal democratic participation, such as demonstrations, but populism is most often identified in the sphere of party politics instead. I suspect this is not because there is no populism outside of party politics, but rather because populism has received the most attention from political scientists, who tend to focus on party politics, whereas sociologists have concentrated more on extra-parliamentary modes of politicization. I attempt to bridge these disciplines to the best of my ability in this work, particularly in articles III and IV.

Secondly, and analytically, a useful distinction is to understand populism as the opposite of *technocracy*. While technocracy emphasizes intellectual expertise, populism values 'folk wisdom' or alternative experts (Cramer 2016: 123–130; Hawkins 2010: 7; Hofstadter 1962; 2008; Oliver & Rahn 2016); technocracy stresses formal conduct whereas populism is about disregard for established manners; technocracy is the ideology of stable progress but populism preaches crisis and cataclysm. In fact, crisis is an *"internal feature* of populism" instead of "something that is purely external to populism" (Moffitt 2016: 9) – populism appropriates crises and creates them in hearts and minds. Crises do not exist without someone interpreting them as such, as we argue in Article I. This axis between tech-

nocracy and populism can also be called a 'high–low' axis of politics be-
tween 'good' and 'bad manners', along with the more established (one
might say ideological) axes of left–right and conservative–liberal (Moffitt
2016: 43–48; Ostiguy 2009; Ostiguy & Roberts 2016; Wiles 1969: 170).
This emphasizes populism's gradational nature: a political actor is not ei-
ther 'populist' or 'non-populist' but can be more or less populist at various
times and in various situations, as I have argued (see also Gidron & Boni-
kowski 2013: 9; Hawkins 2010; Rooduijn & Pauwels 2011).

And thirdly, regarding populism's empirical co-occurrence with other
ideological toolkits, exclusionary nationalism is a toolkit that populism is
often combined with – to the extent that many observers confuse the two
with each other. This is something I will address next.

2.3   Why Populism?

Why concentrate on populism – why not the *populist radical right* (Mudde
2007), for example, which conceptually includes exclusionary national-
ism? After all, most of the empirical work in this book is on the right-wing
populist Finns Party and other nationalist political actors. As noted previ-
ously, plenty of academic research is carried out on similar empirical ma-
terials, but under the varying labels of 'populism', 'racism', 'nativism',
'welfare chauvinism', 'the radical right', and so on. I argue for the im-
portance of understanding populism, in its own right, for five reasons.

First, populism is a broader concept than the populist radical right, to
which it is often reduced; and this is useful for my work. As the recent rise
of non-right-wing populist movements and parties such as Syriza in
Greece, Podemos in Spain and M5S in Italy, and the near-successful can-
didacy of Bernie Sanders in the US shows, populism without the right-
wing component is quite possible (and currently salient). This makes an
understanding of populism itself particularly important for understanding
contemporary societies; we seem to be living in times of populism, not just
right-wing populism (Chwalisz 2015; Moffitt 2016). And even right-wing
populism follows the logic of populism:

> Populists may also target particular Others – such as asylum seekers, immigrant workers or particular minority groups – as enemies of 'the people', but these Others will be linked to 'the elite'. For example, it might be argued that 'liberal elites' have allowed increased immigration, which has led to an influx of migrants, which has threatened 'the people's' livelihood.
>
> (Moffitt 2016: 43–44)

But while populism without the exclusion of Others demonstrably exists, cases of the opposite are more rare in modern Western polities: right-wing exclusionary movements that do not use populist claims.[6] This, I suspect, is largely because most European constitutions and transnational treaties – indeed, a larger societal consensus – is explicitly anti-racist; and thus to be explicitly, politically racist, or even to publicly oppose immigration and multiculturalism, one *has* to be anti-establishment to an extent, in which case anti-immigration values may lead to adopting populist practices.

In fact, the second reason to study populism is that an empirical link between populism and exclusionary nationalism is often implicitly or explicitly posited, but not explicated. Furthermore, there are hints of a causality going both ways, which have been neglected by lumping 'right-wing populism' together as a monolithic phenomenon. A possible mechanism of anti-immigration values necessitating populist practices, because of a societal anti-racist consensus, was mentioned above. Conversely, a proposition of populism as a cause of exclusionary nationalism is evident in accounts that explain radical-right voting by insecurity and resentment felt by 'globalization losers'. These are argued to result from economic and societal changes brought about by a relative loss of status, rendering globalization losers susceptible to "frames that scapegoat immigrant groups" (Rydgren 2013: 6). Such analyses, I would like to argue, explain *populism*, which is based on a people's resentment of the system, but not right-wing populism – for that, one would need an additional mechanism explaining why the scapegoating frame is adopted. In other words, why is the resentment directed at immigrants?

To be fair to Rydgren, he does provide possible mechanisms; namely the ethnic competition thesis, according to which "voters turn to the new radical right because they want to reduce competition from immigrants

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[6] An elitist racist movement that does not care about appealing to 'the people', for example, would qualify, as pointed out by Benjamin Moffitt in the pre-examination of this dissertation.

over scarce resources such as the labor market, housing, welfare state benefits, or even the marriage market" (Rydgren 2007: 250). There are also possible "supply-side" (Rydgren 2007: 242) explanations, i.e. ones related to the politics that is 'available' to voters in the party system: while there is now a right-wing populist 'option' in most electoral systems, many countries simply lack a credible left-wing alternative for someone who wants to 'vote populist'. (Which leads one to ask: why?) Still, these mechanisms remain understudied, possibly because of the conflation of populism and the radical right; for example, to what extent are the motivations for voting populist and voting radical right the same? Why do structural problems in contemporary Western societies (often identified as the primary source for the populist momentum) tend to be blamed on immigrants (something which the populist radical right excels in)? These are questions that merit further research.

Third, numerous scholars have by now analysed the nationalist and nativist features of the Finns Party, its opposition to immigration, the racism and sexism exhibited by some of its politicians, and both online and offline anti-immigration activism in Finland. They have e.g. classified the Finns Party as a populist radical right party (Arter 2010), noted the difficulty of integrating online anti-immigration activism within a party (Hatakka 2016), noted the antifeminism of online anti-immigration activists (Keskinen 2013), connected the anti-immigration movement with concerns over the welfare state (Keskinen 2016; Pyrhönen 2015), and with neoliberalism (Mäkinen 2016; Nykänen 2016). What is lacking is research on the populist component intersecting Finnish politics, not only right-wing movements (however, on Finnish populism, see Helander [ed.] 1971; Paloheimo 2012; Wiberg [ed.] 2011). While clearly populism and nationalism are intertwined, nationalism has drawn most of the attention. This has been the case in spite of exit polls in the 2011 elections – in which the Finns Party truly made its mark (see Article I) – finding that "wanting to see some change in a stagnant party system", a typical populist proposition, was the top reason for voting for the Finns Party (Borg 2012: 201). Nationalist and conservative issues such as curbing immigration, supporting traditional values, and opposition to the EU closely followed, but still, in this light, populism has been understudied in the Finnish case.

Fourth, the reasons advanced for the supposed primacy of the nationalist component in study of contemporary European right-wing populism

tend not to be very convincing. Mudde (2007: 16) states that for contemporary European radical right populist parties, "the core concept is undoubtedly the 'nation'", while populism comes second, if "one looks at the primary literature", but is unclear what that literature is. He then proceeds to define right-wing populist parties by their nationalism, arguing in a manner which to me seems circular: nationalism is the core ideological component for a party family he defines by its nationalism. Rydgren (2007) asserts that a doctrine of opposing ethnic mixing, rather than populism, "is the most distinguishing ideological characteristic of the new radical right party family" (Rydgren 2007: 244), basing this largely on his assessment that "populism is a characteristic but not a distinctive feature of the new radical right" (p. 246); other parties use populism as well. But again, if we set out to study something defined as the radical right, it makes sense that we find that it largely corresponds to the features we expect to see in the radical right. I do not claim to have indisputable grounds for the primacy of populism in contemporary European right-wing populist movements either; merely that there are insufficient grounds to simply subsume it under "the populist radical right".

And finally, fifth: separating populist practice from right-wing populist practice, xenophobic practice, racist practice, or exclusionary practice is in line with my theoretical conception of populism as *a toolkit* and fits what I do empirically. Populism, nationalism and racism are not labels for people, they are things that are done – toolkits in action: it is simply untenable to label someone a 'radical right-wing populist' and expect them to act like one at all times. Political actors may use the populist toolkit and they may use right-wing tools; this work focuses primarily on the populist toolkit, for the reasons explicated above, but touches upon radical right tools as well since they often go together.

Recently, Stavrakakis et al. (2017) have taken a step in the right direction in an article which attempts to break the 'reified association' of populism and far-right politics. Still, they fall short of understanding populist *and* right-wing tendencies in contemporary politics as separate but interconnected phenomena, often but not always employed by the same political actors. Instead, they again focus on the unnecessary exercise of labelling contemporary right-wing populist politicians as *primarily* right-wing, and only secondarily populist, based on a methodology of finding the "core signifiers" of each discourse (Stavrakakis et al. 2017: 1), but actually

using politicians as the unit of analysis and labelling them. Again, a circular definition causes issues here: it is not very surprising to find that the analysed politicians are right-wing, since the politicians chosen for analysis were selected because they were right-wing (Geert Wilders and Marine Le Pen).

In my view, breaking the reified association between the far right and populism requires a commitment to refrain from labelling any single actor as 'far right' or 'populist' (or 'far right populist' or anything of the sort), instead analysing separately the right-wing and populist *practices* exhibited in political *action*.

2.4   Roots of Populism

Why are populist tools currently so popular in democracies the world over? In which contexts does populism thrive? A direction in which Moffitt's (2016) understanding of populism as political style leads him is the media. The *mediatization* of contemporary societies leads public spheres to focus on precisely the features that populism kindly provides: simplification, polarization, personalization, emotionalization and the prioritization of conflict and scandals (Strömbäck 2008; Bos, van der Brug & de Vreese 2011; McManus 1994; Sabato, Stencel & Linchter 2000; cited by Moffitt 2016: 70–94). The mass media also enables communication of "images of 'the people' [...] combining potent symbolism (flags, signs, crowds, colours and so forth) with a visual sense of cohesion and homogeneity amongst 'the people' [...] strongly implying presence and corporeality – and thus existence – of 'the people'" (Moffitt 2016: 104). And furthermore, with the rise of social media comes "the valorisation of commentary from 'non-elites' in the forms of blogs, mailing lists and the like, [in which] we see both a glorification of 'the people' and 'common sense', and an associated dismissal of expert knowledge" (Moffitt 2016: 91–92), which I deal with more comprehensively in Article IV.

But since populism's historical roots are demonstrably American (Houwen 2011; Judis 2016; Kazin 1998; Wiberg 2011),[7] I believe that one

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[7] There were, of course, roughly at the same time as the original American Populists (in the late 1800s), the *Narodniki* in Russia, comprised of "middle-class intellectuals who endorsed a romanticized view of rural life" (Mudde & Rovira Kaltwasser 2012a: 3). Whereas the American Populists' tradition remained 'bubbling under' and raised

often overlooked avenue for understanding European populism is to understand American populism, even though there are some crucial differences.[8] In the case of the Finns Party, some indicators of direct influence include the fact that their youth organization arranges study trips to the Conservative Political Action Conference (CPAC, see issue 2/2013 of the Finns Party Youth's magazine); a list of influencers on the website of the party think tank's director, Simo Grönroos, includes Ron Paul and Pat Buchanan; and in 2017, chairman Timo Soini participated in the National Prayer Breakfast in Washington, D.C. (Yle 16 Dec 2016). Some key activists of the Finns Party are looking to US conservatives for example, making them rather unique in Finnish politics in this sense. These links have thus far been missed in research on Finnish populism and would deserve further scrutiny.

Even more importantly, recent research on US populism has noted some important issues that seem applicable to populism elsewhere as well. Namely, *resentment* and *deservingness* have been identified as two interconnected experiences which can act as seedbeds for populism. Cramer (2016) identifies in contemporary American politics a *politics of resentment,* in which "political differences [...] have become personal. In a politics of resentment, we treat differences in our political points of view as fundamental differences in who we are as human beings" (p. 211). In explaining this, she notes a strong rural–urban divide: The Tea Party (and, more recently, Donald Trump) were heavily supported in rural areas – which applies to the Finns Party as well (Borg 2012: 196). Cramer argues that rural support for populism is rooted in a "rural consciousness" (p. 5), "an identity as a rural person [which] includes a sense that decision makers routinely ignore rural places" (pp. 5–6). The key to that consciousness is that

its head multiple times during the 1900s (Kazin 1998), Russian Narodnik ideology was quickly superseded by socialism.

[8] The Anglo-American two-party system with first-past-the-post voting effectively provides a niche for populist challengers who position themselves as 'outsiders' from the established duality (Canovan 2005: 38, 72; Judis 2016: 12–87, 43–45). And in the American two-party system, the left–right and liberal–conservative axes are conflated – so that the left wing is also liberal and the right wing is conservative – making Donald Trump's usage of the populist low–high axis particularly disruptive: it is radically different from the single axis employed by all other politicians (Moffitt & Ostiguy 20 Oct 2016). Furthermore, Canovan (2005: 127) notes that the populist 'myth of redemption', in which power is returned to the people from corrupt politicians, corresponds to the United States' foundation myth, in which Americans overthrow their British rulers and found a democracy of popular rule.

rural people are "hard working and [thus] deserving" (p. 6) – resentment is a result of not getting a fair reward for hard work. It is about "feeling overlooked, ignored, and disrespected" (p. 40) economically and culturally – and this feeling is strongly tied to place. It is not just about money, since most of the people interviewed by Cramer, and Hochschild (2016) as well, do not want welfare money, but want to work for it. With hard work comes *deservingness* (Cramer 2016: 88). Working hard but not receiving amounts to a sense of injustice and victimhood: "These days, American men are an endangered species too", as one of Hochschild's (2016: 61) informants puts it.

Hochschild (2016) connects this to an American 'deep story' – "a story that *feels as if* it were true" (p. 16) – about working hard trying to earn your place in the world, while some 'cut in line' (public sector workers, blacks, refugees, immigrants – people who supposedly do not work as hard, pp. 136–151). Hard work, not getting anything for free, is an honour. Cramer (2016: 101) calls this "a pervasive work ethic" and "a fighting American spirit". One could well ask how different this is from the Finnish deep story of *sisu* – 'tenacity' – working (together as a nation) to achieve something better through hardship. In both cases, social welfare recipients are viewed as lazy and undeserving; rewards must be earned. On this view, the worst insult not just to you personally but your (national) identity is when someone from abroad comes and takes the welfare check you have proudly refused. Money should be *earned* (Mäkinen 2016; Pyrhönen 2015).

Indeed, such resentment is a powerful political tool of populists everywhere: the fact that "conservative politicians encourage people to focus on the undeserving" has not only been noted recently by Cramer (2016: 167) in the US, but by Hoggett, Wilkinson and Beedell (2013) in the UK, and by Judis (2016: 100) in the case of the Danish People's Party. Everywhere, those who value hard work and deservingness despise 'freeloaders'. At the same time, left-wing parties that used to represent the workers' interest, have become more focused on social and cultural issues such as minority rights, which many working-class people see as betrayal (Judis 2016: 56–57; Kazin 1998: 5; Kitschelt 2004: 9).

In fact, according to Kazin (1998), a historian of populism, the late 19th-century roots of populism are in *a producer ethic:* "it held that only those who created wealth in tangible, material ways (on and under the land, in workshops, on the sea) could be trusted to guard the nation's piety and liberties" (Kazin 1998: 13). The 'elite' opposed by the original populists, the "money

power" (bonds, stocks etc.), was power "whose value was not directly connected to human labor" (Kazin 1998: 20).

This elucidates why a cultural emphasis on hard work and deservingness is still stressed by populist appeals, which in turn may explain why working-class men are overrepresented among populist voters everywhere, including Finland (Borg 2012: 195) – not because of direct economic concerns over immigration, as is sometimes argued, but via culture and identity (Oesch 2008; Rydgren [ed.] 2013). It's still "NOT the economy, stupid" (Kaufmann 2016; Mudde 2007) – instead populist parties are largely parties for *cultural discontents* of the 'globalization losers' (Kriesi et al. 2008). They are, above all, less educated workers, "who tend to work in sectors that are shrinking in Western Europe" (Rydgren 2013: 1). They have "cultural capital invested in 'old' modes of production" and thus "have found themselves in social decline" in terms of status and future prospects, at least in relative terms (Rydgren 2013: 7). This creates a crisis, a breakdown, a disruption in *cultural* terms – a point in time that is ripe for political reorientation and adoption of new frames to interpret reality – such as the populist toolkit (Boltanski & Thévenot 1999; Eranti 2016: 13–26; Rydgren 2013: 5–9; Snow et al. 1998; Swidler 1986: 278–280).

Finally, to revisit the argument that crisis causes populism (e.g. Hawkins 2010: 86–165), I take the position that rather than being structurally caused by crisis, the populist toolkit frames situations in terms of crisis and attributes guilt for it (to elites and Others). Of course, creating crisis out of thin air is not easy – a situation that can be interpreted as a crisis, and thus an opportunity for populist mobilization, must exist (Eranti 2016: 13–19). This highlights the usefulness of a theoretical framework which considers both discourse and material affordances (Boltanski & Thévenot 2006: 16–17; Hawkins 2010: 31–32). I will further explore this in Article I, which deals with how the Finns Party appropriated the economic crisis from 2010 onwards.

2.5   Consequences of Populism

Opponents of populism tend to understand it as a threat to democracy, while its proponents believe it *epitomizes* democracy. Indeed, the populist toolkit is not inherently democratic or antidemocratic. Even on the very simplest analysis, democracy consists of at least both the will of the people

and democratic institutions designed to uphold the rights of individuals and the rule of law. Populism is *for* the enactment of the will of the people as directly as possible, but *against* most of the institutions, which are seen by populists as unnecessary restrictions (Moffitt 2016: 136). As such, it reflects an inherent tension within liberal democracy, between 'redemptive' and 'pragmatic' democracy (Canovan 1999; 2005) – democracy as a provider of feelings of exaltation over the success of a common cause, and democracy as 'business as usual', taking care of everyday governance. Both are needed, but populism tries to tip the scales from the bureaucratic to the effervescent.

As such, among populism's possible positive effects on democracy, one can count that it "can give voice to groups that do not feel represented by the elites, by putting forward topics relevant for a 'silent majority'", "mobilize" and "represent excluded sections of society", "increase democratic accountability" and "bring back the conflictive dimension of politics and thus help revitalize both public opinion and social movements in order to foster the 'democratization of democracy'". On the other hand, unchecked populism may "contravene the 'checks and balances' and separation of powers of liberal democracy", "circumvent and ignore minority rights", and "lead to a moralization of politics, making compromise and consensus extremely difficult" (Mudde & Rovira Kaltwasser 2012a: 21). These are two sides of the same coin, and the balance between them largely hinges on the stability of democratic institutions in the polity in question, as well as the success of populism. It seems that the institutions populists would like to demolish are just what protect societies from the potentially detrimental effects of populism (Mudde & Rovira Kaltwasser 2012b: 210).

As such, the effects of populism in a polity are an empirical question, which also has been studied comparatively (Mudde & Rovira Kaltwasser [eds.] 2012). At least in the cases of Belgium (de Lange & Akkerman 2012) and Canada (Laycock 2012), populism has had mildly positive effects on democracy by forcing mainstream parties to be more responsive and making democracy more direct. In Belgium, the electoral gains of Flemish Interest (VB) have coincided with increases in political trust and satisfaction with democracy (de Lange & Akkerman 2012: 41–44), and the party has contributed to an "increase of political awareness, interest, and participation" (p. 43). And in Finland, the rise of the Finns Party contributed to a

rise in voter turnout and interest in politics in 2011 (Elo & Rapeli 2012: 289).

However, in the cases of Greece and Hungary (Pappas 2014), highly polarized and unstable 'populist democracies' have emerged as a result of populist practices becoming the new norm, instead of merely representing a democratic challenge, with irresponsible fiscal policies and the state being unable to protect vulnerable minorities. In Peru, Levitsky & Loxton (2012: 160) argue, the popularity of populism led to "the destruction of institutional checks and balances", and ultimately Alberto Fujimori's authoritarian regime, shadowed by extrajudicial killings and other human rights abuses. In Austria as well, successful use of the populist toolkit by radical right-wing parties contributed to a situation where the "rights of minorities were either ignored or reduced" (Fallend 2012: 134). In the Venezuelan case, while Hugo Chávez originally campaigned on a democratic populist platform and was received optimistically by both the majority of Venezuelans and many scholars; it was precisely his populism and its accompanying dismissal of institutional restraints on power that ultimately made his reign so detrimental to democracy and the economy (Hawkins 2003; 2010). As in the proverb, populism seems to be *a good servant but a bad master.*

Still, movements using the populist toolkit can also achieve political influence even without getting their representatives elected, because they present radical alternatives which shift the discursive field, making the unimaginable imaginable (Laycock 2012). UKIP's influence in realizing Brexit was undeniable, despite having only a single elected Member of Parliament. Such 'unrealistic' demands are as much ideological as strategic to populism. When Donald Trump says he will build a wall on the Mexican border and make Mexico pay for it, or when Syriza proposes that Greece default on its debts, these are not just policy positions, but ways of differentiating the speaker from mainstream politicians, siding them with 'the people' rather than 'the elite', enabling them to represent a true paradigm shift instead of the old incremental policy modifications (Judis 2016: 30, 118–119, 130, 134–135, 158–160). Getting elected might in fact be undesirable to someone heavily reliant on populist tools, because being in power and having to deal with responsibility is not well-suited to presenting yourself as a radical alternative to the establishment (Fallend 2012; Judis 2016: 140). There is a case to be made for the merits of populist uprisings in 'waking up' democracies, but in many cases, it seems best

for both the polity and the populist that they end up just short of coming to power.

In the end, the consequences of populist successes have to be assessed politically rather than scientifically. What is to some a redemptive experience of 'the people's voice' being finally heard in politics is an abhorrent display of the tyranny of the masses to another.

3 Populism in Finland

Since the dominant view of populism in political science has been that of populism as an ideology, and most research has conflated populism with right-wing movements (e.g. Arter 2010, Hatakka 2016, Keskinen 2013, 2016, Nykänen 2016), there is no existing research on Finnish populism as a practice in the sense explained previously; looking at the use of populism by various political actors, that is, populism in action. Instead, works on Finnish populism thus far have considered only empirical instances that have been *a priori* named 'populism' – that is, 'populist parties' – and even those are few in number (e.g. Helander [ed.] 1971; Paloheimo 2012; Wiberg [ed.] 2011). This chapter provides a concise survey of the history of Finnish parties that have been identified as 'populist', to contextualize the empirical articles that will follow. It regrettably lacks material on the history of populist action outside of 'populist' political parties.

The Finnish Rural Party *(Suomen maaseudun puolue,* SMP) was founded in 1959 as a breakaway faction from the Agrarian League *(Maalaisliitto,* founded 1906), by Veikko Vennamo, a former Agrarian League MP. This happened at the beginning of an era of intense urbanization and structural change in the Finnish society and economy; from an agrarian society to an urban, industrial and service-based one, accompanied by a liberalization of social norms and the mainstreaming of mass media (Sänkiaho 1971). The Agrarian League responded to the changing times by catering increasingly to urban voters as well, renaming itself the Centre Party in 1965 – precisely the kind of development Vennamo wanted to oppose. His Rural Party's ideas and rhetoric were those of classical agrarian populism: he particularly often spoke of 'the forgotten people', referring to the underprivileged victims of urbanization, specifically small farmers. The enemy was the political and economic elite in the cities, 'the money power', which Vennamo famously referred to as 'crime lords' *(rötösherrat)* (Soini 1988: 23–40). He was to remain chairman until 1979, after which his son Pekka Vennamo took the helm; but even then Veikko remained parliamentary group leader, truly personifying his party throughout its lifespan.

The Rural Party, or simply the Vennamoists *(vennamolaiset),* had two peaks of success. The first was in the general election of 1970, with 10.5%

of the vote and 18 MP's, largely attributed to a protest against urbaniza-
tion and structural transformation of the economy (Sänkiaho 1971). The
second came in the 1983 elections, with 9.7% of the vote and 17 MP's,
after a campaign heavily focused on exposing alleged corruption among
political and business elites (Räisänen 1989: 7–16). This time, the party
entered government in a coalition with the Social Democrats, Centre
Party and Swedish People's Party.

In government, the party was plagued by internal strife: while Pekka
Vennamo was now party chairman and a government minister, his father
Veikko was still the chairman of the Rural Party parliamentary group, and
his polemical style was more suited to opposition politics than govern-
ment. These two strong leaders disagreed on significant policy issues in-
cluding nuclear power, which impacted the government's credibility and
efficiency negatively, as Veikko continued criticizing his own party's ac-
tions in government as if he was still an opposition leader (Räisänen 1989:
42–45). This led ultimately to numerous defections, a loss of popularity,
Veikko Vennamo's retirement, and the party finally ended up bankrupt
in 1995.

But by 1979, a 16-year-old Timo Soini had already joined the Rural
Party. He had seen Veikko Vennamo speak at a party rally the previous
year and was so impressed that he embraced Vennamo's populism and
became his apprentice (IS 5 July 2003). Soini steadily advanced in the
ranks of the party. He became vice-chair in 1989, the year after graduat-
ing from the Faculty of Social Sciences at the University of Helsinki, with
a Master's thesis about populism – a work of political theory and practice
from which a deep admiration of his mentor Vennamo shines through
(Soini 1988). He ran unsuccessfully for parliament for the fourth time in
1995, as one of the last candidates the Rural Party fielded. But after the
bankruptcy of the party that year, he became one of four Rural Party vet-
erans to found the Finns Party in its place. He was first named as the vice-
chair and party secretary, then chairman in 1997.

In 2000, Soini stated in an interview *(Karjalainen* 2 Dec 2000) that he
wanted to build the Finns Party into "the same kind of right-wing populist
party that exist in Norway and Austria", referring to the Progress and
Freedom parties that were starting to gain ground. He speculated on re-
naming the party the Progress Party, and said he was looking for a new
charismatic leader, in fact a "prophet" who could "channel the people's

agony", and forecast a 10% vote for the new party. But he ended up becoming that leader himself.

While the Finns Party had started out as a successor to The Rural Party, with largely similar agrarian populist positions and rhetoric, party leader Soini was true to his word and started a shift towards the right, as well as catering to urban voters. The first major sign of this was the parliamentary candidacy and election of former boxer and show wrestler Tony Halme in 2003, on a provocative anti-immigrant platform (Jungar 2016: 119–120). This was also the first time Soini himself became an MP, after five failed attempts, thrice with the Rural Party and twice as a Finns Party candidate.

But the big shift to the right and to the immigration issue started in earnest with an online movement, *Hommaforum,* which is further analysed in Article IV. It was founded in 2008 after lively discussions which took place in Jussi Halla-aho's blog's guestbook. Halla-aho, a Helsinki academic linguist, had started his blog *Scripta* in 2003 (with the tagline: 'Writings from the sinking West'), and positioned it within the global *counterjihadist* movement, most acutely represented by the *Gates of Vienna* blog (which later inspired Norwegian terrorist Anders Behring Breivik; see Archer 2013). Halla-aho's blog and *Hommaforum* brought together Finns who wanted to politicize immigration, and particularly make Islam a cultural-political issue in the public sphere.

While this new online anti-immigration scene was initially divided on whether to enter parliamentary politics – and if, through which party – the anti-immigration movement quickly took parliamentary form within the Finns Party. First, Jussi Halla-aho ran for parliament as an independent Finns candidate in 2007, but did not get elected. At this time, immigration was still a minor issue for the party, but Halla-aho's candidacy (and Halme's before him) had started to change this, as we see in Article I.

In 2008, Halla-aho was elected as Helsinki city councellor. This attracted the attention of the media, gave increased visibility to the movement and led many of the activists to join the Finns Party ranks. While party leader Soini was reluctant at first to include this new movement in his party, denying Halla-aho candidacy in the European elections of 2009 for example, he must eventually have realized the electoral potential of combining his established brand of populism with the radical right positions advocated by the new movement. Several *Hommaforum* candidates

ran on the Finns Party ticket in 2011, with phenomenal results, further analysed in Article I.

Veikko Vennamo, Timo Soini and Jussi Halla-aho have been monumental figures for Finnish party-political populism. But while the first two represent a relatively seamless continuation, the last two have been at odds with each other. While Halla-aho has advocated making the Finns Party more focused on opposing immigration, Soini has preferred to not talk about the issue, while at the same time allowing his party to include strong anti-immigrant voices – and this has proved crucial for the party's success, for which Soini has worked for his whole life.

Announcing his retirement after 20 years as party chairman in an emotional interview in March 2017, Soini expressed his pride in building up the Finns Party from the ashes, but also a hint of regret for "some of the things that have been built up with it" (MTV News 5 Mar 2017), a thinly veiled reference to the rise of the anti-immigration movement. The following morning, the party office held a press conference announcing MEP Sampo Terho as a candidate for chairman, complete with perfectly-timed tweets of support from several popular names of the party. Terho presented himself – and, indeed, was presented by the party leaders – as someone who could unite the party's agrarian-populist and radical-right factions, as Soini had somewhat successfully done, and seemed quite credible at it.

But he was challenged by Halla-aho, the unofficial leader of the anti-immigration faction. His supporters rallied behind him, starting an online campaign on *Hommaforum* to get as many of them as possible to register as members of the party and to show up in person to vote at the party convention. The project proved successful, with Halla-aho beating party elite favourite Terho on the first round of voting on 10 June 2017. This immediately resulted in the split of the party: three days later, 21 MPs loyal to Soini and Terho defected, forming their own group, hastily and rather ambiguously named 'Blue Future' *(Sininen tulevaisuus)*. The Finns Party, now led by Halla-aho, was kicked out of government by the other two ruling parties due to "fundamental differences in our values" (IL 10 Jun 2017) and because they refused to further toughen up immigration policy (Yle 12 Jun 2017), and the splinter group Blue Future was included in government in the Finns Party's stead.

The anti-immigration faction had now won the battle over control of the party, but at high cost. As for Blue Future, the Soini-loyal spinoff, it is

too early to tell at the time of writing (August 2017) what their ideological niche will be, and whether or not it will succeed.[9] In terms of brand-building and party institutionalization, it will be an uphill battle. And as for populism, both parties will likely continue employing its tools – to what extent and in what ways will be investigated by future studies.

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[9] Some hints were given on 14 August 2017 (Yle) when the new group presented their first policy suggestions: lowering taxes for the working and middle classes and small businesses, raising them for the most well-off and big corporations. These may signal an attempt to continue the Rural Party left-populist tradition and distinguish Blue Future from right-wing populism.

4   Research Design and Datasets

Empirically, this study takes as its starting-point the observation that Finnish political culture has traditionally employed institutionalized mechanisms of consensus. There has been a strong cultural requirement to frame political arguments in terms of efficiency and rationality (Eranti 2016; Lonkila 2011). Disagreements are often framed as technical, instead of being based on ideological struggles – compared to France, for instance (Alapuro 2005; Lamont & Thévenot [eds.] 2000; Luhtakallio 2012; Ylä-Anttila 2010: 100–103). However, the proliferation of populism seen in the 2010s is introducing new tensions, emotional argumentation, and polarization. This leads to the main research question of this book: **How was the populist toolkit used in Finnish politics from 2007 to 2016?** This is answered via the four more specific questions of the four empirical articles:

1. *Did the Eurocrisis affect populist mobilization in Finland, and if so, how?*
2. *How does gender matter for the Finns Party, quantitatively and discursively?*
3. *How can emotional familiarity be used for doing populism?*
4. *How are claims about knowledge used in doing populism in online media?*

To study such questions dealing with populist political action in various situations, there is a case to be made for getting 'closer' to political actors, to achieve thicker descriptions and understanding in the form of in-depth interviews or ethnographic participant observation (in the case of right-wing populism, see Berezin 2007; 2009). However, using text as data has other merits: it is the most prominent medium of public political communication, increasingly so in the age of social media, for formal and informal political discussions. Text data can provide a representativeness difficult to achieve otherwise (Bail 2014).

Still, texts are always written by someone, for someone, and convey a particular representation of reality, not an accurate reflection of it. This is 'a feature, not a bug', if you are interested in the depictions and interpretations of reality in those texts, such as using the populist toolkit. In fact, in the case of investigating populism as a facet of political culture, they are central, since populism is something intersubjective, something that happens in communication between individuals (Hawkins 2010: 70). Another way to put it is that texts contain traces of worldviews (Hawkins 2010:

238), and these traces are what we can reliably observe. Below, I elaborate on why I use different types of text data in this work.

4.1 Party Materials

Manifestos, party newspapers and other party publications are some of the most classic materials of political science. They lend themselves well to assessments of official party positions and their change over time (see e.g. the Manifesto Project, http://manifestoproject.wzb.eu/), but only represent views sanctioned by the party office. They do not necessarily cover all views espoused by politicians of the party, not to mention candidates, voters or other supporters. Manifestos and newspapers by the Finns Party were used for a qualitative analysis in Article I, in which the central interest was the change in the party's policy frames brought about by the economic crisis. They were also used in Article II, but in that case complemented by Voting Advice Application data, described below.

4.2 Voting Advice Applications (VAAs)

Voting Advice Applications (VAA, *Vaalikone)* are online questionnaires meant to facilitate voter choice. The candidates answer multiple-choice questions on topical political issues, and can also make open-ended comments on them. The prospective voters can then answer the same questionnaire, and have the application calculate a compatibility percentage between them and each candidate. The voters receive the percentages in the form of a compatibility ranking of candidates, hence the 'voting advice', and can compare the candidates' answers with their own. VAAs have become popular in Finnish elections in the 2010s (Mykkänen 2011: 17) and have very high rates of candidate participation: 80.0% of the 2011 parliamentary candidates answered the VAA by *Helsingin Sanomat* (HS), Finland's largest daily newspaper. This creates a comprehensive dataset of candidates' policy positions and justifications for them – essentially a candidate survey with both multiple-choice and open-ended text answers. HS publishes the candidate responses as Open Data, freely available online for journalists, citizens and researchers. I use the open-ended comments from the 2011 HS VAA data in Articles II and III.

Some of the advantages of VAA data include that they are largely un-moderated by either the parties or the VAA operators, whereas official party publications only represent views sanctioned by the party office, and media data can be biased; populists particularly often claim it is, a discontent which researchers should take seriously. Additionally, the VAA covers all candidates, not just elected representatives.

The downside is the brevity and specificity of the free-text answers, which stem from each one being a comment on a specific multiple-choice question. Thus, even the open-ended answers lend themselves best to a fairly specific and restricted coding scheme rather than discourse analysis, for example (see e.g. Hawkins 2010: 71). This is why I used them for a quantitative gender-comparative content analysis in Article II, and complemented them with media data in Article III.

4.3 Media Data

The mass media is perhaps the most important discursive field of the public sphere of modern democracies, where political actors engage in debates and compete for influence (Bail 2012; Habermas 1962; Koopmans & Olzak 2004; Ylä-Anttila & Luhtakallio 2016), making media data crucial for studying public debates, as I do in Article III, in an analysis based on Laurent Thévenot's sociology of engagaments (Thévenot 2001; 2007a; 2007b; 2014).

But media data always comes with bias, as it is moderated and edited by press gatekeepers – which is why I also employ VAA data in Article III. This has the additional benefit of having a perspective on politicians' views on the issue, not just those of journalists, opinion piece writers, interviewees and others whose messages are conveyed by the media.

4.4 Textual Big Data from Online Media

While the jury is still out on the effects of online and social media on democracy (see e.g. Adamic & Glance 2005; Dahlgren 2000; Gil de Zúñiga & Valenzuela 2011; Hargittai, Gallo & Kane 2008), what we know is that online media of various types are becoming increasingly important for public debates. While the caricatural social media is an unrestricted free-

for-all, some online media are just as subject to editorial oversight as print media, and most fall in between: production of content is open to many (pseudonymous registered users, most often) and editorial policy is lax.

The boon of online media for social scientists is the availability of social data. Never before have we been able to gather so many 'naturally existing' discussions, network links and other records of people going about their daily business; working, shopping, procrastinating and talking politics with others – doing things we social scientists are interested in. At the same time, advances in natural language processing and machine learning have made it possible to analyse such big social datasets. This has led to a burgeoning Big Data movement within the social sciences (see Adamic & Glance 2005; Bail 2014; boyd & Crawford 2012; Cioffi-Revilla 2010; Conte et al. 2012; Grimmer & Stewart 2013; Halavais 2015; Hanna 2013; Hopkins & King 2010; King 2011; Laaksonen et al. 2017; Lazer et al. 2009; Purhonen & Toikka 2016; Wallach 2014). This movement is as much about new data as it is about new methodology, because big datasets are useless without the means of analysing them.

The development of these methods and data also affect the social itself, since social media and the changing habits of its use – new facets of social action – are largely based on the same technological advances as the Big Data movement studying them. An example of such a change is the advent of 'countermedia', the subject of Article IV. The opportunity for anyone not only to communicate online, but to produce new knowledge claims and found new media to authoritatively disseminate them, are toppling the established *epistemic authorities* of the media and public officials.

In Article IV, online 'alternative news' posts and anti-immigration discussions (altogether a bit over 330,000 posts) were used as text data and analysed by a combination of topic modeling (Bail 2014; Blei 2012; Di-Maggio, Nag & Blei 2013; Evans 2014; Levy & Franklin 2013; Meeks & Weingart 2012; Mohr & Bogdanov 2013; Mohr et al. 2013) and qualitative, interpretive frame analysis (Entman 1993, Nisbet 2009). The role of the computational analysis was to locate the discussions of interest in a way that is representative and reproducible, while the qualitative frame analysis provides an interpretative understanding, a thick description (Geertz 1973) not possible with computational methods.

While content analysis based on word frequencies has previously been cricitized in the study of populism, topic modeling partly circumvents the problem, which is that "the ideas that constitute the underlying worldview

are held subconsciously and conveyed as much by the tone and style of the language as by the actual words" and that "there is no single word or phrase distinct to populist discourse or a particular location in the text where we can usually go to find the speaker's 'statement of the issue'" (Hawkins 2010: 71). It does this by focusing on word *co-occurrences* rather than particular words, taking into account the relationality of meaning, that is, the fact that words have different meanings in different contexts (DiMaggio, Nag & Blei 2013). Still, there needs to be a significant element of post-modeling interpretive work, as I will argue.

5 Original Publications Summarized

The empirical research in this dissertation consists of four articles, which fall into two main sections. The first two document the rise of the Finns Party using material from 2007 to 2014, and employ two different viewpoints; that of the economic **crisis**, and that of **gender** and equality politics. The last two analyse populism more broadly than just in parliamentary politics: in the media and online discussions. They use data from 2011 to 2016, and proceed from the perspectives of **emotions** and **knowledge**. The order of the articles is thus roughly chronological, starting from how the current political landscape came about, before moving on to scrutiny of the situation as it is now; but also proceeds from a general and descriptive standpoint towards a more specific and analytic angle, as well as from parties to individuals as political actors (Eranti 2016).

5.1 Article I: Crisis

Article I was co-authored by Tuomas Ylä-Anttila and myself as part of a comparative, collaborative book project led by Hanspeter Kriesi and Takis S. Pappas ([eds.] 2015). In it, we claim that the state of the economy provided the Finns Party with an opportunity to frame the situation as a crisis and to present itself as a righteous populist challenger to established parties.

The volume, *European Populism in the Shadow of the Great Recession,* takes crisis as its departure point. Innumerable scholars have noted that crisis and populism go together in one way or another, but there is considerable disagreement on whether crisis is an exogenous phenomenon that *causes* populism, or whether populism *creates* crisis, by spreading claims that there is one, thus creating the crisis in hearts and minds, taking advantage of events and giving them a particular political interpretation (Moffitt 2014) – in the words of Eranti (2016: 13–19), turning crisis into opportunity. The book sets out to empirically test the causal hypothesis that crisis causes populism, by comparing 17 European countries. In each, the chapters look at the 'independent variable' of whether the country experienced a (political or economic) crisis in the wake of the economic recession, and

the 'dependent variable' of whether this crisis resulted in a rise of populism in that country.

While the results are not entirely clear-cut, the hypothesis that economic and political crises fuel populist success is supported by the country cases in the volume (Kriesi & Pappas 2015: 303–325). However, the cases are so diverse that this is by no means a linear relationship. In our chapter on Finland, we propose that political, cultural and economic specificities must be considered in explaining national populist successes.

First of all, we note that before the economic crisis which hit Europe in 2009–2010, the Finnish party field was stagnant, having been dominated for two decades by 'The Big Three': The Centre Party (formerly the Agrarian League), the Social Democrats and the moderate-right National Coalition. While the populist Finns Party had made some progress, they were marginal until their breakthrough in 2011, right after the crisis.

In line with the edited volume's shared conceptual definitions, the article considers populism a 'thin-centred' ideology combined with complimentary ideologies to form a complete ideological base (Freeden 1998: 750; Mudde 2004: 544; Stanley 2008). It compares Finns Party electoral manifestos from 2007, 2008, 2011 and 2012, together with twelve pre-election issues of the party newspaper *Perussuomalainen* ('The True Finn') from 2007 and 2011 via a qualitative content analysis. We argue that 1) the party ideology's 'thin' core is that of populism: a defence of the common people against the corrupt elite. This core is complemented by 2) a left-wing populist defence of the underprivileged against market-led policies promoted by the elite and 3) a nationalist defence of the sovereignty and unity of the Finnish people against immigration and the federalist tendencies of the European Union.

Over the timespan in question, 2007–2012, tenet 2 (framing the people as the underprivileged class) of their ideology has been downplayed and tenet 3 (framing the people as the nation) emphasized. This was done to exploit the *discursive opportunity* (Koopmans & Olzak 2004) presented by the Greek economic situation. In the Finnish case, it enabled the populist party to shift from blaming domestic elites to blaming the Southern debtor countries of the EU. All in all, the party indeed benefited from the crisis, but not directly or structurally (such as generating widespread unemployment resulting in resentment), but by gaining an opportunity to frame their politics in a salient way: by giving the European economic crisis a

nationalistic interpretation, as a crisis for Finns as Europeans, directing resentment against the Southern countries.

In the party's 2007 and 2008 campaigns, economic justice for the underprivileged had been central, with manifestos and newspapers touting slogans such as 'YOUR social security is in danger!', 'For justice, well-being and rule by the people!' and 'Protest so they can feel it!' The elite was described as 'corrupt cognac drinkers', 'big money' and 'stock option predators'. Nationalism was visible as opposition to the EU because the 'Finnish model of the welfare state was being cut back because of various EU-led strategies', but anti-immigration candidates were peripheral and did not receive much space in the official party materials.

This changed profoundly after the economic crisis. The Finnish economy was doing well in 2008, but was very dependent on heavy industry exports, the demand for which dramatically declines in a recession (Rouvinen & Ylä-Anttila 2010: 11). This means that the economic crisis did affect Finland, but with a delay: it did not, for example, create widespread unemployment or bankruptcies. A wealthy state and a stable job market buffered the crisis. The severe political effects came only in 2010 when Greece began seriously faltering.

When it became clear that EU countries would have to save Greece from going bankrupt, the Finns Party was the only one that could feasibly oppose this plan, which was very unpopular amongst the Finnish electorate (Pernaa 2012: 20–22), the mainstream parties being tied to their commitment to the EU project (Railo 2012: 231). This enabled the Finns Party to present themselves as a radical alternative to the perceivedly corrupt mainstream parties – fulfilling the populist promise. Moreover, framing their populism as more strongly *nationalist* than before enabled them to speak for 'all Finns', not just the underclass, as their previous left-populism had done.

Our analysis of the 2011 manifestos and newspapers shows an increased emphasis on national sovereignty of the Finnish people, and the elite the party opposes is now the 'cheaters and liars of the Eurozone' – specifically, Greece, into which party chairman Timo Soini now claims Finland is 'shoveling money'. This is very much in line with the populist notions of hard work and deservingness, reviewed in chapter 2.4.

We conclude that in the Finnish case, populism did get a significant boost from the economic situation, because it enabled the populist party to present itself as a righteous challenger to the corrupt mainstream parties

and as a protector of the Finnish people. This was not a direct, structural, causal effect, but a result of the agency of the party, responding to a changed situation by modifying its toolkit and framing, employing more nationalist elements. This also made it a more appealing option for the growing anti-immigration movement, further analysed in Article IV.

5.2   Article II: Gender

Article II was co-authored with Eeva Luhtakallio for another comparative European book project, *Gender and Far Right Politics in Europe* (Köttig, Bitzan & Petö [eds.] 2017). It shows that the Finns Party uses notions of traditional femininity and masculinity to oppose a hegemonic conception of gender equality and present itself as a populist alternative.

Finland has strong traditions of equality politics, manifested as 'state feminism': a plethora of policies aimed at improving gender equality as part of the welfare state project, together with strong representation of women and the feminist movement within party politics and state structures (Kettunen 2008: 128–171; Holli & Kantola 2005; 2007). However, despite enjoying broad cultural acceptance in principle, state feminism faces implementation problems since the issues of equal pay, equally shared parental responsibilities, gendered violence, and male-dominated political and business leadership have in fact faced stagnation rather than strong progress in the 21st century (Holli & Kantola 2007). Finnish gender equality discourse has a paradoxical duality about it: equality politics are considered a matter of national pride, and equality even enjoys the status of a hegemonic discourse; but discrimination persists on multiple fields of society, and criticizing it is often met with denial, since 'in Finland, we already have equality' (Holli, Luhtakallio & Raevaara 2006; Luhtakallio 2012).

What are the consequences of a proliferation of right-wing populist politics, dominated by men, in such a case? We analyse two facets of the Finns Party's rise: firstly, the party's internal gender gap, comparing the VAA answers of their male and female candidates for the 2011 elections; and secondly, the party's discourse on gender and equality, analysing their 2011 electoral manifesto, the 2011 and 2012 volumes of the party magazine *Perussuomalainen* ('The True Finn'), and public materials produced by

the party's womens' organization that were available on their website and in the National Library of Finland.

We used open-ended responses by the candidates as qualitative material to analyse the candidates' justifications for their positions, not just simple policy choices, which were then compared quantitatively. The material revealed a left–right gender gap. When asked about income inequality, a minority of men (13%) argued in a typically right-wing fashion that income inequality is in fact good, because it rewards competition; a small minority. But the percentage of women who argued so was *zero*. A majority of male candidates (39%) advocated the levelling of income cleavages on social justice grounds, but the percentage of women who did so was higher (56%); furthermore, female candidates more often did so on grounds of poverty relief and explicitly mentioning the underprivileged (42%); over twice as often as men (19%).

Both the men and the women of the Finns Party were equally opposed to immigration, and justified this mostly on economic grounds, arguing that immigration was supposed to be financially beneficial and not detrimental 'for Finland'. Some also mentioned immigrant crime and 'cultural incompatibility' of (Muslim) immigrants and native Finns.

But when asked about homosexual adoption rights, a gender gap emerged again in that female Finns Party candidates were decidedly more liberal, defending equal rights for sexual minorities (30%) more than twice as often as men (14%). Very few women resorted to the argument that heterosexuality is 'normal' and homosexuality 'abnormal' (10%), whereas male candidates did so more than three times as often (31%).

In sum, whereas we already knew the Finns Party represents radical right-wing populism and is male-dominated, this analysis showed that this is no coincidence and the connection also holds true within the party, its male candidates voicing more right-wing and socially conservative moral arguments than its female candidates. The party's hard-line right-wing politics seems to be partly a product of its male majority.

As for the Finns Party's use of gender and equality framing, we analysed written materials produced by the party women's organization, and relevant portions of the party's 2011 electoral manifesto, together with the 2011 and 2012 volumes of the party newspaper (articles that either mention the party's women, gender, or equality). We show that the party women's organization mostly speaks of issues that are important to the party as a whole (such as unemployment, pensions and veterans), rather

than emphasizing their role as women. They explicitly state they are 'not feminists', and when they do talk of women's issues, they speak of a traditional, domestic, caring womanhood. Motherhood is emphasized, and staying home taking care of children instead of working is portrayed as an important women's right. The traditional role of women is of great importance for the nation, because "the family is the basic unit of society and children are the future of the nation" (Finns Party electoral manifesto 2011). Even if women become politically active, they must continue to take care of the home: "We are women who, year after year, work for the party for the sake of the common good along with doing the everyday chores" (The True Finn 9/2012). The role of women in the party, according to our reading of the party materials up to 2012, is largely to support the male leadership.

All in all, our results show that while the success of the Finns Party contributes to a turn to the conservative right in Finnish politics, it does so particularly in terms of gender. The hard-line right wing of the party is mostly a product of men, and the gender and equality politics of the party are conservative, even anti-feminist. The 'ordinary' women of the party are portrayed as outsiders compared to the feminist women of the mainstream, 'elite' parties. The paradoxical duality of Finnish political discourse on gender equality provides a convenient tool for conservative politics to argue against further equality policies, because it offers the argumentative frame of equality 'already achieved'.

5.3   Article III: Emotional Familiarity

Article III moves from the Finns Party towards populism understood more broadly. It forms a pair with Article IV, which focuses on knowledge, by focusing on emotion. Specifically, it presents a theory of how populist argumentation can use familiar emotional experiences in bonding 'the people' together. It does so by analysing the Finnish debate on *Suvivirsi*, the Summer Hymn, primarily by using Laurent Thévenot's pragmatist *sociology of engagements* (Thévenot 2001; 2002; 2007a; 2007b; 2009; 2011a; 2011b; 2011c; 2014; 2015) to analyse media texts from 2002 to 2014 and political candidates' opinions and justifications in 2011 (VAA).

Suvivirsi, which pupils in Finnish schools traditionally sing at spring graduation ceremonies, has become a site of political struggle. Some question whether Christian hymns are appropriate in public schools, while others defend the cultural tradition. Right-wing populist arguments emphasize the hymn's Finnishness (even though it is originally Swedish) and defend it against a cultural threat they claim has been introduced by (Muslim) immigrants.

To most Finns, it is a familiar practice enabling remembrance and tradition. That familiarity is used to anchor right-wing populist discourse in shared experience. Through its familiarity, *Suvivirsi* provides a vessel to connect political argumentation with a solid base of everyday practices, which produce experiences of belonging, to bridge the gap between familiar experience and institutional politics.

Laurent Thévenot's sociology of engagements separates the typical sphere of politics, the *regime of justification* – in which conventionalized value-systems such as market exchange, traditions, or rational efficiency are accepted as yardsticks of what is measurably valuable (Boltanski & Thévenot 1999; 2006; Thévenot 2001: 71) – from the *regime of familiarity,* in which people can act from habit, without critical reflection on the value-basis of their actions, while maintaining a feeling of ease (Thévenot 2007: 416; 2011b: 14–16; 2014: 13–15, 19–28). Objects we engage with in the familiar regime, which may be material or cultural artefacts, and which Thévenot calls *commonplaces,* are invested with a "strongly personal engagement" and breed "confidence" (Thévenot 2011a: 49). They "are not merely symbols, or signs, because they are the vehicle for deeply personal attachments" (Thévenot 2014: 20). Familiarity is perhaps best described "by the phrase: 'inhabiting a home'" (Thévenot 2001: 69). We have a personal relationship with our everyday material and cultural surroundings, we are used to them. *Suvivirsi* is a prime example of a commonplace.

Such familiar engagement using commonplaces can take the form of political action, even though it is "not taken into account in most approaches to politics" (Thévenot 2014: 10). Commonplaces can even be "instrumental in support of authoritarian power" (Thévenot 2015: 98), since they are "by construction, rather foreign to strangers" (Thévenot 2015: 98) – while they form a strong bond between those who share them, they also exclude strangers. This is also apparent in the *Suvivirsi* debate, and is what gives *Suvivirsi* its exclusionary power. In the debate, two solutions emerge: that of *justification* (appeals to shared values) and that of a

return to *familiarity* (appeals based on an experience shared by a community). The latter is more compatible with populism, because it constructs a people around the commonplace and valorizes the felt experience of the people participating. This is the analytical dichotomy I employ: justification vs. familiarity. For example, when a participant in the debate argued that *Suvivirsi* should be sung because it has been done for decades, this argument was classified as justification based on the generally accepted value of cultural traditions. On the other hand, when participants referred to the concrete situation or the experience of singing the song and the emotions it evokes, the argument was classified as based on familiarity.

In total, I located 67 appeals to *justification* and 33 appeals to *familiarity* in the 139 documents of the media material on *Suvivirsi*.

Most of the debate focused on whether *Suvivirsi* should be identified as part of the social worlds of 'culture' or 'religion', and then justifying opinions by referring to the worth of *Suvivirsi* in that world. However, participants also reminisced about their experiences of singing *Suvivirsi* as schoolchildren, and noted how singing the song now arouses 'feelings of nostalgia'. The singing of *Suvivirsi* was described as 'beautiful and tender', something 'most Finns have experiences of', even 'a part of the shared experience of many generations'. The hymn contains 'a powerful emotional charge' which can elicit even physical responses: it can 'move' you and 'make you weep', cause 'shivers' and 'make your heart pound'. Such expressions do not appeal to a shared cultural value-system but a shared familiar experience, a commonplace – crucial to claiming convincingly that this is what 'the people' feel.

The cultural and religious justifications seen in the media debate were reflected in the 2011 VAA candidate questionnaire as well (with 199 appeals to justification), but familiarity was also salient (with 55 appeals) – particularly for Finns Party candidates (with 24 appeals). For them, the heartfelt emotional familiarity of the song is powerful. Many seem to genuinely feel insulted by the potential 'loss' of the experience – it is not just about the song itself, but the continued practice of singing it – and for some, this should count as an argument, without need for further justification. As the song represents something familiar, the candidates see the practice of their offspring continuing this tradition as a touching gesture of the succession of generations.

The meaning of the song cannot be grasped by referring to its lyrical content or even the generalized values of Christianity or Finnishness it is

claimed to represent. The emotional experiences referenced by respondents indicate that the 'good' conveyed by the song is strongly attached to the very experience of singing it with others at a specific event (the school-year-ending ceremony) held at a specific place (the school), a specific age (childhood) and a specific time of year (spring). They reminisce about the sound of the hymn and the smell of spring, visceral bodily experiences that cannot be conveyed by referring to principles of justification, only by appealing to the familiarity of the commonplace – to those that share that familiarity – the 'people' of their populism. "I believe everyone knows it by heart", as one candidate put it.

The emotional experience of this cultural habit is tied to the actual physical situation, via personal attachment to a commonplace, not just discursive descriptions of it. 'Tapping into' this experience is a politicization of the everyday experience of the 'common people'. The implication is that one cannot truly understand the significance of the song unless one has participated in the springtime ritual by singing it.

The populist reaction in this case can be interpreted as an attempt to avoid the imperative for justification. Instead, it turns back to the heartlands and commonplaces of familiarity – in this case, the supposed homogeneous national community 'before multiculturalism' – to fix the crisis by returning to times before it happened, before the habit had to be justified, when one could 'sing the song as it has always been sung', instead of engaging in a public debate over plural orders of worth. These participants in the debate demand the acceptance of their experience as 'common people' in the sphere of politics, without need for justification by value-systems, let alone politicians, bureaucrats or other authorities. This is a populist and exclusionary politicization of the familiar experience of 'the common people', to which 'everyone' is claimed to belong.

5.4   Article IV: Alternative Knowledge

Whereas Article III provided a view of the emotional component of populism, Article IV tackles the populist epistemology: populism's theory of knowledge. While populism can be critical of intellectuals, experts and knowledge authorities in general, the article shows that another populist strategy is the creation of *counterknowledge,* incorporating alternative

knowledge authorities, and that this strategy is particularly employed by the populist radical right.

Since populism opposes elites (typically in terms of political power), it also tends to oppose knowledge elites – that is, experts and epistemic authorities. This tendency captured the public imagination in 2016, as seen in a proliferation of accounts in the press about so-called 'post-truth politics', which supposedly eschew facts in favour of emotional appeals and identity (e.g. Economist 10 Sep 2016, Guardian 15 Nov 2016). Previously, an epistemology that valorizes "the knowledge of 'the common people,' which they possess by virtue of their proximity to everyday life", has been termed *epistemological populism* by Saurette & Gunster (2011: 199). This tendency to eschew experts in favour of 'folk wisdom' is a well-known tool of populism (Cramer 2016: 123–130; Hawkins 2010: 7; Hofstadter 1962; 2008; Oliver & Rahn 2016; Soini 1988: 4). But, as I argue in this article, 'epistemological populism' is not the full picture of *populist epistemology*. Another kind of populist epistemology is what I call *counterknowledge* – epistemic opposition to established experts by the production of alternative knowledge authorities – and it has played a significant role in Finnish populism in the 2010s.

The inclusion of anti-immigrant activists in the Finns Party was largely made possible by their consolidation on *Hommaforum.org* since 2008, a discussion forum for self-proclaimed 'critics of immigration'. More recently, spurred on by the spike in numbers of refugees in 2015, several 'countermedia' websites sprung up, publishing political news often of questionable truth value; accusing immigrants of serious crimes, mainstream journalists of covering them up, and politicians of facilitating a destructive assault on Finnish society by immigrants. The most popular of these is *MV-lehti* ('WTF Media'). 'Countermedia' combine facts with fiction and rumours, sometimes intentionally blurring the lines or spreading outright lies, other times cherry-picking, colouring and framing information to promote a radical anti-immigrant agenda. These websites quickly became immensely popular, while street violence against immigrants simultaneously intensified and government asylum policy was tightened.

Article IV argues that production and dissemination of counterknowledge can be instrumental in populist mobilization. An effective way to question mainstream policies, such as the intake of asylum-seekers and state-sanctioned multiculturalism, is to claim they are supported by false knowledge, and produce and circulate alternative knowledge countering

it. I analyse counterknowledge on Hommaforum and WTF Media by a combination of computational topic modeling (Bail 2014; Blei 2012; Di-Maggio, Nag & Blei 2013; Evans 2014; Levy & Franklin 2013; Meeks & Weingart 2012; Mohr & Bogdanov 2013; Mohr et al. 2013) and qualitative, interpretive frame analysis (Entman 1993, Nisbet 2009). The role of the computational analysis here is to locate the discussions of interest in the large dataset (more than 330,000 messages and news articles) in a way that is both more representative and reproducible than either a fully qualitative selection (such as Mäkinen 2016) or a keyword search would be. Qualitative frame analysis, on the other hand, provides an interpretative understanding, a thick description (Geertz 1973) not possible with computational methods.

According to the findings, the predominant framing of truth on Hommaforum and WTF Media looks similar to a populist framing of power and democracy. Like the populist assertion that limitations of liberal-democratic institutions – checks and balances that are in place to protect minorities – should be lifted to uphold democracy; the same applies on Homma and WTF for any limitations on freedom of speech, which are portrayed as detrimental to the truth.

Moreover, an empiricist-positivist 'counterknowledge epistemology' is explicit especially on Homma: truths about society are presumed accessible by scientific methods, and these truths could be adopted for governance; but the multiculturalist-relativist hegemony and the corrupt research community prevents such work. An example of their positivist empiricism is the habit of framing the immigration question as purely economic, thus enabling calculations of the monetary value of people and rejection of those who are not deemed of value to the national economy (see also Mäkinen 2016). Such an economization of the immigration question can in fact be described as technocratic, and as such is quite incompatible with the traditional populist dismissal of expert knowledge, 'epistemological populism' (Saurette & Gunster 2011). Instead, it is a political tool associated with the radical right.

WTF Media is received quite positively by the anti-immigration activists of Homma, despite some contributors condemning WTF's 'obvious' neo-Nazism and apparent political connections with Russia, using these connections to frame it as unreliable. Homma users praise WTF for 'saying what others won't'; even though much of the information might be bogus, some of it is correct and not available elsewhere. The participants

emphasize that the same scepticism should be felt against mainstream media and countermedia, and that smart media consumers can assess information themselves, without gatekeepers, like a rational *homo economicus* in a marketplace of ideas. This portrait of the 'ideal *knower'* is, again, very different to that of 'epistemological populism' (Saurette & Gunster 2011), in which members of the 'common people' *know* things based on their common sense and lived experience. The ideal *homo economicus* 'knower' of counterknowledge is a rational selector instead.

Thus, it seems that unlike what Wodak (2015: 22) claims, right-wing populism does not simply correlate with anti-intellectualism; it is *populism* that does so. The contemporary European amalgam of populism with radical right-wing thought is in fact quite comfortable with intellectualism, as long as that intellectualism is technical-rational in nature and can be used against the 'false truths' of political opponents. Rather than an ambivalent and experiential truth orientation – as suggested by the 'post-truth' thesis and 'epistemological populism' – right-wing populists take *some* expert knowledge very seriously, in fact often overestimating possibilities to arrive at the right solutions to political issues by inquiry. Both 'epistemological populism' (populist folk wisdom) and a 'counterknowledge epistemology' (radical right rationalism) nevertheless provide tools to denounce opponents as enemies, since opponents are not only politically but epistemologically wrong.

6 Discussion

In this dissertation, I have argued that a sociological perspective based on the vocabulary of cultural toolkits and practices is useful for analysing populism, and that populism is a useful concept for analysing society, particularly contemporary Finnish politics. Of course, this is not the only possible theoretical framework, because social scientific theories do not just provide hypotheses to be empirically tested, thus *explaining* phenomena in a causal sense, but must also assist in choosing the right questions and perspectives, and ultimately help *understand* society. Some of the insights provided by this work could perhaps have been formulated using other theoretical tools as well. But the practice-oriented perspective used here helped us to study populism in action, as something that is done by political actors who are constrained but also enabled by their situations. This reminds us to consider in our studies not only institutions and the motivations of organizations and individuals – and not just cultural discourses either – but the *agency* of political actors, whether they are party politicians or citizens in everyday political debates.

I believe theories in social sciences have to be assessed by their usability in empirical research – which I hope to have demonstrated in the four empirical articles – and their usability for scholarly cooperation. I want this latter point to emphasize that the 'toolkit theory' is quite compatible with (and translatable into the language of) many other theories employed in not only sociology, but political science, communication and related branches of study.

If we allow ourselves to consider the 'toolkit theory' vindicated at least to some extent, what about the concept of populism? Is it a term we should be using; does it help us understand society? And how were populist tools used in the Finnish case? I hope that the four empirical articles have proven the relevance of populism as a concept as well. Firstly, in Article I, the populist juxtaposition of a positively connoted 'people' and a negatively connoted 'elite' was identified as a prominent frame in Finns Party manifestos. But before the Eurocrisis, 'the people' was mostly defined as the 'underclass' and the elite as the 'money power' in a classical populist sense. The dire economic situation of the European countries, mainly in the South and culminating in 2010, presented the party with a new opportunity: because the mainstream parties were committed to the Euro

project, the Finns Party could begin employing an argumentative frame of *defining the situation as a crisis for Finns as well* – despite the fact that the crisis was buffered by the country's strong economy and institutions – and blaming the crisis on the Southern countries. They were still employing the toolkit of populism, but 'the people' were re-defined in terms of the Finnish *nation*, and its opponents as European elites and the 'lazy' Southerners they were coddling. In other words, they moved towards right-wing populism, which identifies elite-pampered Others as enemies. Their populist toolkit was modified according to the situation, and it was made more exclusionary.

In Article II, we illustrated how the populist toolkit was used in terms of gender: to draw a line between the 'ordinary', 'common women' of the Finns Party and the 'elite feminists' of other parties. This valorization of traditional womanhood led them to support caretaker positions rather than public positions for women. In terms of the gender gap within the party, the radical right tools which were identified in Article I were shown in Article II to be primarily deployed by the men of the party. Radical right politics are associated with men and masculinity.

Moving on from the Finns Party to other parties as well as ordinary citizens, Article III noted the power of *familiarity* as a tool of populism. By referencing a shared emotional experience, that of singing the hymn *Suvivirsi*, political actors were able to infuse their proposition of who 'the people' are with a solid experiential foundation. Those who have sung the hymn together were a ready-made *community of feeling* that was now given a nationalist definition. Whereas populism has often been identified as 'emotional', Article III analysed the populist use of emotions as political tools more closely, showing the importance of familiarity.

Finally, in Article IV, the focus turns from emotions to knowledge – and epistemology, theories of knowledge. It is often argued that populism valorizes 'folk wisdom'; this has been called 'epistemological populism'. But a combination of computational text analysis and frame analysis in Article IV shows that while Finnish anti-immigration activists denounce knowledge authorities, they often posit alternative knowledge authorities in their place instead of completely shunning expertise. This was identified as production of *counterknowledge*, in contrast to populist epistemology. The theory of the populist toolkit has trouble capturing these anti-immigration activists; instead counterknowledge seems to be specifically a *right-wing* populist frame.

Thus, not all the phenomena studied in this work neatly fit under the umbrella of the 'populist toolkit'. Still, the populist toolkit has analytical utility, since it can separate a set of populist repertoires from others, for example that of radical right repertoires, in a way that takes into account culture in action.

Syriza in Greece, Podemos in Spain, M5S in Italy, the Pirate Party in Iceland, and Bernie Sanders in the USA prove that not only radical-right movements can use the populist toolkit, for better or for worse. Bornschier & Kriesi (2013) have argued that the populist uprising we are witnessing now in Europe and North America – and which has taken primarily right-wing forms – is a delayed backlash against the New Left of the 1970s and 1980s. If so, is the next wave going to be left-wing and/or liberal parties taking up the tools of populism? *Should* they do so, or instead embrace the 'new axis' between populism and technocracy precisely by doing the opposite: placing themselves *against* the populists, by defending pluralism, democratic institutions, evidence-based policy, scientific knowledge and expertise; finding non-populist ways of listening to the grievances of the people, helping them voice their discontents? This is the question that would keep me up at night, were I a politician.

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Original Publications

Chapter Four

Exploiting the Discursive Opportunity of the Euro Crisis: The Rise of the Finns Party

*Tuomas Ylä-Anttila and Tuukka Ylä-Anttila*

For the two decades preceding the economic crisis of 2009, the Finnish party system was notably stable, dominated by 'The Big Three': Social Democrats, the Centre Party (formerly Agrarian League) and the moderate-right National Coalition. The populist Finns Party (*Perussuomalaiset*, PS)[1] made some progress, but remained marginal until the crisis election of 2011, where their vote share skyrocketed (up to 19.1 per cent from 4.1 per cent in 2007) and they became the largest opposition party, illustrated in Figure 4.1. In this chapter we examine the role of the euro crisis in the rise of the PS, and argue that between 2007 and 2013 the party exploited the crisis discourse by moving from their agrarian populist roots towards radical right populism.

Considering populism as a 'thin-centred' ideology that is combined with complimentary ideologies to form a complete ideological base (Mudde 2004: 544), in line with this volume's premises, we will argue that in the PS's ideology 2007–13, 1) the populist defence of the common people against corrupt elites is combined with 2) a left-populist defence of the welfare state against market-led policies promoted by elites and 3) increasingly, a nationalist defence of the sovereignty and unity of the Finnish people against immigration and federalist tendencies of the European Union (EU), typical of radical right populism (*see* Saukkonen 2003). In 2007, these themes hardly resonated with the general campaign debate, but in 2011, fuel for populist anti-corruption talk and nationalist EU-criticism was abundant. A political crisis following a national corruption scandal implicating the established parties, and the economic crisis of the Eurozone that required Finnish taxpayer money to bailout Ireland, Portugal and Greece, were served to the PS on a silver platter. We will argue that the discursive opportunities (Koopmans and Olzak 2004) brought on by the economic crisis, and the party's willingness to exploit them, have been crucial to their success.

Simultaneously with making EU critique a central part of their discourse, the party also accommodated a new, rising anti-immigration movement, originating from web discussion forums and blogs (*see* also Arter 2012). The integration of this new group of party members and supporters was done by downplaying

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1. Perussuomalaiset, previously often translated as the True Finns, Ordinary Finns or Basic Finns, adopted the official English name 'The Finns' in August 2011, after receiving international media attention (HS 21 August 2011). The prefix 'perus' refers to fundamental ordinariness as a virtue, similarly to expressions such as 'down to earth' or 'straightforward'.

Figure 4.1: Parliament seats won, 1987–2011
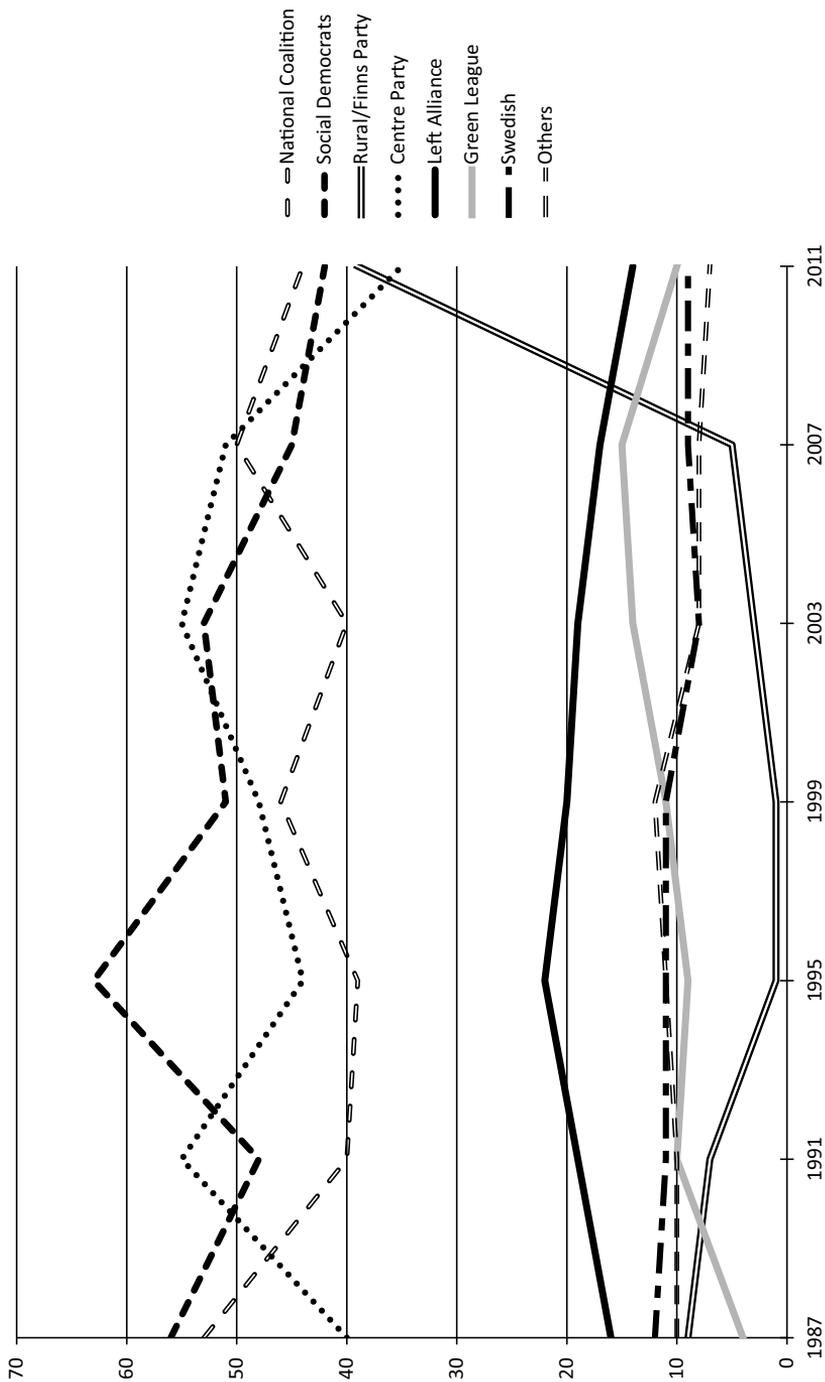
the left-populist defence of the poor (ideological tenet two) and emphasising nationalist, anti-immigrant and anti-EU elements of the party ideology (tenet three). The left-populist rhetoric emphasising the distress of the underprivileged had been typical of the party's predecessor, the Finnish Rural Party (Suomen Maaseudun Puolue, SMP), moderately successful in the 1970s and 1980s (Helander 1971). However, the party seems to be moving further away from its SMP roots and towards radical right populism. Defence of the welfare state is still an important part of their ideology, but it is now phrased in a more nationalist tone, as welfare chauvinism: in order to save the welfare state, immigrants must be excluded and payments to the EU, especially the countries in need of bailouts, must be rejected.

This chapter proceeds chronologically. We focus first on the 2007 parliamentary and 2008 municipal elections before the euro crisis, followed by an analysis of the implications for the crisis on Finland. Next, we study the 2011 landslide elections at the height of the crisis and the 2012 post-breakthrough municipal elections. The presentation is based on a qualitative content analysis of the electoral manifestos for the 2007, 2008, 2011 and 2012 parliamentary and municipal elections, along with pre-election issues of the party newspaper, *Perussuomalainen* (The True Finn), read alongside key statistics about the Finnish economy. As the parliamentary elections were held in March 2007 and April 2011, we selected the newspaper issues published since the beginning of the election year until the election, two for 2007 and six for 2011, consistent with the importance of the 2011 elections for the party. For the municipal elections of October 2008 and October 2012, we selected two pre-election issues for each. Additionally, for a glimpse into the future, we look at 2013 issues of the party youth organisation's newspaper *Rahvas* (The Common People) and briefly review the party's performance in the 2014 European elections.

Pre-crisis populism 2007–08: Peripheral and struggling

The campaign for the 2007 parliamentary elections was, in a word, dull. That, at least, is the conclusion of two major reports on the elections (Pernaa, Niemi and Pitkänen 2007; Borg and Paloheimo 2009a). Since the start, polls predicted that the governing coalition would easily renew its mandate (Moring and Mykkänen 2009: 28), and differences in opinion between the three biggest parties were mild (Borg and Paloheimo 2009b: 19). Television coverage focused on the leaders of the 'Big Three' – the Centre Party, the Social Democrats and the National Coalition – and in the last TV debates the three leaders even openly stated that they had already said everything they had to say several times over (Pernaa 2007: 25). In this context, the PS got little media coverage and very little chance to influence the political agenda. However, the speaking skills of the party chairman (since 1997) Timo Soini, as well as his opinions which differed from the consensus of the Big Three, were positively noted by commentators (Saarikko 2007: 66).

Reading the manifesto, it is apparent that the 2007 PS campaign was based on a populist view of democracy (e.g. Canovan 1999; Mudde 2004; Taggart 2004). The manifesto speaks not of democracy (*demokratia*) but *kansanvalta*, literally 'rule by

the people', starting with its title 'For justice, well-being and rule by the people!' (*Oikeudenmukaisuuden, hyvinvoinnin ja kansanvallan puolesta!*). The 'people' whom the party sets out to defend refers to 'the ordinary people', especially 'the most forgotten ones: the elderly, the disabled and the homeless'. With this focus on the most downtrodden, the party positions itself at the margin, reinforced by calls for the marginalised to 'protest so they can feel it!' A boxed text in the party newspaper asserts that 'the heartless policies of the government weaken the basic security of people with small and medium incomes, pensioners, families with children, the sick, the handicapped, the unemployed, the precarious workers, students and single parents', and exclaims in large bold typeface: 'YOUR social security is in danger!' The orientation is to secure the votes of the most disadvantaged and incite protest from the margins of society – an attitude that later changes markedly.

'Corrupt cognac drinkers'

Notably, much more colourful language is used to describe those whom the party is opposed to – the elite – than is used to define 'the people'. Two elite groups are singled out in particular: politicians and bureaucrats on the one hand, and business elites on the other. The political elite is described as 'old parties', 'the other parties', 'the big parties' or 'the ruling parties'. Particularly targeted is the Centre Party, from which the predecessor of the PS, the SMP split off in 1959. This implies that the main voter base targeted at this point is lower and lower middle class conservative voters in the countryside and small towns. According to the manifesto, the old parties are 'cheating the pensioners' like they 'cheated the students', their representatives 'raised their own salaries' and voted to 'lower the taxes on the rich'. They are 'the parties in power who only remember the rich, the stock option predators and the EU big spenders'. They are teamed up with 'EU and domestic bureaucracy', and their policies support the second elite group, business elites, described as 'big money', 'rentiers, machine millionaires and cognac drinkers'. At this stage, the elites targeted are mainly national, even though the EU also gets its share of blame.

'Away with poverty!'

The populist discourse of the party in 2007 is supported by a left-wing economic discourse. Most stories in the party newspaper, including editorials, columns of the party leadership as well as quotations of parliamentary speeches by their three MPs, focus on economic justice issues. Headings include: 'Away with poverty', 'Where does Finland's money go?' and 'Child poverty is a national disgrace'. Party chairman Timo Soini is quoted as demanding that tax policy be the main theme of public debate leading up to the elections: 'I shall demand a change in the current line of overtaxing work and favouring lazy capital gains'.

At times, the left-wing rhetoric even uses terms that were common currency of the Finnish Communist Party in the 1970s: 'In many things, including income distribution, Finland has become an ultra-capitalist exploitation society. Examples

are corporate executives' exorbitant stock options and excessive salaries'. This is, again, clearly in the tradition of the party's predecessor, SMP, and dovetails with the party's description of its enemies, the elites, examined above.

Social justice is also focused on in the manifesto. It opens with a defence of the 'traditional Nordic welfare state model', with social and health services guaranteed for every citizen. The Nordic model is contrasted with an Anglo-Celtic liberal view of a minimal state, which is purportedly pushed by the political elite under EU command:

> […] it is wrong that a broad and functioning Finnish model of welfare state is being cut back due to various EU-led strategies […] Accepting poverty and exclusion as normal phenomena represents an Anglo-Celtic tradition of thought, in which the most important function of the state is only to guarantee the free functioning of markets.

Additionally, the manifesto demands better care for the elderly and pensioners, and particularly state support for those taking care of elderly family members at home and war veterans.

'Minimal EU'

The third main ideological tenet, nationalism, has been present in the party ideology since the beginning. It has become more important in the recent years, however, we will argue. In the 2007 manifesto, the unity and identity of the Finnish nation is already a typical justification for policies, including critique of the EU, which threatens the sovereignty of the Finnish people. The party has never advocated leaving the EU at once, but rather pressed to discard any federalist plans, restrict expansion and demanded that the union interfere in national legislation as little as possible – all in all advocating a 'minimal EU'.

> Finland's influence in the union has only declined. The only thing that has substantially increased is Finland's membership fee [...] we support any and all propositions to reduce the EU's influence on issues of its member countries. (p. 11)

This call for sovereignty[2] is present in the party newspaper too, but comes clearly second to economic issues. Anti-immigration opinion gets relatively little space in 2007. The summary of the electoral manifesto merely states:

> Finland must carry its share of the world's crises and receive refugees – to the extent that resources permit. Therefore, Finland must fast-track the refusal of unwarranted claims for asylum so that resources can be directed to helping real refugees, and so that attitudes towards refugees would not tighten unnecessarily.

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2.   The party tends to use the less formal term '*itsemääräämisoikeus*', literally 'the right to self-rule'.

More hostile arguments on immigration are brewing in the margins of these more careful statements, however. Towards the end of the manifesto it is stated that 'large-scale immigration' might 'threaten original Finnish culture' (p.20). The demands of the party's newly established youth organisation include 'valorisation of national culture – no to multiculturalism!' Ex-boxer and wrestler Tony Halme had already been elected MP in 2003 on a strongly anti-immigrant protest campaign, and this rhetoric will later become more central to the party's argumentation.

'Poverty populism' wins 4–5 per cent of the vote

In sum, the 2007 PS was populist, rooting for the 'common sense' of the 'common people' to fight oppression by corrupt elites. This was combined with left-wing rhetoric, defending the Nordic welfare state model, resisting poverty and advocating redistributive tax policy. Nationalist discourse is there, but appears to play second fiddle.

In the 2007 election, the party achieved 4.1 per cent of the vote and five out of 200 parliamentary seats. This was already a success for the party, as the previous parliamentary elections of 2003 had left them with only 1.6 per cent. It was noted as a victory both by the party itself, with leader Soini citing 'a historical breakthrough' in *Perussuomalainen* 3/2007, and by researchers (Borg and Paloheimo 2009b: 19). With only five seats, however, the party's influence was marginal.

Despite the growth slump of late 2008, the economic crisis was nowhere to be found in the fall 2008 municipal electoral manifesto of the party. On the contrary, the manifesto celebrates 'fast economic growth' and 'good economic standing', which make the 'ever-expanding poverty and exclusion', which runs alongside it, all the more lamentable. Some media accounts even claimed the party had taken a left-populist turn (Yle 6 October 2008). The results saw the party continue their gradual rise in success, receiving 5.4 per cent of the vote. Although party leader Soini received the second-most votes nationally for any candidate of any party, PS activists claimed the result 'demonstrates we are not a one-man show' (Yle 26 October 2008).

An economic crisis, buffered

Was Finland hit hard by the economic crisis, which began globally in full effect after the fall of Lehman Brothers in September 2008? Looking at the first indicator of an economic crisis used in this volume, Figure 4.2 shows that the dip in GDP growth in 2009 was dramatic, deeper than in any other country studied here, including the countries that experienced the worst crisis overall, such as Greece and Ireland (*see also* Figures 1.1–1.3 in the introduction). This is due to the fact that the Finnish economy is heavily dependent on cyclical export industries, producing investment goods such as paper mills and mining machinery, for which demand drops sharply when a global crisis hits. During this crisis, Finnish

Figure 4.2: Finns Party (PS) vote share, unemployment rate (12-month moving average) and GDP growth rate (compared to same quarter of previous year) (2003–13)
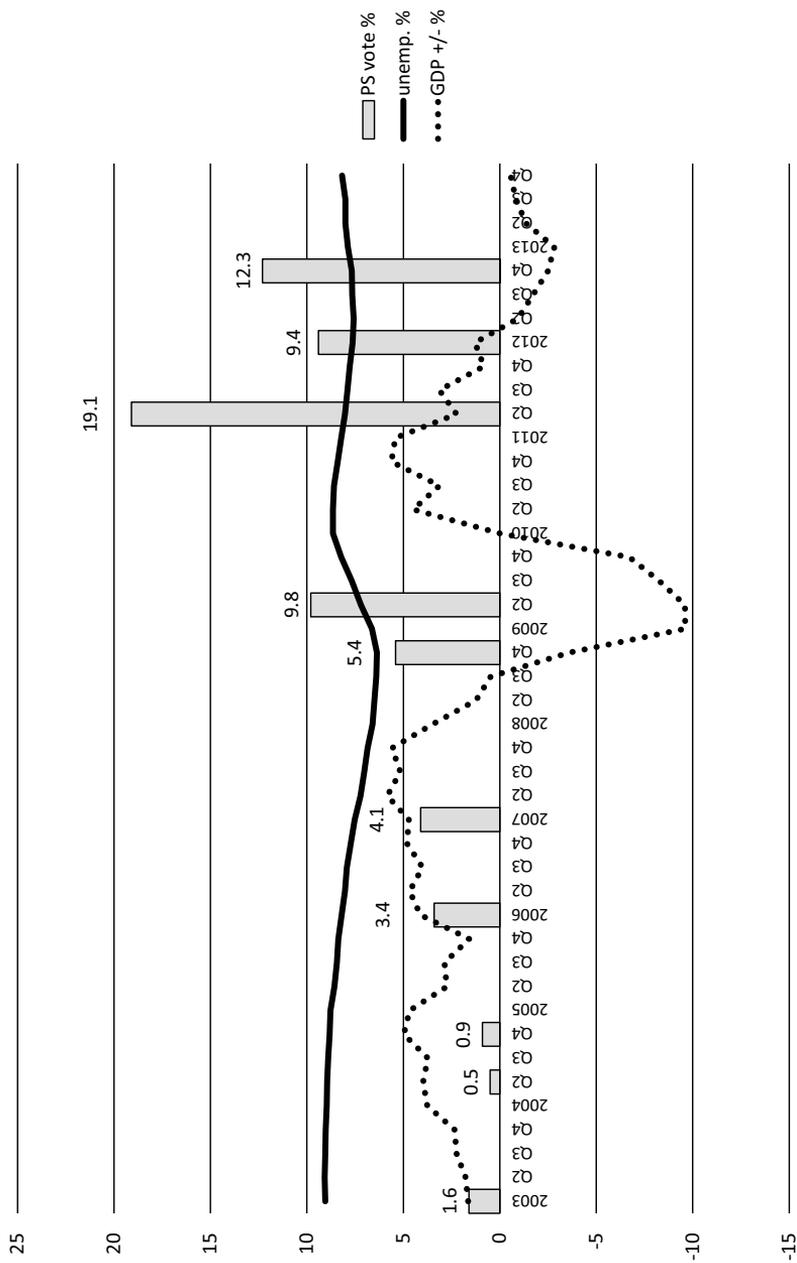
industrial exports slowed down more than in any other OECD country (Rouvinen and Ylä-Anttila 2010: 11).

However, looking at our second crisis indicator, the rise in unemployment caused by the GDP drop was less severe than elsewhere. In fact, average unemployment for the pre-crisis period (2001 Q1–2008 Q3) is slightly higher than for the crisis years (2008 Q4–2013 Q2)! The first explanation for this stability of the job market is that there was a widespread understanding among big businesses that recovery would be quick (EK 2014). This belief proved to be justified at first; by the end of 2010 GDP growth had been restored to the relatively high pre-crisis level of 5 per cent per annum, even if only briefly, before the second phase of the crisis in 2011. Secondly, the age structure of the Finnish population is strongly tilted towards the currently retiring generation, especially compared to Southern European countries. Businesses foreseeing the effect of the retirement boom were less likely to begin mass layoffs, fearing that in the near future when growth would pick up again, they were to face competition for scarce labour resources.

Turning to our third indicator of an economic crisis, the level of sovereign debt did rise as a consequence of the crisis, but the starting level, 33.9 per cent of GDP in 2008 (Eurostat 2014a), was very low. In fact, the rise in debt during the first years of the crisis was due to a conscious decision of the government to engage in deficit spending to stimulate the economy and to provide welfare benefits for those hit by the downturn, something that it could well afford at this stage (Alho 2010).

Taken together, the stability of the job market and the enduring capacity of the state to provide welfare benefits, buffered the impact of the economic crisis on Finnish voters. Therefore, the rise of populism in the Finnish case cannot be explained by the concrete effects of the economic crisis: rising unemployment and decreased capacity of the state to provide safety nets.

However, as Figure 4.2 shows, the PS's success does strikingly coincide with the crisis. Even though the party's 9.8 per cent result in the European Parliamentary elections 2009 was a significant success, it did not yet have much to do with the euro, and was very much a personal triumph of party leader Soini, the only candidate of the party to win a seat. The global economic downturn of 2009 had not yet resulted in much trouble for the common currency and thus did not attract attention to the PS's EU critique (Pernaa 2012b: 20). It was the revelation in early 2010 that Greece was on the brink of bankruptcy that did.

Crisis populism 2011: A right-wing success

The rise of populism was not a direct consequence of the economic crisis on Finnish voters. Rather, it was a consequence of a combination of a national political crisis and the discursive opportunity generated by the economic crisis elsewhere in Europe. These two most important political topics of the campaign spoke directly to two of the PS ideology's main tenets, populism and nationalism. First, their populist claim that the political elite is corrupt gained resonance with an election funding scandal implicating all major parties in 2008–11

(Kantola, Vesa and Hakala 2011). Second, their anti-EU nationalism was well served by the euro crisis, which dominated Finnish media during the campaign. Additionally, the party's nationalist rhetoric expanded towards a more overt anti-immigration stance, with new members of the party crucial for starting a debate on immigration. Content analyses show that these three issues were the most reported in the media before the election (Pernaa 2012a, 2012b).

First, the political crisis began when, during 2008, it was gradually revealed that a group of businessmen had funded the campaigns of certain business-friendly politicians, who had then supported permits for specific property development plans, including a shopping centre and a snowmobile factory. Even taxpayer money had been channelled through the state-owned gambling monopoly to fund the Centre Party's campaign. Several claims against Prime Minister Matti Vanhanen were investigated but he was not charged, eventually resigning for 'personal reasons' in 2010. Party loyalty in the 2011 elections was exceptionally low. Some 40 per cent of voters reported voting for a different party than before. Over half of PS voters stated that the election funding scandal affected their vote 'to some extent' or 'significantly' (Väliverronen 2011: 142). The Centre Party was hit hardest. A total of 72 per cent of survey respondents said that their view of the party had changed for the worse. The Centre Party was also the biggest loser of the elections, crashing from 24.7 per cent to 15.8 per cent. The PS, in contrast, was granted the opportunity to push its discourse of integrity against 'corrupt mainstream parties'. A total of 30 per cent of respondents said their view of the PS had changed for the better, the largest number for any party. The scandal provided them an exceptional public confirmation for their thesis of the mainstream parties being 'corrupt', enabling them to represent 'the honest common people'. These findings of media content analyses and voter surveys strongly suggest that the situation can be characterised as a political crisis. This despite the fact that the general indicators used in this book to characterise political crises – electoral volatility, trust in parliament and satisfaction with democracy – do not place Finland in crisis territory. The crisis may not have been as severe as in Hungary or Greece. But in the Finnish context characterised by an exceptionally stable party system and persistently high trust in parliament, it was interpreted as a severe crisis by the media, the voters, and the PS, which used it as a campaign weapon, as we will show below.

Second, the European economic crisis and bailouts dominated headlines in 2010–11 (Pernaa 2012b: 21–22). Whereas The PS had been fiercely critical of the EU since day one, the theme had lacked salience. However, the revelation that Greece's economy would need EU support, a proposition that would have to be accepted by the Finnish parliament, instantly made the issue top priority. Mainstream parties were tied to their commitment to the EU project (Railo 2012: 231), whereas the populist contenders, in opposition, had no such burden, and could denounce any aid to foreign countries. This position enjoyed broad support from the Finnish electorate (Pernaa 2012b: 20–22). The media dominance of the euro crisis (Railo and Välimäki 2012a: 35–36) was reflected in voting: it was quoted as the most significant issue by voters (Borg 2012b: 246), particularly for PS voters.

Third, the immigration debate was largely started by PS candidates, especially the councilman and blogger Jussi Halla-aho, a fierce critic of multiculturalism. Among the issues debated were the public costs of refugee policy, cultural integration and urban segregation, immigrant criminality and Roma travellers. Immigration was the most reported issue in *Helsingin Sanomat*, the largest daily newspaper, in early 2011 (Railo and Välimäki 2012a: 35–38). The issue was seen as 'owned' (Petrocik 1996) by the PS, with their candidates seen as competent on the issue (Railo and Välimäki 2012b: 132). However, it was also one of the most divisive and controversial issues, with several candidates accused of racism.

The fourth major campaign issue was the rise of the PS itself. The media eagerly reported on the party's rise in opinion polls, promising the most interesting elections in years, giving the party a publicity boost and spurring the phenomenon onwards (Railo and Välimäki 2012b: 127–130). This intensified after the polls of summer 2010 indicated over 10 per cent for the rising party, as the Greece bailout furor was raging (Pernaa 2012b: 21).

In the PS manifesto 2011, '*Best suited for a Finn*' (*Suomalaiselle sopivin*, PS 2011), the first thing to note is its length of sixty-seven pages. It is clearly not written only for voters, but also for party activists themselves: to define, specify and record the growing party's ideology in detail. Populism is clearly the main tenet of this manifesto. While populism in 2007 was implicit, the 2011 manifesto offers a precise definition for the word. The PS is now a self-proclaimed populist party: 'The Finns Party is for a populist model of democracy, which means one based on the will of the people, instead of an elitist, that is, bureaucratic model of democracy' (p.6).

The 'populist view of democracy' is defined at length – perhaps not surprising in the light of the fact that Vesa-Matti Saarakkala, leading the manifesto working group, holds a BA in politics, and party chairman Timo Soini obtained his MA in politics with a dissertation on populism. The party agrees with the scholarly view that populism is combined with other elements: 'Populism is not a global ideology like socialism and capitalism, but always bound to a particular culture and national character' (p.7). In the 2011 manifesto, it is most clearly intertwined with nationalism.

'Democracy needs a nation'

In 2007, the PS's flavour of populism was mostly seasoned by what we have called the second tenet of their ideology – a left-wing social justice discourse – denouncing 'heartless policies' towards the poor, while 'the people', defended by the party, were equated with the disadvantaged. This placed the party at the margins. In 2011, this left-wing discourse is moderated, and what we have described as the third tenet of its ideology, nationalism, is now tightly connected to the populist core. This permits the party to portray itself as the defender of not only the poor, but the entire Finnish people.

What the party opposes now are not only the national elites, but increasingly other nations: the Greek and the Portuguese who have allegedly mismanaged their finances and do not 'deserve' the Finnish bailout money, as well as immigrants who do not 'deserve' Finnish jobs or social security, and whose presence is incompatible with the idea of the Finnish people deciding about its own affairs.

> The Finns Party wants to defend the popular sovereignty of Finns, which means that the people and the people only, which constitutes its own nation, separate from other nations, has an eternal and unlimited right to always freely and independently decide about all of its own issues. (p.7)

In the principles section of the manifesto, the key concept is '*kansanvalta*'. As already pointed out, this literally means 'rule by the people'. The party prefers the term to '*demokratia*', perhaps because of the possibility to use it interchangeably with 'populism'. As in the Finnish language, the word '*kansa*' refers to both 'people' and 'nation', the concept of '*kansanvalta*' enables the party to portray nationalism as necessary for true democracy. Their nationalist conception of democracy is 'rule by the nation' just as much as 'rule by the people'. The nation is equivalent to the people, which must be the sovereign ruler – there can be no democracy other than nationalist populist democracy. This is consistent with Mudde's (2007: 19) notion of nativism – the belief that the state primarily 'belongs' to its native group – as a core concept of 'populist radical right' parties. Mudde also notes that '[t]he step from 'the nation' to 'the people' is easily taken, and the distinction between the two is often far from clear' (2004: 549). In Finnish, this is all the more true. The nation-people of the PS's populism is a 'community' with 'shared values and norms'. 'Community is very much based on shared values and norms, which allow for the development of community into a society [...] Democracy is rule by the people, and is not possible without a nation'.

Both other nations, with their distinctive national cultures, and the domestic political elite, are posited as 'constitutive outsiders' or 'others' to this sovereign nation-people (e.g. Laclau 2005a: 73–83). 'Certain original ingredients, such as language, customs, art, conceptions of justice, nature, myths and beliefs affect the identity of each nation. These are unique to each nation, which exactly makes for diversity and richness' (p.8).

This is a typical argument of the contemporary radical right, whether labelled 'ethno-pluralism' (Spektorowski 2003), 'identitarianism' (Betz and Johnson 2004), 'cultural racism' (Wren 2001) or 'differentialist racism' (Taguieff 1993). It opposes immigration and multiculturalism by arguing that a plurality of cultures is best preserved by preventing them from mixing. Instead of the category of 'race' of traditional racism, the concept of 'culture' is used, but cultures are defined similarly to races, as separate and monolithic natural entities. The right of other cultures to exist is acknowledged, but mixing of cultures denied. This makes it possible to defend exclusionary policy by a seemingly 'liberal' justification, diversity of cultures.

'Cheaters and liars of the Eurozone'

The principle of nationalist populism is also used to ground the party's opposition to the EU. In their populist version of democracy, based on the 'general will' of a nation-people, democratic governance on a European scale is impossible.

> To assume that the EU could develop into a system of popular rule […] we would also need to assume that Europeans could in the long run become a unified people. The Finns Party believes this to be utter madness. (p.32)

The EU is illegitimate because it is supranational, not 'international'. On this basis, the party does not advocate dismantling the EU, but strongly limiting its competencies.

> The Finns Party advocates cooperation between governments of independent nation-states. Our ultimate goal is to regain power from the EU back to nation-states. […] We want a better EU through having less EU. (p.32)

Regarding the euro crisis, the manifesto is indirect and formal and does not mention Greece or Portugal, likely because it does not seem to be addressed to the voters, but rather to the party organisation itself. In other party communication, however, the euro crisis is everywhere. Chairman Soini demands on TV that Finland 'must stop shoveling money under the palm trees' in Southern Europe, a phrase that begins a life of its own. In his blog entry titled 'Greece', he writes: 'You lied and cheated to get into the Eurozone [...] You knew you were cheating. What does it tell about the EU if they, indeed, did not notice?' Vice-chair Saarakkala links the more abstract criticism of EU democracy with the Union's current financial problems:

> Democracy can never be supranational, which means that the EU is always anti-democratic. This has led, especially in the countries using the Euro, to the final erosion of political morality, because in the EU system, those who should be responsible for their decisions are not. Instead, the innocent, like the Finns, are made to pay for the silliness of the others.

This rhetoric fell on fertile ground. Voter surveys showed that the euro crisis was the most important issue for voters (Borg 2012b: 246), especially PS voters. Exploiting the discursive opportunity created by the euro crisis was crucial to their success in 2011.

'Somali welfare parasites'

The categorisation of 'populist radical right' has been debatable in the case of the PS (Arter 2010; Koivulaakso, Brunila and Andersson 2012). However, an anti-immigration bloc entered the PS in full effect for the 2011 elections and plays an ever larger role, lending more credence to such a classification.

The immigration-focused politicians tend also to take notably right-wing (libertarian) economic stances (Ylä-Anttila 2012; 2014).

The central figure of the anti-immigration politicians is blogger Jussi Halla-aho, who had already been a candidate (without party membership) in 2007, but did not get exposure in party materials. After fame in mainstream media in 2008 as the main critic of immigration policy, he joined the party and got to publish his own piece in the party paper. His rhetoric here is very careful compared to some of his blog remarks, the latter including suggestions that Somali immigrants come to Finland to 'casually rob passers-by' and 'to live as welfare parasites' – for which he was convicted for racist agitation in 2009. He and other new party members belong to nationalist organisations such as Suomen Sisu, which opposes the 'unnatural mixing of peoples' (Suomen Sisu principles 2006).

Such radical positions are not present in official party material. However, the theme of restricting immigration occupies significantly more space in 2011, as anti-immigration candidates have joined the party. Vesa-Matti Saarakkala chairs the party's manifesto committee but is also one of the signatories of an unofficial anti-immigration manifesto and a 'resignation from the ideology of multiculturalism', signed by thirteen PS candidates. Many candidates not previously identified with anti-immigration opinions have now begun to talk about the issue. Ten of the forty candidates presented in the election issue of the party newspaper list immigration as one of their main themes. The long-time editor of the paper now laments:

> The Greens and the Swedish People's Party are the main culprits for the fact that we now get 26,000 immigrants every year to generate wealth (for the rich). Taxpayers' money is spent on uniting immigrant families, even for their plane tickets. The poor of our own country have been forgotten and their constitutional rights trampled on.

The party's five parliamentarians issued a statement to the media asserting that 'Finland must not become the place to store asylum seekers whose applications have been deemed unfounded by other countries', adding that 'in the recent weeks and days big crowds of such asylum seekers have entered Finland. A news-like item in the paper cites a prison guard saying that 'Finnish prisons are no deterrent for foreign thieves, part of whom openly brag that a Finnish prison is like a five-star hotel in their own country'. Another story presents a model immigrant whom the party warmly welcomes to Finland: Igor is Ingrian (from the area that Finland lost to Russia in the Second World War), has a Finnish surname and Finnish roots, and is presented as clearly fitting Finland culturally. He is also a small entrepreneur who works hard 'but still can't even afford a car and only makes 1,000–1,500 euros per month'.

We have argued that there is a shift from populism 'thickened' by a left-wing social justice discourse to populism 'thickened' by anti-EU and anti-immigration nationalism within the PS. It must be noted that the left-wing discourse has not disappeared completely. A major section of the 2011 manifesto calls for the

upkeep of a 'traditional Nordic welfare state' with no major privatisations or cuts (pp.11–12). This is to defend the least well off and support income equality, but also to support 'the unity of the people' (pp.46–47). However, living on benefits should not be allowed and the propensity for work should always be rewarded (p.22). 'Ordinary Finns' stand against 'big capital and international finance' (p.44):

> The Finns Party believes that big capital and international finance must pay for the financial crisis, not ordinary Finns. […] We must look into the possibility to employ taxes on financial transactions, currency transactions, banks and credit institutions. (pp.44–45)

Despite their 2011 landslide victory, the party excluded itself from government negotiations by sticking to its policy of unconditionally rejecting any euro bailouts. This position was untenable for the mainstream parties committed to EU cooperation, leading to a rainbow coalition of Conservatives and Social Democrats with four smaller parties, dubbed the 'six-pack'.

2012–14 and beyond

Even though PS voters are more focused on the party leader than other voters (Kestilä-Kekkonen and Söderlund 2014), in the presidential elections 2012 Soini, as PS candidate, failed to muster support even remotely comparable to the party's recent success. He only received 9.4 per cent. As presidential elections are naturally candidate-focused, neither the protest against the 'old parties', nor opposition to EU or immigration were on the agenda here. Moderate right-wing candidate Sauli Niinistö carried the election by a wide margin, predictable after his narrow loss six years before.

A similar story can be told about the municipal elections of October 2012, where the discussion largely revolved around issues of an administrative and economic nature, lacking any serious potential for large-scale protest. The PS tried to play the anti-EU card again. Their manifesto depicts an old car, number plate FIN-12, representing Finland. Its roof is stacked with boxes, a burden weighing it down, labelled 'developmental aid', 'euro bailouts', 'Greece loans', 'EU membership fees', and 'Green directives'. The party accused previous governments of 'committing Finland to saving foreign big banks' and assert that 'to fund these obligations, the government is cutting funding for municipalities'. The PS, in contrast, is for local democracy and local identities: 'The foundation of a municipality is a home region, where its people want to live and work'. The party obtained 12.3 per cent, not much when compared to the 19.1 per cent in the general election, but still a significant increase from their previous municipal result of 5.4 per cent. EU-critique proved difficult to exploit at the local level.

A look at the party youth newspaper shows a move further towards the right, now also in terms of economic policy. For example, in March 2013, the youth chairman Simon Elo writes that 'the Finns Party youth must drive a tax rebellion into the party!' This 'tax rebellion' refers to 'redefining' the welfare state by 'cutting public

spending where we can', lowering corporate tax, and 'gradually lowering taxes for the middle class'. This, he states, would 'fit our national-liberalist economic policy perfectly'. For April 2013, they invited libertarian youth politician Henri Heikkinen as columnist, advocating a decentralisation of the school system to help top achievers to succeed.

The party have also founded a think tank, 'Suomen Perusta' (Foundation for Finland), with Simo Grönroos as its manager – a 29-year old member of the nationalist organisation *Suomen Sisu*, supporter of the anti-multiculturalist MP Jussi Halla-aho, and a fan of United States Republican politicians Ron Paul and Patrick Buchanan, according to his website. The think tank produced a report in February 2014 advocating privatisation of municipal services, in contrast with the mainstream party policy. The report also called to stop all developmental aid and 'humanitarian immigration' and for drastic cuts of social benefits, particularly for two groups: immigrants and drug abusers. Socially conservative, economically libertarian – this seems to be the way forward for the new generation of the party. And the youth wing is gaining support from current members of parliament. In February 2014, Teuvo Hakkarainen, an older MP known for racist remarks, somewhat surprisingly revealed his own suggestions for public-sector cutbacks. 'The public sector will burst like a toad filled with water', he claimed, demanding that '[it] must be cut back with a heavy hand, cut the administration, cut the bureaucracy' (*Verkkouutiset* 27 February 2014). The party's two MEPs elected in 2014, Jussi Halla-aho and Sampo Terho, both represent the party's right wing, also regarding economic policy. After negotiations, they joined the European Conservatives and Reformists Group (ECR), known as the group of the Conservative Party of the United Kingdom, together with the MEPs of the Danish People's Party (DFP).

The party owes it success in 2011 largely to floating voters (Arter and Kestilä-Kekkonen 2014), creating a difficult starting point for lasting support (Borg 2012a: 209). Indeed, its poll success has declined in anticipation of the April 2015 general election (HS 18 August 2014), but it still is the third largest party in the polls. For the time being, the party seems to have established its position as a mainstream player (Arter and Kestilä-Kekkonen 2014), catering to a populist constituency that had long existed (Kestilä 2006).

Conclusion: Populism can exploit crisis discourse

We have argued that the PS ideology can be analysed via three tenets: 1) the populist defence of the common people against corrupt elites, 2) a left-populist defence of the welfare state against market-led policies promoted by EU and national elites and 3) a nationalist defence of the sovereignty and unity of the Finnish people against federalist tendencies of the EU and immigration. Populist democracy, or '*kansanvalta*' (rule by the people), as the party calls it, takes as its input the unfiltered general will of the common people, who know in their hearts what is right. Politics is a matter of morality and conscience, of right and wrong, not of administration and bureaucracy. According to the PS, for this general will to emerge, the democratic unit needs to be consistent with the nation. Constitutive

outsiders ('others') such as immigrants and elites, both domestic and European, must be excluded, or democracy cannot function.

The focus of the party, however, has turned from the second tenet above (social justice) to the third (national sovereignty and unity). The party has shifted from opposing the domestic elite – which was the bread and butter of SMP, the PS's predecessor (1959–95) – to opposing foreign threats, namely the EU and immigration. This also means that the definition of 'the people' has shifted from the disadvantaged to all (ethnic) Finns, that is, from people as class to people as nation. While Mudde (2004: 549) correctly observes that '[t]oday, populism is again mainly associated with the (radical) right', because of the conflation of the 'people' of populism with the nation; we have argued that until the economic crisis, the PS's 'people' was largely based on class. However, the move from agrarian populism of the periphery towards radical right populism helped the party to gain massively at a time of political and moral crisis – with the established parties accused of corruption and Southern EU countries accused of immoral economic policy. This brings the PS ideology more in line with the mainstream of current European radical right populist parties and brings it out of the margins, facilitating its more widespread success. Indeed, it is converging with the other Nordic populist parties, despite its agrarian populist roots, as argued by Jungar and Jupskås (2014).

To conclude, looking at economic indicators, the crisis hit Finland's economy hard particularly due to the composition of its industry, but due to other structural factors (the population's age structure and the state's strong economy), it was not reflected dramatically in the everyday lives of Finns. Despite this, the Finnish polity witnessed an unprecedented populist success. This was fuelled by the discursive opportunity the crisis offered for blaming other EU countries on moral and economic grounds.

Thus, the first guiding hypothesis (H1) of this volume, that economic crisis intensifies populism-*qua*-discourse, gains support in the Finnish case, but only with very specific qualifications: it was not the state of the Finnish economy but the broader European situation that served populist success, by way of creating discursive opportunities. As for the second hypothesis (H2), that political crises also intensify populism, we must again add qualifiers. The Finnish populist mobilisation was indeed partly a reaction to a corruption scandal. Nevertheless, in the context of a remarkably stable polity, even a political crisis deemed as severe by the media, academia, parties and voters, might not be visible in simple indicators of volatility or trust. The third hypothesis (H3), of a combination of economic and political crises being particularly conducive for populism, is also supported by our results, but again with the country-specific qualifications outlined above. As for populists toning down their populism when in power (H4), the Finnish case does not apply, since the only party that can be identified as populist has always been in opposition.

These findings suggest that simple structural explanations and indicators only go so far in explaining populism – cultural and economic specificities are equally important. It is interpretations of crisis that matter, not just crisis in numbers.

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Contesting Gender Equality Politics in Finland: The Finns Party Effect

Tuukka Ylä-Anttila and Eeva Luhtakallio

THE FINNS PARTY AND FINNISH EQUALITY POLITICS

What are the consequences of far-right electoral success in a country with a strong tradition of equality politics? In this chapter, we juxtapose the politics of gender advanced by the candidates and party publications of the Finns Party with Finnish equality politics.

The right-wing populist Finns Party[1] (*Perussuomalaiset* [PS]) broke through in the 2011 Finnish parliamentary elections, more than quadrupling its share of votes (19.1 %); it continued to do relatively well in the 2012 municipal elections (12.3 %), and entered government following the 2015 parliamentary elections with a strong result of 18.2 %. Men are over-represented in the party's electorate (Grönlund and Westinen 2012, 159), as is common with European radical right populist parties (Mudde 2007, 111–112). The gender repartition of candidates is also strongly

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male-dominated: 66.8 % in the 2011 parliamentary elections, 76.7 % in the 2012 municipal elections, and 64.7 % in the 2015 parliamentary elections (Statistics Finland 2011, 2012, 2015). In the 2011 and 2012 elections, the overall percentage of female candidates dropped. For the municipal elections, this was the first time since the 1950s (Holli et al. 2007, 19–23). This is significant in the Finnish context, where a strong equality discourse has marked party politics since the 1970s. The Finns Party's linked discourses on nationalism and gender challenge the status quo on gender equality and create a counter-trend to recent developments in other parties, both quantitatively and qualitatively (see also Kantola and Saari 2012).

In this chapter, we first present an overview of the rise of the party and the context of the Finnish equality discourse. We then analyse two facets of the Finns Party's rise: the gender gap and the gender discourse. We compare the arguments of the party's male and female candidates on various policy issues, and present a view of the party's gender politics by analysing its publications. The comparative analysis finds that the party's left-populist elements—stressing social justice and poverty reduction—are more typical of female candidates, while the far-right candidates are mostly men. The analysis of the party's gender politics, in turn, indicates that the party strongly challenges prevailing Finnish conceptions of gender equality.

The Rise of the Finns Party

The Finns Party breakthrough in the 2011 elections was largely a protest against a stagnant political sphere, which had been dominated by three mainstream parties for decades. The euro crisis and a political corruption scandal fuelled the debate; these were served to the Finns Party as if on a silver platter right before the election (Arter 2010; Borg 2012; Mattila and Sundberg 2012; Pernaa 2012; Ylä-Anttila and Ylä-Anttila 2015). The growing support for the party also made it a credible alternative to voice objections to immigration, mobilized in particular by a lively online anti-immigration movement. The party was able to mobilize previous non-voters while also attracting voters away from mainstream parties. The Finns Party voters come from all societal classes, but especially from the working class. One of the most notable characteristics of their voter base, however, is its male dominance (Borg 2012; Ylä-Anttila 2012, 2014).

The argument that populism is a backlash against stagnant politics (Canovan 1999; Taggart 2004) fits the Finnish situation rather well. This

is not to say that the PS vote could be brushed off as 'just a protest' without political content: it is undoubtedly ideological (Eatwell 2003, 51–52; Kestilä 2006). Anti-elitism and conservatism, frustration with politics in general, and anti-EU and anti-immigrant sentiments in particular were mobilized when the opportunity arose. One feature of the Finns Party's conservative ideology is that is represents an 'alternative' to the dominant gender equality politics. Yet, as our analysis will show, the relationship between the Finns Party and the 'hegemonic gender equality discourse' detected in Finnish politics (Holli 2003) is more complex than it may seem. We argue that the Finns Party is under strong pressure to include women, like many populist parties (see Niemi and Parkkinen 2012), while still emphasizing traditional gender roles. First, however, we will consider the context of Finnish equality politics.

Gender and Equality in Finnish Politics

The Finnish party system and gender equality politics are historically intertwined; the two entered the public sphere nearly in step. Finland was the first European country to grant women the right to vote in parliamentary elections in 1906, followed by municipal elections in 1917. The parliamentary elections in 1907 made Finland the first country in the world to have women MPs (Ministry of Justice 2007, 13). Nevertheless, the early elections and parliaments were largely the domain of men. As late as 1954, only 15.2 % of candidates were women. This gradually increased to 41.2 % in 1991, but dropped slightly to 39.0 % in 2011, together with the rise of the Finns Party (Statistics Finland 2003a, b, 2007, 2011).

While the early developments of the 1900s did not render women's political representation equal to men's (Holli and Kantola 2005, 62), a programme for gender equality in political representation is inherent to the history of Finnish party politics. It has become customary to describe this feature through the concept of *state feminism*, meaning the plethora of policy issues specifically aimed at improving the gender equality that was included in the Finnish welfare state project, and the strong representation of the women's movement within party politics and state structures (see Kettunen 2008, 128–171; Holli and Kantola 2005, 2007), as illustrated by the importance of strong and independent women's associations within political parties. All major Finnish parties have a women's association, and these associations are all members of the umbrella organization 'Women's Associations in Cooperation' (Naisjärjestöt yhteistyössä ry [NYTKIS]).

NYTKIS is a good example of the wide cross-party cooperation between women's party associations and other civil society actors, characteristic of the Finnish field of gender equality politics, and leading to a certain level of consensus in major equality issues (Kantola and Saari 2012, 2, 7). This consensus has been effective in realizing several policies that were considered 'advanced' in terms of gender equality at the time, such as day care for children and a relatively long maternity leave as subjective rights. The consensual cooperation has also established a 'hegemonic' gender equality discourse, providing a means of 'equality education' for newcomers in the field (ibid.).

However, developments in recent decades have revealed that the Finnish style of equality politics is afflicted by an implementation problem: despite lengthy efforts and comprehensive legislation, essential equality indicators such as equal pay, gendered violence, or shared parental leave show stagnation rather than strong progress (Holli and Kantola 2007). The Finnish political sphere has a dual take on gender: on the one hand, gender equality has the status of a hegemonic discourse; on the other hand, implementation of equality policies falls short on multiple levels of governance. Gender discrimination is a difficult issue to discuss, as it tends to provoke deliberate underestimation or even hostile denial (Holli 2003, 2012; Holli et al. 2007; Luhtakallio 2012). This dualism also figures in the Finns Party discourse, as we will show.

The stagnation of contemporary equality politics is shown in women's political representation: the percentage of female electoral candidates began to stagnate in the 1990s and even drop slightly in the 2010s, coinciding with the electoral gains of the Finns Party. The party had more than doubled its number of candidates since the municipal elections of 2008, and 76.7 % of its candidates were men (Statistics Finland 2012). This overrepresentation of men marks a clear difference from other parties (Fig. 1), especially the Greens, who represent an opposition to the Finns Party on almost any issue (Grönlund and Westinen 2012, 183).

The elections of 2011 marked a step towards reversing the trend of women as more active voters due to an exceptionally strong mobilization of male voters, as Fig. 2 shows. This is partly explained by the Finns Party (Grönlund and Westinen 2012, 159), which was particularly successful in mobilizing men who did not previously vote (Borg 2012, 196).

Finnish equality policies and legislation are also facing recurrent problems. Studies on implementation of the gender quota law (Holli et al. 2006) show that attempts to circumvent the law are regular, and civil servants have a tendency to 'forget' to implement it (Holli et al. 2006;
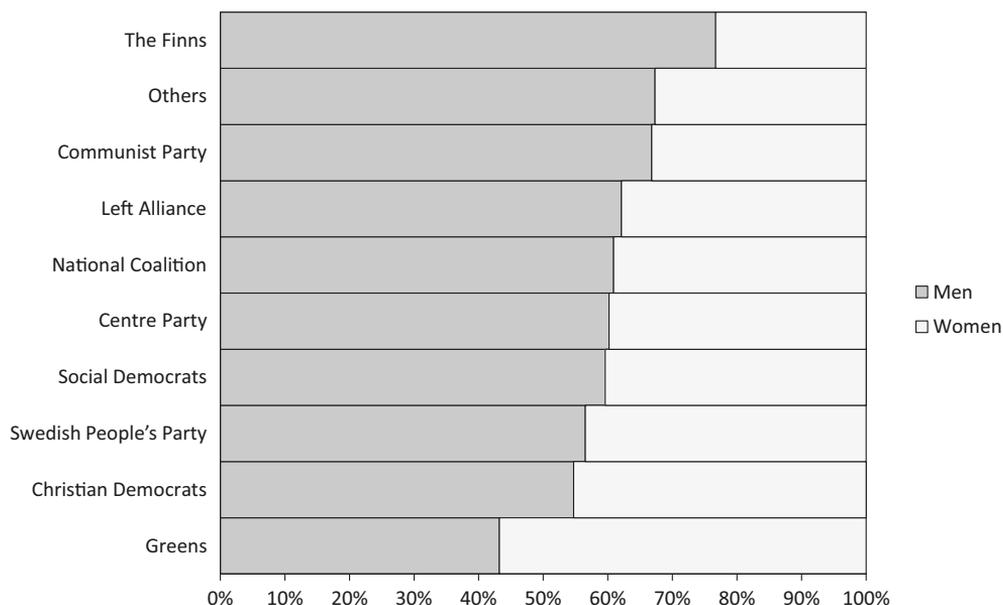
Fig. 1 Gender distribution of candidates by party in Finnish municipal elections 2012 (Statistics Finland 2012)

Holli 2011). A survey (Parviainen 2006, 300–302) found that 54 % of male respondents were ready to abolish the quota law, whereas 74 % of women felt it was a necessary measure. The resistance against quotas was particularly strong among male representatives of right-wing parties.

Nousiainen et al. (2013) suggest that a concept of equality that stresses quantitative 'factual' equality, and disregards more complex intersections of power and equality policies, creates conditions for calling into question the legitimacy of equality measures, regardless of their legal status. At least since the 1980s, Finnish equality struggles have been marked by recurrent attempts to deny the existence of gender discrimination (e.g. Holli et al. 2006, 2007; Holli 2011). Furthermore, Kantola and Saari (2012) argue that the emphasis on numerical claims regarding, for example, the representation of genders in the quota law, the 'women's euro is 80 cents' argument in equal pay debates, or the statistics of shelter visits and police intervention in gendered violence, enables problems underlying these phenomena to be concealed along with sources of gender discrimination in cultural practices and political power struggles. In their view, reducing equality to technical arguments about numbers and statistics is a sign of a recent turn towards conservative and right-wing thinking in the Finnish gender equality discourse (ibid.).

Fig. 2 Turnout (%) in Finnish parliamentary elections by gender, 1962–2011 (Statistics Finland 2007, 2011)

In sum, it seems that the new nationalist movement in Finnish politics is led by men and is connected with counter-arguments against the earlier gender equality politics. The hegemonic nature of the discourse on 'already achieved' gender equality, however, much of a fiction it may be, makes it a fruitful ground for 'fresh questioning' that undermines the legitimacy of equality policies. Next, we will examine how the Finns Party gender politics takes shape in this context.

The Finns Party Gender Gap

What does the male dominance of the Finns Party mean for its politics? Does the political argumentation of Finns Party men differ from that of Finns Party women? We examine this by analysing male and female Finns Party candidates' arguments in the 2011 parliamentary elections. The dataset we use is the *Helsingin Sanomat* Voting Advice Application (HS VAA), a website set up by the largest daily newspaper in Finland, designed to facilitate voters' decisions by a political questionnaire. VAA's have become very popular among voters in Finland (Mykkänen 2011, 17).

The candidates who responded to the questionnaire also posted free-text comments on the questions, which were released, with the multiple-choice answers, as Open Data (Helsingin Sanomat (HS), 6 April 2011). This dataset offers a substantial body of non-moderated text produced by candidates, especially valuable for studying a populist party that typically accuses the media of misrepresenting their opinions. In this dataset, 202 (84.9 %) out of a total of 238 PS candidates posted written comments. Three questions were selected for analysis, representing left–right and liberal–conservative ideological cleavages. These were questions about income equality, immigration policy, and gay adoption rights, constituting a text dataset of roughly 15,000 words. These texts were qualitatively analysed, coded for recurring arguments and compared by gender.

LEFT-WING WOMEN, RIGHT-WING MEN

In the question on income equality—'Since the mid-1990s, income inequality has increased rapidly. How would you respond to this?'—Finns Party responses predominantly called for levelling income cleavages on the basis of social justice, an argument typical of the political left. Two populist subcategories of this argument were, first, appealing to the injustice experienced by disadvantaged people, and second, condemning the unjust position of elites. Some saw income equality as a matter of national unity, while others still argued, in right-wing fashion, that income cleavages are in fact necessary to encourage competition and reward achievement (Table 1).

Comparing respondents by gender, women argued more often for levelling of income cleavages to achieve social justice, but a difference is

Table 1 Arguments by gender for question on income equality[a]

	Women (N = 48)	Men (N = 98)	Difference (Women − Men)
Social justice	56 %	39 %	17 %*
Poverty reduction	42 %	19 %	22 %**
Anti-elitism	17 %	18 %	−2 %
Unity of the people	8 %	10 %	−2 %
Economic competition	0 %	13 %	−13 %*

[a]Some respondents voiced several arguments, which is why the sum of percentages may be more or less than 100 %. **$p < 0.01$; *$p < 0.05$ based on a Pearson's chi-squared test (two-sided tests)

especially evident in those responses that specifically referenced the distress of the poor; this was more than twice as common among female respondents. 'The differences in income between the highest earners and the poorest, the "true underclass", are huge. […] Income differences invoke despair and pessimism in the poorest part of the people. […] the poor cannot afford anything but the most necessary of necessities' (F, 35).[2]

In the anti-elitist and the nationalist 'unity of the people' argument, there was no gender gap. However, only men used the right-wing argument that income cleavages have positive effects. 'I don't see differences in incomes as a signal of injustice as such. The problem is not that some earn plenty […] I believe it is good that a person can get wealthy by honest work […] This should not be prevented by unduly hard taxation' (M, 39).

The VAA also contained another question on economic redistribution: whether child benefits should be paid universally or according to income. Here, women again stressed poverty relief, while some men argued that child benefits are a 'reward' for mothers for rearing children to uphold the vitality of the nation.

Minority Rights: Mixed Messages of (In)tolerance

The second question we analysed dealt with immigration policy: 'During the parliamentary term 2007–2011, immigration policy was tightened by several separate decisions. Do you feel that Finland's current immigration policy is too strict, agreeable, or too slack?' Here, the respondents most often argued in favour of selective immigration that would be economically beneficial for Finland, typically in the form of 'employment-based immigration', rating immigrants on the basis of job qualifications. Other recurring arguments included a discursive connection of immigration with crime, demanding the deportation of criminal immigrants. A simple 'Finns first' argument was that Finnish politics should focus on the interests of (ethnic) Finns, and an anti-multiculturalist argument was that while a diversity of cultural identities is positive in principle, cultures should be protected from mixing (see, e.g. Betz and Johnson 2004, 316–320) (Table 2).

Most notably, we observed the lack of any significant differences. All of the categories identified are uniformly supported by both genders. Male and female respondents are equally critical of Finnish immigration policy and often advocate selective immigration, where immigrants would

Table 2   Arguments by gender for question on immigration policy

	Women (N = 37)	Men (N = 86)	Difference (Women − Men)
Calculation of (economic) effects of immigration	35 %	33 %	2 %
Immigrant criminals	11 %	9 %	2 %
Finns first	11 %	7 %	4 %
Anti-multiculturalism	8 %	5 %	3 %

be evaluated for their potential contribution to the Finnish economy. 'Finland needs to be open to immigration that is neutral or beneficial in quality. We need to be strict when effects are negative […] Finland cannot be the social office for the whole world […] I would employ a citizenship test, a language test and a scoring system' (M, 24).

The final question analysed addressed adoption rights for gay couples: 'The Parliament legalized intra-family adoption for gay and lesbian couples in 2009. Should gay and lesbian couples have the right to adoption in general?' While the most common and repeated argument—'a child has a right to a mother and a father'—showed no gender gap, the argument of 'normality' of heterosexuality and the 'abnormality' of gay couples did. Men used this argument three times as often as women. 'Every child has a biological father and mother. According to my view, an adoption family should attempt to mimic this biologically "normal" arrangement, thus no one should have two mothers or two fathers' (M, 39).

Women, on the other hand, argued in favour of equal adoption rights for homo- and heterosexual couples roughly twice as often as men, often adding that gender or orientation does not matter as long as the child is cared for. 'A good father or mother is just that, even if the child is not their own. Being homosexual doesn't reduce the ability to be a parent. […] Homosexuals have fought a difficult battle to become accepted: that's a school [that] undoubtedly gives one an outlook on things different from narrow-minded intolerance' (F, 43).

Finally, the conservative Christian 'homosexuality is sin' argument was mentioned by a handful of men (Table 3).

In sum, female Finns Party respondents expressed left-wing views on social justice, and poverty reduction in particular, more often than men. In contrast, only men used the right-wing argument that income

Table 3   Arguments by gender for question on homosexual adoption rights[a]

	Women (N = 40)	Men (N = 84)	Difference (Women−Men)
Child has a right to a mother and a father	25 %	26 %	−1 %
Homosexuality is abnormal	10 %	31 %	**−21 %***
Equal rights	30 %	14 %	**16 %***
Homosexuality is sin	0 %	6 %	**−6 %***

[a]**$** p < 0.01$; **$*$** $p < 0.05$ based on a Pearson's chi-squared test (two-sided tests)

cleavages enhance economic competition. The majority of both male and female candidates opposed immigration, and justified this with economic or cultural arguments or by connecting immigration with crime (see, e.g. Eatwell 2003; Hainsworth 2008; Mudde 2007). On the issue of gay adoption rights, the women of the party are more liberal. This shows that the connection between gender and far-right attitudes matters for the party: its hard-line right-wing policy seems partly to be a product of its male majority.

THE FINNS PARTY GENDER DISCOURSE

From the gender gap, we now turn to the gender discourse the party puts forward. We analysed how gender and equality politics figure in texts aimed both at supporters and at the wider public: the public material of the Finns Party women's organization, the party's electoral manifestos and the party magazine. To match the above analysis of the 2011 VAA, we chose the electoral manifesto of the 2011 parliamentary elections and volumes 2011 and 2012 of the party magazine *Perussuomalainen*.[3]

'WOMEN, NOT FEMINISTS'

The women's organizations of all Finnish mainstream parties (The National Coalition, the Social Democrats, the Centre Party, the Green League, the Left Alliance, the Swedish People's Party and the Christian Democrats) state their mission in very similar terms, being mainly concerned with advancing gender equality in politics and in society. On the websites of all organizations except the Finns Party, the first paragraph of

the introduction contains the terms 'gender equality' or 'feminism'. The stated *raison d'être* of the Finns Party Women diverges from this: 'The goal of the women's organization is to gather together on a Christian social basis, and in cooperation with the party, those population groups whose interests and socially, economically and societally equal status have not been justly taken care of' (Finns Party Women 2012).

Only after listing seven population groups in need of 'more equality', including families, pensioners and the unemployed, none of which are specified in terms of gender, the website portrays five missions that aim at the aforementioned goal: 'creating a national network of women', 'promoting women's equality and general economic and social benefits', 'advancing the value of women's work in the contexts of society and the home as well as the changing labour environment', 'developing the maternity leave system and pension security', and 'defending the right of children to a safe and humane growing environment'.

Except for these missions that directly concern women, the organization's material stresses issues that are of general importance to the party. It highlights the significance of 'family values', and emphasizes equality between socio-economic and age groups rather than genders. In the party magazine, the chairwoman of the organization, Marja-Leena Leppänen, emphasizes that Finns Party women want to cooperate with men and be 'women, not feminists' (parliamentary elections issue 2011). The Finns Party Women's promotion leaflet strengthens this image, giving special emphasis to motherhood and caring, such as caring for elderly relatives, and associated social policies. In addition, women's entrepreneurship receives attention.

In the Finnish party subsidy system, around 10 % of the state subsidy is allocated to each party's women's organization (Ministry of Justice 2009; Finnish Government 2013). The party loses this share of the subsidy if it does not have a women's organization. The Finns Party Women's chairwoman admits in an interview in the party magazine (parliamentary elections issue 2011) that this is indeed the reason why the organization was founded and exists—to qualify for the subsidy. She adds that this is 'just like in all other parties', which is not the case: other women's party organizations were founded well before the subsidy came into effect—most of them decades ago. For instance, the history of the Social Democrats' women's organization (founded in 1900) dates back to the struggle for women's right to vote (Social Democratic Women 2013).

TRADITIONALISM MEETS HEGEMONIC GENDER EQUALITY?

Gender issues are few in the texts of the women's organization. Also, the 2011 electoral manifesto rarely addresses gender explicitly, even though it deals with diverse policy issues, including immigration, the EU, social and health issues, special needs of war veterans, the elderly, families, and so on. An exception is the question of parental leave, which the manifesto addresses by calling for an even division of the expenses between the employers of both parents.

Nevertheless, gender issues are important in the parts of the manifesto which deal with the party's vision of the role of the family in a society. They outline how the family should be connected to the notion of nationhood: 'The family is the basic unit of society and children are the future of the nation'. Initiatives to increase fertility are endorsed, and 'marriage is meant to unite a man and a woman'. It follows that the idea of gay marriage as an equality issue is turned down.

In the *Perussuomalainen* party magazine, gender equality does figure as a recurrent theme. The president of the organization has a column in several issues, and reports on the women's organization are frequent. Articles describe the organization's annual meetings and festivities, as well as events organized by its local subsections. Additionally, women in active campaign work for the party get publicity in the magazine. The tone is often 'empowering', and the general message suggests that women should be encouraged to join the party activities in greater numbers. The headlines are full of enthusiasm: 'The Finns Party Women Lapland: Power isn't given, it has to be taken!' (12/2011), 'Feminine energy on the road' (9/2012), or 'Women with an important cause: the Finns Party Women rolled up their sleeves and addressed societal problems in the Kemi spring meeting' (10/2012). The value of women's work for the party is emphasized, and the women themselves are described rather solemnly, for example: 'The Finns Party Women don't run wild at celebrities' parties, and no scandal headlines will be written [about] us. We are ordinary, or lone wolves, we are women, spouses, mothers and grandmothers. We are women who, year after year, work for the party for the sake of [the] common good along with running the everyday routines' (9/2012).

Equality is addressed in some stories, and the argument is in line with the typical hegemonic equality discourse we described previously, that is, equality is a national Finnish virtue that should be fostered and enhanced when it is in need of (small) amendments. However, mentions of gender

equality *politics* are rare and often accompanied by 'pleasant' stories to 'soften' the topic, like in an article about the Lapland subsection's drive in which gender equality is discussed while distributing sweets: 'The Finns Women of Lapland delighted people on the slope of the Levi fell by distributing a thousand and one chocolate kisses on Women's Day, March 8th. With cheerful spirits and smiles, everybody got a kiss regardless of age, nationality, or gender. The theme of The Finns Party Women was a woman's life course. Sharing the expenses of parenthood, decrease in university intake, unemployment, entrepreneurship, and EU politics were discussed. Women's equality is in reality still unaccomplished. Domestic work and the burden of family responsibilities stop many women from being active, for example, in party politics' (5/2012).

The quotation repeats a recurrent feature of the Finnish political discourse on equality in general, that is, the idea of equality as a state of things that *can* be accomplished once and for all, instead of equality as a process or an ever-ongoing struggle (e.g. Holli et al. 2007). The examples given of the 'problems' that prevent equality from being realized are all directly related to motherhood. The emphasis on the joyfulness of the event and the humoristic allusions to kisses in the story are typical of articles reporting on women's organization activities—they serve to render the issues discussed sympathetic and perhaps less likely to trigger conflict within the party.

Such a discursive technique is in use when the magazine reports on the annual meeting of the women's organization, a rather undramatic proceeding described very matter-of-factly—the sitting president continues and a new board is elected—but at the end, the reporter describes how, during the evening's festivities, the women are invited to dance by 'willing, courteous local gentlemen' who are delighted to be cavaliers to Finns Party ladies (15/2012).

WOMEN ARE WELCOME, BUT GENDER DOESN'T MATTER

A recurrent theme in *Perussuomalainen* articles is the importance of women for the party and the good treatment they get, especially from party leader Timo Soini. He is portrayed as a (god)father figure who extends special protection to women party activists. As the president of the women's organization recounts in one of her columns, he welcomes a women's delegation to Brussels with a warm hug, encourages women to continue the good work, and 'also knows how to listen' (16/2011).

However, few women are in the party, the magazine highlights them with both words and images. The majority of these stories and pictures are not connected with gender equality issues, but create the impression that women have a front row seat in the party (see Niemi and Parkkinen 2012). 'Finns Party women improve the quality of politics' (3/2011), states the magazine, and then presents a variety of stories that repeat this message, without, however, going into further detail on how the party's politics may or may not be affected by the work of women activists.

On the one hand, the party's gender discourse builds on a repeated insistence that women are and should be welcome to be active in the party. On the other hand, it stresses that gender actually does not matter at all. The following story about women members of a local party association in eastern Finland captures the paradox: 'We have been accepted in the party with a lot of encouragement, and they have even made room so that women have been able to join the activities. I could say that womanhood has been a sheer benefit in this regard. […] Men have quickly included women in the tasks of the party district. Women have been active themselves and have shown with their own work that they can take responsibility for things. […] "Talking business and taking matters forward does not have to do with gender", says one of the party veterans. […] The Finns Party Women of Etelä-Savo […] find equality between genders in the party, both in the district and on the part of the party leaders, so self-evident that they have never even thought about the matter' (5/2011).

Women have been included, they feel welcome, men have happily 'made room' for them, and women have shown that they are worthy of the room given—and yet, gender 'does not matter', so much so that no one has ever given it a thought. The above quotation seems to portray the negotiation of a peaceful resolution of the 'gender issue' between the party activists: a male party veteran confirms that doing politics is gender neutral, and the women state that gender equality is not an issue of any importance. Furthermore, the story insinuates a critique of the 'traditional' conception of equality and positions gender equality as an old-fashioned concern.

MEN'S RIGHTS

Finally, *Perussuomalainen* magazine often treats gender and equality issues via discussions about child-care politics—and men. The debate on the Finnish child-care subsidy system gains plenty of attention. The coverage is univocal: the right to an allowance for home care of children gains

unquestioned support, and strong appreciation of stay-at-home mothers is voiced. Home care is 'cost effective' (6/ 2012), and being a stay-at-home mother is 'a precious title' (13/ 2012).

Interestingly, discussions on fatherhood and child-care also get significant attention. These stories bring forward an important feature of the Finns Party equality politics. Whereas women's importance in the party is emphasized in multiple ways, as shown above, societal gender equality problems that particularly concern women, such as unequal pay or violence against women, are mainly ignored. In contrast, the question of fatherhood is directly linked to a discussion on men's rights in society and the need to promote *men's* equality. A story that reports on the founding of the Finns Party men's organization *Perusäijät,* 'Ordinary Blokes', depicts a man washing the bottom of a newborn baby: 'The ordinary bloke does not give in easily! The ordinary Finnish man sings at a karaoke night "I will never give in…" At home, it's a different story. Tough brute on the exterior, yet the ordinary bloke bends but does not break. In a tough spot, even a male may breed. A hardened shovel of a hand holds the newborn baby with tenderness. […] "Everything works except breastfeeding", said a metal worker from Rauma, father of the newborn *Nuppu*' (15/2012).

The language the article uses to describe the man taking care of the baby is striking: the 'tough brute' and his 'hardened shovel of a hand' echo a 'good old' working class masculinity that is contrasted with the newborn baby girl *Nuppu* (Blossom). The story continues with an antifeminist argument of equality 'gone too far' and claims that the party men's organization is needed to ensure that men are not discriminated against and women favoured 'in the name of equality'.

To recapitulate, gender equality issues are not addressed in the party manifesto, and it instead presents the traditional nuclear family as central to the vitality of the nation. In the party magazine, women feature strongly, and gender is often presented as the reason for writing about them; they are on display to show that there are active women in the party. The stories stress their activities *as women*, but womanhood often equals motherhood and other traditional caregiver roles. Gender equality politics is often labelled old-fashioned or in need of a 'new' perspective, that is, men's rights. Nevertheless, women's visibility in politics and men's right to stay at home with their children *are* topical questions of gender equality, and it is not without importance that the Finns Party magazine grants them space on its pages.

CONCLUSIONS

In this article, we have explored the Finns Party from a gender perspective and juxtaposed our findings with what previous studies have taught us about Finnish equality discourses and politics. The landslide electoral gains of a male-dominated and conservative Finns Party coincide with stagnating women's representation in Finland, and with a conservative turn in discourses on equality. We have shown how these developments resonate within the Finns Party by comparing the male and female candidates' opinions, and by analysing the gender discourses the party's publications portray.

There is indeed a gender gap in the party: women stress social justice and the rights of the disadvantaged in a left-wing vein. However, in terms of immigration politics, the Finns Party women and men follow the same line of thought, and opposition to immigration unites the party.

Our reading of party materials shows that Finns Party gender politics are conservative, if not outright anti-feminist. The prevailing conception of gender leans on traditional roles in representing women and men. The *Perussuomalainen* magazine does give women a special place in party publicity, but the role is mostly a supporting one: women confirm and prop the canon of the party. Gender equality is conceptualized either as society's support of motherhood, an accomplished fact, or, in some cases, through men's roles and rights as fathers.

In sum, we suggest, firstly, that populist right-wing politics and an anti-feminist political agenda are linked in several ways in Finland today. Despite men forming the majority of Finns Party candidates and voters, and being responsible for the most right-wing attitudes within the party, Finns Party women also refrain from supporting a feminist agenda in equality politics or politics that aim at dismantling power structures behind discriminatory practices, such as gendered violence or unequal pay. Secondly, the Finns Party equality discourse challenges Finnish state feminism by using features of the 'hegemonic' gender equality discourse. Conceiving equality as a matter of national pride, something already or nearly achieved, enables belittling gender discrimination and concealing power structures that cause gender inequality because they cannot possibly exist in a country that 'has gender equality'. In this regard, the Finns Party represents a backlash to gender equality politics in Finland, and its electoral gains can be seen in part as the victories of a new wave of masculinist politics.

Finally, while the Finns Party attempts to include more women to continue its electoral success, we can speculate on the effects of the potentially

growing role of women in the party. On the one hand, the women's organization's participation in NYTKIS is likely to spread know-how on equality politics among the Finns Party women. This, combined with the Finns Party women's more left-wing opinions compared to men, indicates that an increase in the number of women could pull the party in a more liberal direction. On the other hand, there are signs that after electoral success, the party has rather moved even further towards the socially conservative far right (e.g. Ylä-Anttila and Ylä-Anttila 2015). Politicians with conservative gender agendas may further challenge Finnish state feminism by using a dualist equality discourse—where equality as a norm is taken as a given, while the existence of actual problems is denied. The Finns Party and its women may play an important role in this, as they emphasize 'already achieved' equality, the traditional conception of women as caregivers, the party's male leadership and men's rights.

NOTES

1. Previously often translated as the True Finns, Ordinary Finns or Basic Finns, *Perussuomalaiset* adopted the official English name The Finns after receiving international media attention (Helsingin Sanomat (HS), 21 Aug. 2011). The word *perus* refers to fundamental 'down-to-earth' ordinariness as a virtue.
2. The gender and age of the candidates are portrayed.
3. Seventeen issues of *Perussuomalainen* magazine were published in 2011, and 16 issues in 2012. An average issue contains 24–28 pages and 42 articles, including feature stories, interviews, political columns, commentaries and opinions. We read through titles, introductions and subtitles in the 2011 and 2012 volumes. If any of these indicated that the story touched upon equality politics and/or gender-related issues, we included the article in our corpus. We found and analysed 47 gender and/or equality-related articles. We looked at the general themes these articles treated, as well as the recurrent discursive techniques used to address gender and equality. We will refer to the magazine by no. of issue/year of publication.

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III

Familiarity as a tool of populism: Political appropriation of shared experiences and the case of *Suvivirsi*

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Abstract
Populist argumentation claims to represent 'the people' against 'the elite', appealing to emotions and reacting to a sense of crisis. By analysing a public debate in Finland in which populist arguments appropriate a culturally shared, familiar experience – that of singing Suvivirsi, the Summer Hymn – I argue that evoking familiarity is an effective way of 'doing populism'. Analysing media texts from 2002 to 2014 and a questionnaire to political candidates in 2011, and using Laurent Thévenot's sociology of engagements, the article shows that appeals to the familiarity of the hymn are particularly compatible with the populist valorization of the experience of the common people. Familiarity thus constitutes a central tool in the toolkit of populism. Remembering the shared experience of singing the hymn bonds the assumed 'people' together and gives an emotional charge to populist arguments. By drawing on pragmatist political sociology and analysing politics 'in action' in everyday disputes, the paper makes a novel contribution to the scholarship of populism.

Keywords
Familiarity, justification, political sociology, populism, pragmatic sociology, right-wing populism, sociology of engagements

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Introduction

Our summer is arriving and gentle winds will blow

We see our world reviving as grass and bushes grow

For Heaven always brings us

Both sun and soothing rain

Eternal hymns it sings us

And all is born again.

(First verse of Suvivirsi, translated by Helsingius, 2000.)

Suvivirsi (Summer Hymn), which pupils in Finnish schools traditionally sing in spring graduation ceremonies, has become a site of political struggle in 2000s Finland. Some question whether Christian hymns are appropriate in public schools, while others defend the cultural tradition. Others still emphasize its Finnishness and defend it against a cultural threat they claim is introduced by immigrants. Analysing this debate, I will show that populist argumentation can appropriate (take into use) the *familiarity* of cultural artefacts such as this hymn to effectively claim to represent 'the people' against 'the elite'. This is because appealing to familiar experience, rather than more abstract political constructions such as values, is particularly compatible with the populist valorization of the common people.

By arguing that familiarity is a central tool in the toolkit of populism (see Swidler, 1986) – at least in Finnish political discourse, and in all likelihood, other instances of populism – I contribute to the literature on right-wing populist argumentation and especially its noted emotional tendency (Berezin, 2001, 2002; Canovan, 1999; Demertzis, 2006, 2014). This use of familiarity aims to conflate a 'community of feeling' – in this case, those participating in the song – with a nationalist political identity (Berezin, 2001, 2002). Also, I demonstrate that Laurent Thévenot's sociology of engagements (Thévenot, 2001, 2007, 2011a, 2011b, 2014, 2015) is a particularly useful theoretical framework for analysis of populism, since it distinguishes between *justification* and *familiarity* in a way that aptly describes nuances of populist argumentation. Thus, the article is an application of pragmatist political sociology to the analysis of populism – largely absent from previous, extensive studies on populism.

As empirical material, I use Finnish media texts from 2002 to 2014 and a questionnaire of political candidates' opinions and justifications in 2011. Immigration was one of the key issues of the Finnish 2011 electoral campaign, and the right-wing populist (True) Finns Party (*Perussuomalaiset*)[1] gained a landslide victory – a development echoing those in several European countries (e.g. Kriesi and Pappas, 2015; Moffitt, 2016; Mudde, 2007; Wodak et al., 2013) – with a nationalistic campaign, in which asserting the significance of cultural traditions such as Suvivirsi played its part.

Suvivirsi represents a valuable cultural symbol to some, while others see it as a religious practice. To many, it is a *familiar* practice enabling remembrance and tradition. For populist framing (Aslanidis, 2015), this shared familiarity of the song is vital. That familiarity can be used to anchor right-wing populist discourse in shared experience. I will argue that, through its familiarity, Suvivirsi provides a vessel to connect political argumentation to a solid base of everyday practices, which produce experiences of belonging, to bridge the gap between familiar experience and institutional politics. I will begin with a short introduction to the Suvivirsi debate.

Suvivirsi, the Summer Hymn

Typically, Suvivirsi ends the ceremony held on the first Saturday of June in the school gym, after the handing out of report cards, marking the beginning of the summer holiday. The music teacher often plays

the piano or even a pump organ, leading the song, while proud parents and teachers stand up and join their offspring and students in a sing-along.

Curiously, with regards to the new-found nationalist usage of the song, the hymn is of Swedish origin. It was popularized in Finland after the great famine of 1695–1697 (Lappalainen, 2012) and thanks God for the awakening of nature and a coming harvest in springtime. In agrarian Nordic societies, this was a significant yearly event. The hymn's lyrics mention 'growing crops in the valleys' and 'thy blessed gifts that the land and sea bear for us'. As a seasonal rite, it holds great significance for many Finns. If you ask a Finn, they will typically say 'everyone' in Finland knows it by heart – since 'everyone' has sung it every spring as schoolchildren. Parents are reintroduced to the tradition each spring.

However, the definition of 'everyone' participating in this cultural ritual is not as unambiguous as would seem at face value. While the strong position of the Lutheran church has meant that Finnish traditions often are Christian in nature (Kallio, 2015), Suvivirsi has become controversial as the country is becoming more and more multicultural and secular. The church and the state school system have been some of the strongest institutions in Finnish society, which explains the saliency of this debate. The school system is near-universal and a matter of national pride: more than 97% of children attend state schools (Statistics Finland, 2014), they are ranked by a majority of Finns as 'the most significant thing about Finland's history', and education is seen as an asset to the nation (Torsti, 2012: 99–101, 109). Membership in the Evangelical Lutheran Church was until recently also near-universal: as high as 95.0% in 1970, but declining to 75.2% in 2014 (Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland, 2006, 2014) because of immigration and secularization. On the other hand, large-scale immigration to Finland started relatively late, in the early 1990s, and is likely to continue – public debates on multiculturalism, however, are still in their infancy, and the debatable conception of a historically homogenous and united Finnish people is overemphasized in nationalist arguments (Lehtonen, 2009).

The Suvivirsi debate has previously been interpreted from the viewpoint of discursive cultural-essentialist Othering of the out-group (Leppänen, 2002; also see Sakki and Pettersson, 2016; Wood and Finlay, 2008), and there is literature on emotional collective narratives of shared history (e.g. Liu and Hilton, 2005; Mols and Jetten, 2014; Wodak and Forchtner, 2014). However, instead of the narrative of Suvivirsi and what it *represents*, I focus on the argumentative power resulting from the mere *familiarity* of singing it, and how populist argumentation can 'tap into' such everyday experiences, reaffirming its defence of the people in the process. Such populist argumentation has, in recent years, increasingly been brought to the fore by the (True) Finns Party, which I will introduce next.

The (True) Finns Party and populism in action

The (True) Finns Party (*Perussuomalaiset*) shocked the Finnish electoral scene in the general election of 2011 by coming in third place, shattering the decades-long stability of the so-called Big Three (Social Democrats, conservative National Coalition and agrarian Centre Party) alternating in power (Arter, 2010; Borg, 2012; Ylä-Anttila, 2014; Ylä-Anttila and Luhtakallio, in press; Ylä-Anttila and Ylä-Anttila, 2015). It entered government with the Centre Party and the National Coalition in 2015. The party is self-avowedly 'nationalist', 'Christian-social' and 'populist' (Finns Party, 2011: 6). They define populism as a mode of democracy based on rule of the people *as a nation* instead of rule by 'international elite bureucracy' (Finns Party, 2011: 7). While it has roots in the agrarian populist Finnish Rural Party (*Suomen maaseudun puolue* (SMP), 1959–1995), it has moved from a defence of the rural poor to a full-fledged right-wing populism, converging with Nordic parties from different (right-liberal or neo-fascist) roots – the Sweden Democrats, the Danish People's Party and the Progress Party of Norway (Jungar and Jupskås, 2014; Ylä-Anttila and Ylä-Anttila, 2015). Rhetorically, the party often looks to find comfort in the past: nostalgically referencing a lost community where things were simpler, familiar and firmly rooted in the perceived organic national community (Arter, 2010; Pyykkönen, 2011; Ylä-Anttila, 2014). In its name and politics, the party exclaims the virtue of being 'just an ordinary down-to-earth Finn' (see also Rapley, 1998). It is Eurosceptic, anti-immigration, socially conservative and increasingly

right-wing in its economics as well – altogether, a right-wing populist party (Arter, 2010; Jungar and Jupskås, 2014; Ylä-Anttila and Ylä-Anttila, 2015).

However, while the rise of the (True) Finns is generally taken as the primary indicator of the rise of populism in Finland, populism surely is not something only 'populist' parties engage in. Moreover, the concept of 'populism' is notoriously debated. Is it an ideology, a strategy, a style, a rhetoric, a discourse, a logic or something else (for an overview, see Aslanidis, 2015)? The fact that it is often used pejoratively in everyday talk does not help. However, as the (True) Finns Party are proudly 'populist', there should be no issue in addressing them as such. Moreover, in the definition struggle of populism, what matters is whether the concept is of analytical use. Paris Aslanidis (2015) has convincingly argued that it is indeed, if we conceptualize it as a *discursive frame* (see also e.g. Benford and Snow, 2000; Goffman, 1974; Snow and Benford 1988), an '*anti*-elite *discourse in the name of the sovereign People*' (Aslanidis, 2015: 9). Populist framing posits a 'pure', sovereign people against a 'corrupt' elite and, in the case of right-wing populism, often excludes certain Others from 'the people' (see Sakki and Pettersson (2016) for a comparison of Othering in Finnish and Swedish right-wing populist discourses).

Thus, crucially, to be populist is to use populist framing, and populism is a matter of degree, not either/or. Some have even suggested populism to be measurable in quantity from party documents (see Rooduijn and Pauwels, 2011).[2] To be clear, in this view, there is no clear division between 'populist' and 'non-populist' political actors. The populist frame may be employed strategically (Aslanidis, 2015: 12–13), but actors also interpret their experience through it (Aslanidis, 2015: 12, also see Goffman, 1974). I do not label and study 'a populist party' or 'populists', but *doing populism* (see also Jansen, 2011), in which politicians and laymen may engage when discussing and acting out politics, if and when they engage in a valorization of the 'common people' and a denigration of 'corrupt elites'. This understanding of populism is based on social movement studies, which take a much broader view of 'politics' than a traditional political-scientific view of (party) politics, including everyday discussions and actions of politically engaged citizens. Further, it is based on pragmatist sociological theorizing, which focuses on observable *action* and *habits*, without making assumptions about the underlying motivations or ideological values of social actors (see e.g. Boltanski and Thévenot, 1999; Joas and Knöbl, 2009: 500–528).

Populist argumentation has been noted to have a strong emotional component (Berezin, 2001, 2002; Canovan, 1999; Demertzis, 2006, 2014) and to often follow from a sense of crisis (Aslanidis, 2015: 12; Taggart, 2004: 275). I will argue that one particularly salient way of doing populism – to react to a 'crisis' by making emotional anti-elitist appeals in the name of 'the people' – is to appeal to familiar experience politically. This is because using familiarity-based arguments in the public sphere, and thus implicitly demanding their acceptance and legitimacy, lends particular potency to populist argumentation. Laurent Thévenot's sociology of engagements provides my theoretical framework for this analysis.

Sociology of engagements

Laurent Thévenot's sociology of engagements starts with justification theory (Boltanski and Thévenot, 1999, 2006), which describes *worlds of justification*. These are conventionalized value-systems, which conceptualize what is considered worthy on different fields of social interaction – and by extension, which arguments are seen as legitimate in public discussion concerning those fields (Boltanski and Thévenot, 1999: 364). For example, when buying and selling on markets, people implicitly agree that the worth of goods is measured by the market mechanism (Boltanski and Thévenot, 1999: 372, 2006: 43–61, 193–203) – thus arguments based on market value are most legitimate, and appeals to other kinds of legitimacy, such as family ties, would be considered inappropriate nepotism. In contrast, in the world of domestic relations, traditional hierarchies such as family ties are what matters (Boltanski and Thévenot, 1999: 370, 2006: 90–98, 164–178). References to these shared valuation systems are used in disputes in everyday situations and political debates, whenever a *crisis* creates the *imperative to justify* (Boltanski and Thévenot, 1999: 359–360) – the worlds are conventionalized ways to legitimize arguments

(Thévenot, 2001: 71). In the case of Suvivirsi, the most central justificatory dispute is whether the hymn should be evaluated as a cultural tradition or religious practice.

However, clearly, not all social action takes the form of settling disputes by appealing to higher common principles. Thévenot has added a 'vertical' (Thévenot, 2007: 418) dimension to justification theory, forming a *sociology of engagements* of different levels of engagements. Here, the *regime of justification* is conceptualized as one *regime of engagement with the world* – the other pertinent regime, for this article, being the *regime of familiarity*. When in familiar surroundings, people can act based on habit, without critical reflection on the value-basis of their actions (as would be necessary for justification), while maintaining a feeling of ease (Thévenot, 2007: 416, 2011b: 14–16, 2014: 13–15, 19–28). Here, the underlying pragmatist philosophy is evident (see also Thévenot, 2001). Objects we engage with in the familiar regime, which can be material or cultural artefacts (see also e.g. Latour, 2005), and which Thévenot calls *common-places*, are invested with a 'strongly personal engagement' and breed 'confidence' (Thévenot, 2011a: 49). They 'are not merely symbols, or signs, because they are the vehicle for deeply personal attachments' (Thévenot, 2014: 20). Familiarity is perhaps best described 'by the phrase: "inhabiting a home"' (Thévenot, 2001: 69). We have a personal relationship with our everyday material and cultural surroundings, we are *used to them*. Suvivirsi is a prime example of a common-place.

Such familiar engagement using common-places can take the form of political action, even though it is 'not taken into account in most approaches to politics' (Thévenot, 2014: 10). Common-places can even be 'instrumental in support of authoritarian power' (Thévenot, 2015: 98), since they are 'by construction, rather foreign to strangers' (Thévenot, 2015: 98) – while they form a strong bond between those who share them, they also exclude strangers. This, as well, is apparent in the Suvivirsi debate, and is what gives Suvivirsi its exclusionary power. In the Suvivirsi debate, two solutions to the crisis emerge: that of *justification* (appeals to shared values) and that of a return to *familiarity* (appeals based on an experience shared by a community). The latter is more compatible with populism, because it constructs a people around the common-place and valorizes the felt experience of the people participating. This is the analytical dichotomy I will employ. First, however, I will present some examples of empirical research using the concept of familiarity.

Empirical usage

Empirical research on familiarity at work in politics includes studies on disputes over public urban space in Russia (Lonkila, 2011), workers union activists in Belgium (Charles, 2012), environmental conflicts in Italy (Centemeri, 2015), urban ecological activists in Denmark (Blok and Meilvagn, 2015) and city-planning controversy in Japan (Blok, 2015). Also, feminist scholars have noted that in care work, familiar engagements are crucial – not just the official, measurable requirements of work (Thévenot, 2011a: 58). The feminist slogan of 'the personal is political' thus connects to this concept of familiarity – both highlight the importance of a personal level excluded from public, rationalized politics. This leads to one of two empirical examples I will briefly discuss.

First, Anna Colin Lebedev (2012) studies the *Committee of Soldiers' Mothers of Russia*, an NGO representing the relatives of soldiers in the Russian army. They complain about the mistreatment experienced by the soldiers, but in order for their appeals to appear legitimate before the Russian authorities, they need to be reformulated as human rights abuses. They have to be re-framed as breaches of generally agreed principles – *justified* – instead of presented as mothers' personal worries, which would remain in the *regime of familiarity*. The soldiers' mothers study legal texts and write official letters translating the mothers' worries into the language of legal contestation. Particular emotional grievances are raised onto the level of public societal action, making them legitimate. In the Suvivirsi debate, the situation is quite opposite, as I will show: populist arguments demand that familiarity is accepted as a legitimate political argument. This is where familiarity-based arguments' populist appeal culminates: they valorize felt experiences over the value-systems of establishment politics.

Table 1. Theoretical framework (adapted from Thévenot, 2001: 76, 2014: 13).

	What is 'good'?	How are material and cultural objects engaged with?	How is this visible in empirical material?
Regime of justification	Conventionalized and generalized common goods: worlds of justification, which can be appealed to publicly	Justifications can be tested against them	Implicit or explicit references to common value-systems: cultural or religious heritage
Regime of familiarity	Feeling of ease, comfort and 'home' in habituated action	As intimate common-places, which make ease and comfort in familiarity possible	References to the concrete experience of singing the hymn and the emotions it evokes

Second, and importantly for the Suvivirsi case, Serguei Oushakine (2011) argues that songs 'act as acoustic and narrative containers capable of evoking or accommodating forms of collective sensibility' (Oushakine, 2011: 249) – they can be common-places, in Thévenot's (2014: 21–22) words. Oushakine vividly describes Russian patriotic concerts in which war songs are performed to honour veterans, with audiences standing up and joining the performers in song, in a 'collective impulse affectively orchestrated by the song' (Oushakine, 2011: 263). Such a 'collective impulse' is what discussants try to appropriate in the Suvivirsi debate.

Thus, to analyse the Suvivirsi dispute on the basis of Thévenot's sociology of engagements (summarized in Table 1), I coded my material with the Atlas.TI software for qualitative analysis, looking for *justifications* for arguments based on value-systems and separating them from arguments based on *familiarity*. For example, when a discussant argued that Suvivirsi *should be sung because it has been done for decades*, this argument was coded as *justification* based on the generally accepted value of *cultural traditions*. On the other hand, when discussants referred to *the concrete situation or the experience of singing the song and the emotions it evokes*, the argument was coded as based on *familiarity*. The line between worlds of justification and familiarity was often blurred and interpretation is not clear-cut. Still, they did emerge as distinct arguments, as I will show.

Analyses of Finnish politics have identified it as emphasizing the regime of justification, especially the worth of efficiency (Lonkila, 2011; Luhtakallio, 2012; Ylä-Anttila, 2010), and private interests (Eranti, 2014, in press). Thus, I hypothesize that when actors use the populist frame, which proclaims to bring the everyday grievances of 'the ordinary people' into politics, opposing elite bureaucracy, they will employ the regime of familiarity particularly often, and that there is a particular discursive connection between the populist frame and the regime of familiarity. I will show that this indeed is the case by analysing media materials and a questionnaire for political candidates, materials which I will present next.

Materials

Helsingin Sanomat (HS), the largest daily national newspaper in Finland, has been one of the main arenas of the Suvivirsi dispute, as it tends to be for political debate in Finland. A search for 'suvivir*' in HS 2001–2014 returns 213 articles, editorials and opinion pieces, which fall roughly into two waves: 2002–2003, when the Religious Freedom Act was being revised, and 2010–2014, marked by an immigration debate and the rise of the (True) Finns Party (see Figure 1). I selected these two waves, adding up to 139 pieces. This material gives an overview of the public debate on Suvivirsi.

To include politicians, I analysed candidates' responses to the *HS* Voting Advice Application (VAA) (HS 6 April 2011) in the Finnish parliamentary elections of 2011, the event of the (True) Finns Party's breakthrough. The web-based VAA gives voting suggestions based on a political questionnaire, but also
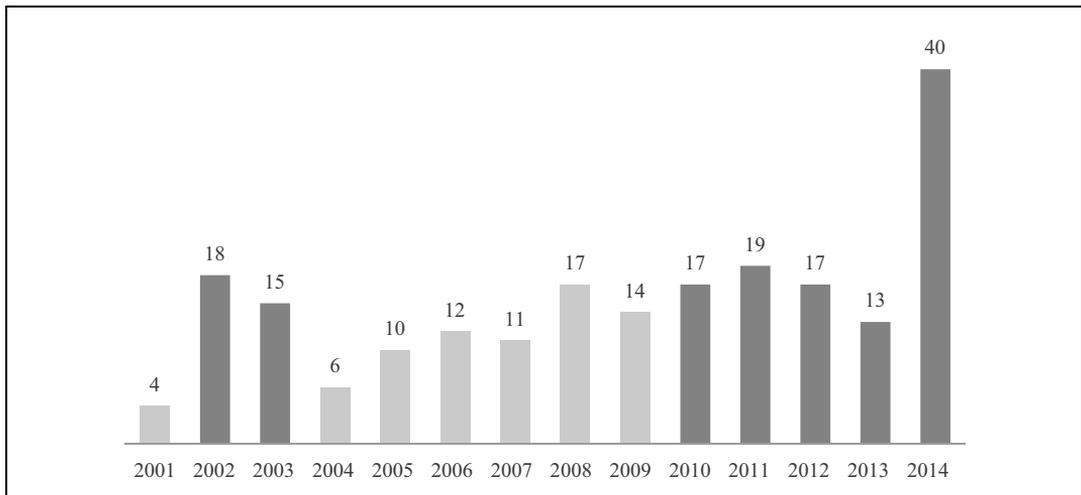
Figure 1. Pieces in *Helsingin Sanomat* mentioning Suvivirsi 2001–2014, analysed years in dark grey.

creates a comprehensive dataset of the argumentation of party candidates. The VAA is a popular way for candidates to communicate with voters. 1820 of 2315 total parliamentary candidates (78.6%) responded to the question: 'Should Suvivirsi be sung at schools' spring festivities?' I analysed comments ($N = 358$) from the four largest parties: the conservative National Coalition, the agrarian Centre Party, the Social Democrats and the right-wing populist (True) Finns Party. This material shows how politicians 'tap into' the familiarity of Suvivirsi in their argumentation. First, however, let us turn to the media debate.

The public debate on Suvivirsi in *HS*

The hymn's cultural significance is illustrated in *HS* by recurrent references to it. The ending of the school year is typically noted by a small news piece: 'Suvivirsi will soon ring out in Finnish schools to mark the beginning of summer' (News, 27 May 2002, quotes translated by author). An ice-hockey team that lost a tournament was 'seen off to summer holidays by Suvivirsi' (sung by fans of the opposing team, Sports, 24 March 2003). Even a new medical implant for the hearing-impaired is introduced by telling the story of second-grader Tuulia, who, thanks to the implant, 'can now join the others in singing Suvivirsi' (News, 31 May 2003).

However, on 30 May 2002, a reader, 'grandmother' by title, writes in the opinion section that she is 'deeply concerned' over the fact that some kindergartens had omitted Suvivirsi from their spring ceremonies 'because there were a few Muslims amongst the children'. A few opinions agree with her in the following days. On 4 June, another reader, this time a teacher, references a column in *Opettaja* (*Teacher*) magazine on 31 May, which misinterprets a new draft for the Religious Freedom Act as banning Suvivirsi. The teacher is strongly opposed to this. Håkan Mattlin, administrative director of the Ministry of Education, quickly writes to correct, stating on 6 June 2002 that 'Suvivirsi will not be silenced' (Opinion, 6 June 2002). The proposed legislation only ensures that students may opt out of religious ceremonies.

Between 2002 and 2014, there are no actual calls in *HS* to ban Suvivirsi, and there are repeated assurances by officials that it will indeed not be banned (Constitutional Law Committee, 2002, 2014; Deputy Chancellor of Justice, 2014; Deputy Parliamentary Ombudsman, 2014; *HS*, 22 September 2003, 16 March 2006, 8 August 2013, 4 April 2014, 25 April 2014, 26 April 2014; National Board of Education, 2006, 2014; Religious Freedom Committee, 2001). Despite this, the bulk of the debate consists of angry arguments vehemently opposing a supposedly looming ban. In 2014, more than 3000 members of the public even attend a 'Save the Suvivirsi' event to sing the song on Töölöntori

square in Helsinki (IS, 31 May 2014). Mere rumours are immediately opposed: 'I heard that an EU directive forbids singing the fourth verse of Suvivirsi in schools, since it mentions Jesus!' (Opinion, 10 November 2002).

Justification

In total, I located 67 appeals to worlds of justification and 33 appeals to familiarity in the 139 documents of the *HS* material on Suvivirsi. There were no notable differences between the timeframes of 2002–2003 and 2010–2014. The majority of the debate focused on whether Suvivirsi should be identified as belonging to the world of 'culture' or 'religion', and then justifying opinions by referring to the worth of Suvivirsi in that world. These multiple worlds were also recognized by discussants, such as this one, who asserts that Suvivirsi can be interpreted as a prayer, a cultural tradition or something else, critically distancing himself from the debate:

> One of the signs of spring is the debate over whether singing Suvivirsi in school festivities is religious practice. There is no one right answer to this question: to one Suvivirsi may be a prayer, to another a beautiful tradition and yet to another neither of these. There is no objectively right answer. (Opinion, 6 April 2014)

Suvivirsi is often described in the material as 'a part of our cultural heritage' (Opinion, 29 May 2014). This is a justification appealing to an assumed shared understanding that cultural traditions have worth. Even a church official defined the hymn as 'part of Finnish culture' (Opinion, 28 March 2014) and not constituting religious practice. Others noted that 'it's a part of our national cultural heritage despite its religious background' (Opinion, 15 April 2014).

Many discussants presented Finnish culture as the norm and immigrants as a homogeneous Other, who 'should not be allowed to change our traditions' (Opinion, 30 May 2002). They argued it is 'insulting' to 'have to live with Muslims who despise our religion' (quote from letter to Chancellor of Justice reported in *HS*, 25 April 2014). The abandonment of Suvivirsi was portrayed as symptomatic of a long-standing moral decline 'insulting the values of the majority, trampling on women's rights, silent acceptance of genital mutilation and honour violence' (Opinion, 28 February 2011). Such argumentation often echoed a cultural-essentialist view, which sees cultures as unchanging and distinct features of groups (e.g. Hopkins et al., 1997). The 'ethno-pluralist' belief that these cultures should be preserved by preventing them from mixing is typical of European right-wing populist argumentation (Betz and Johnson, 2004; Spektorowski, 2003; Taguieff, 1993; Wren, 2001). However, cultural essentialism can also be used to defend multiculturalism (which 'emphasizes equality between and respect for the pluralism of cultures and group identities', Verkuyten, 2007: 280), as noted by Maykel Verkuyten (2003) and exemplified in this quote, in which the discussant states that 'cultures' should respect each other, but still clearly delineates between their distinct traditions:

> When the Lutheran mainstream culture celebrates Easter, for example, Muslim children should be asked to join. Reciprocity is important: this is why it should be appropriately noted in schools and kindergartens when Muslims in their turn celebrate Ramadan. (Opinion, 3 June 2002)

Altogether, the justification based on cultural heritage constituted the primary tone of the debate. Others defined Suvivirsi as religious instead of cultural, and either defended or criticized it on those grounds. It was seen as 'a sung prayer' (interview with Deputy Chancellor of Justice, 4 April 2014) and 'a Christian tradition' (News, 28 June 2012). A bishop denied his children attendance to their school's spring ceremony because it did *not* include Suvivirsi (News Story, 5 June 2012), and it was argued that 'raising a child in a religious vacuum' (Opinion, 28 March 2010) would be detrimental to their development. These arguments are based on the claim that religious tradition is an important shared value-system.

Table 2. Appeals to worlds of justification and familiarity in the Voting Advice Application comments ($N = 358$).

	Centre Party	(True) Finns Party	National Coalition	Social Democrats
Appeals to worlds of justification	63	44	52	40
Appeals to familiarity	7	24	13	11

Familiarity

A newspaper is not the most conducive medium for emotional expressions of familiarity, and it is conventional to justify arguments by general principles. Nevertheless, discussants reminisced about their experiences of singing Suvivirsi as schoolchildren, and noted how singing the song now arouses 'feelings of nostalgia' (Column, 11 May 2014). The singing of Suvivirsi was described as 'beautiful and tender' (Opinion, 1 June 2011), something 'most Finns have experiences of' (interview of Deputy Chancellor of Justice, 4 April 2014), even 'a part of the shared experience of many generations' (Opinion, 29 May 2014). The hymn contains 'a powerful emotional charge' (interview with Deputy Chancellor of Justice, 4 April 2014) which can elicit even physical responses: it can 'move' you (News, 26 December 2015) and 'make you weep' (News, 26 December 2015), cause 'shivers' (Column, 21 July 2013) and 'make your heart pound' (News, 3 June 2011). Such expressions do not appeal to a shared cultural value-system but a shared *familiar experience* – crucial to claiming that this is what 'the people' feel, as also shown by the quotes above about 'most Finns' and the 'shared experience of generations'.

Politicians appropriating Suvivirsi

I now turn to a medium that is less formal and filtered: an online VAA for political candidates. The cultural and religious justifications seen in the media debate were reflected here as well (with 199 appeals to worlds of justification), but familiarity was also salient (with 55 appeals) – particularly for (True) Finns Party candidates (with 24 appeals), as can be seen from Table 2.

Justification

Many candidates refer to the implicitly shared and understood worth of cultural traditions, for example: 'It is an essential part of Finnish cultural heritage' (65, M, Finns Party). Indeed, the most common justification again is that the hymn is 'cultural heritage' – implying a shared understanding that cultural heritage is valuable in and of itself. Again, culture is often presented in an essentialist sense, as an unchanging and distinct feature of groups: 'Schools can continue to carry Finnish traditions, but should also teach about other religious traditions' (47, F, Social Democrat). Many candidates believe that 'they' will also respect the fact that 'we' hold on to our traditions: 'National culture is important, and when carried out with poise, others will also respect our practices' (57, M, Centre Party).

The religious content of the hymn is debated in the VAA as well. However, when candidates directly address voters, if they place Suvivirsi in the world of religious justification and assume the reader to share the valuation of this world, they can use more overtly religious justifications than discussants in the newspaper opinion pages. Here, a religious justification is tightly intertwined with nationalism as well: 'If you don't have Home, Christ and Fatherland, what you have is room for Satan' (63, M, Finns Party).

The threat to Suvivirsi was located in 'Muslims', 'immigrants', 'foreigners', 'minorities', 'other religions', 'other cultures', 'outsiders', 'other people', 'others' or just 'them' – this was especially characteristic of (True) Finns Party comments. It has been previously noted that, in their 2011 manifesto, the (True) Finns Party engaged in a discourse of 'superior, self-evident and natural Finnishness' built on its stark separation from Others (Pyykkönen, 2011). In the following quote, the candidate discusses the value of cultural traditions in an aggressive 'if you don't like it here, move out' fashion. Immigrants,

equated here with refugees ('I understand immigrants have come here to get help') are accused of 'trying to take over the country' by supposedly forcing the Finnish majority to change their traditions.

> If our tradition is offensive to someone, he/she should move to a country whose traditions don't offend him/her. I understand immigrants have come here to get help. Why are they trying to take over the country. (58, F, Finns Party)

Familiarity

While text is not necessarily the most conducive medium for expression of emotion, it can be done, perhaps with capital letters and multiple exclamation and question marks:

> If Finns have to look at the religious dress of Muslims and the subordination of women under the guise of religion, so we can without worry sing Suvivirsi once a year! IS THIS QUESTION SOME SORT OF JOKE??? (53, F, Finns Party)

In quotes like these, the issue of opposing immigration, and morally condemning the claimed cultural habits of Muslims, takes primary importance. However, the heartfelt emotional familiarity of the song is clearly powerful. The candidate quoted above seems to genuinely feel insulted by the potential 'loss' of the experience – it is not just about the song itself, but the continued practice of singing it 'once a year' – and for this candidate, this should count as an argument, without need for further justification. This proposition is so unfathomable to the candidate it can only be interpreted as a 'joke' – her experience should render any need for justification unnecessary. A similar sentiment is echoed by many other candidates. For example: 'Totally unbelievable that someone would even question this' (57, M, Finns Party).

As the song represents something familiar, the candidates see the practice of their offspring continuing this tradition as a touching gesture of the succession of generations. The meaning of the song cannot be grasped by referring to its lyrical contents or even the generalized values of Christianity or Finnishness it is claimed to represent. Candidates talk about the *habit*, its *familiarity*, and the *comfort* this brings: 'it feels familiar and expresses the coming of the spring' (63, M, Social Democrat), or: 'The best thing about the school spring ceremony was Suvivirsi' (56, F, Social Democrat). Such claims do not adhere to the regime of justification, where reference to abstract common goods is made. Instead, the emotional experiences referenced by respondents indicate that the 'good' carried by the song is strongly attached to the very experience of singing it with others at a specific event (the semester-ending ceremony) held at a specific place (the school), a specific age (childhood) and a specific time of year (spring). They reminisce about the sound of the pump organ and the smell of spring, visceral bodily experiences that cannot be conveyed by referring to principles of justification, only by appealing to the familiarity of the common-place – to those that share that familiarity – the 'people' of their populism. 'I believe *everyone* knows it by heart', as one candidate put it (47, M, Social Democrat, emphasis added). The emotional experience of this cultural habit is tied to the concrete situation, via personal attachment to a common-place, not just discursive descriptions of it. 'Tapping into' this experience is a politicization of the everyday experience of the 'common people', not in need of justification. It is non-negotiable, quite literally: political debate or deliberation about it is *impossible*. One respondent simply typed: 'Give me a break!!' (45, M, Finns Party), while another noted 'That's it' (58, F, Finns Party).

When talking about their familiar attachments, in contrast to the justification of the value-system of 'national traditions', the respondents make reference to the personal experience of hearing the song 'echoed in Finnish schools, filling hearts with emotion when nature blooms' (65, M, Finns Party). The remembrance of once singing the song as pupils themselves, to mark the beginning of summer, overwhelms them with emotion even today. The implication is that one cannot truly understand the significance and meaning of the song unless one has heard it and participated in the springtime ritual. The

common-place is similar to Paul Taggart's (2004) notion of the 'heartland' as a central concept for populists: it 'represents an idealized conception of the community they serve', and 'heartlands are something that is felt rather than reasoned' (Taggart, 2004: 274) – they are *familiar*:

> Suvivirsi draws thoughts to summer even if school days were a long time ago. (49, F, Finns Party)

> I don't understand who's offended by Suvivirsi? I'm not particularly religious myself and still I always wait for Suvivirsi to brings tears to eyes. (38, F, Social Democrat)

> It still brings tears to my eyes when I sing it. This I want to be continued and this feeling I hope will be passed to children. (42, F, National Coalition)

Two respondents, both Finns Party candidates, even entered the first few lines of the song ('*Jo joutui armas aika . . .*') as their comment on the issue, as if they were singing it behind their keyboards, highlighting the ability of this experience to tie together those and only those who have participated in it (Berezin, 2001, 2002; Oushakine, 2011; Thévenot, 2011b: 18). This shared common ground brings with it a feeling of security, of being tied to one's familiar surroundings (Thévenot, 2011b: 8). This brings us to my concluding discussion.

Discussion

As noted, one of the most common observations about populism is that it is 'a reaction to a sense of extreme crisis' (Taggart, 2004: 275, see also Aslanidis, 2015: 12). The populist reaction can be interpreted as an attempt to avoid the imperative for justification created by such a crisis. Instead, populism turns back to the heartlands and common-places of pre-justification familiarity – in this case, the supposed homogeneous national community 'before multiculturalism' – to fix the crisis by returning to times before it happened, before habits had to be justified, when one could navigate worldly complexities based on familiarity, and 'sing the song as it has always been sung', instead of engaging in a public debate over plural orders of worth. By writing comments based on personal familiar experience, the analysed discussants demand the acceptance of their experience as 'common people' in the sphere of politics, without need for justification by value-systems, let alone politicians, bureaucrats or other authorities.

Coming back to Berezin's (2001: 83) argument that 'political identities are [. . .] distant from the concerns of "ordinary life" [. . .]. Political identities are public identities. They frequently take second place to more deeply felt private identities', we can argue that this is the gap that populist appeals to *familiarity* attempt to bridge: they aim to conflate the *community of feeling*, those who feel the familiarity, with a nationalist *political identity* (Berezin, 2001, 2002). Indeed, according to Berezin, the most effective political usage of communities of feeling is to appropriate existing ones, as when British Prime Minister Tony Blair labelled Princess Diana as the 'People's Princess' at time of her death, 'to infuse his Labour Party with Diana's charisma' (Berezin, 2002: 40). Similarly, in the case at hand, populist arguments appropriate the familiarity of Suvivirsi and claim that it is threatened by immigrants – to infuse exclusionary nationalist demands with the feeling of familiarity, and exclude from 'the people' those who do not share the feeling. While Suvivirsi is not nationalist *as a song*, and neither is the school spring ceremony explicitly formulated to foster *national* belonging, the ritual creates a community of feeling, a shared experience bonding its participants together. By giving this shared emotional experience a nationalist meaning, the 'deeply felt private identity' (Berezin, 2001), arising from belonging in the community that sings the song, is conflated with a political, public identity.

Thévenot (2014: 10) argues that the regime of familiar engagements 'is not taken into account in most approaches to politics and participation in public spaces or arenas'. Similarly, Lonkila (2011: 31) states that the typical Finnish expectation, of requiring all political arguments to operate on a publicly justified

level of generality, has led to neglecting some research questions and themes. Clearly, politicization that appeals to *familiarity* as an argument in itself requires analysis on that level, not merely on the level of abstract values and ideologies.

However, contrary to a Laclauian conception of populism (e.g. Laclau, 2005a, 2005b) focusing on 'empty' and 'floating signifiers', with no particular content, which are imbued with suitable meanings for the particular demand at hand, my analysis of the situatedness of populist symbols in a concrete familiar experience points out that these signifiers are sometimes not 'floating' or 'empty' – on the contrary, in this case, they are strongly connected to spatial, physical, concrete and familiar experiences which enable them to carry a strong weight and emotional power to be harnessed in populist argumentation, constructing *a people* against perceived threats. These arguments would not have such impact without the familiarity of Suvivirsi, and Suvivirsi could not be harnessed as easily to a non-populist cause because of the inherent connection of the ritual to a construction of 'the people'.

In this paper, I have analysed the political appropriation of familiar experiences by populist arguments. Such politics emphasizes personal familiarity felt by 'the people' towards particular commonplaces. Examples of this were found in political candidates' and citizens' comments in a public debate, in their appeals to the familiarity of Suvivirsi. The appeals hinge on a shared common-place, the school spring semester ending ceremony and the shared experience of singing the hymn as a schoolchild. In understanding right-wing populist argumentation, this should be taken into account: it is quite different to argue the importance of national traditions as a generalized value than it is to appeal to a familiar experience of singing a traditional hymn. In the latter case, inclusion in the group, the members of which share the familiarity of this experience, is nigh on impossible to achieve for 'outsiders'. This is a populist and exclusionary politicization of the familiar experience of 'the common people', to which 'everyone' participating in the debate is falsely assumed to belong.

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Notes

1. The first part of the party name, *perus*, refers to a fundamental ordinariness, with the latter part, *suomalaiset*, meaning Finns. They previously used the translation True Finns but adopted the official English name The Finns in August 2011, after receiving international media attention (*HS*, 21 August 2011).
2. Rooduijn and Pauwels' approach is very compatible with the one taken here, since they measure populism in party discourse, that is, observable populism 'in action' in politics. This is clearly distinct from Akkerman et al.'s (2014) approach of measuring populist attitudes in voters, that is, as an assumed attribute of individuals, which is not in the focus of this paper.

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IV

Knowledge and Contemporary Populism: Contesting Epistemic Authority in Anti-Immigration Countermedia

Abstract

'Post-truth politics', particularly as manifested in 'fake news' spread by countermedia, is claimed to be endemic to contemporary populism. I argue that the relationship between knowledge and populism needs a more nuanced analysis. Many have noted that populism valorizes 'common sense' over expertise. But another populist strategy is counterknowledge, proposing politically charged alternative knowledge authorities in the stead of established ones. I analyse countermedia in Finland, where they played a part in the rise of right-wing populism, using a combination of computational and interpretive methods. In my data, right-wing populists advocate counterknowledge; they profess belief in truth achievable by inquiry, not by mainstream experts but alternative ones. This is a different knowledge orientation from the valorization of 'common sense', and there is reason to believe it is somewhat specific to contemporary right-wing anti-immigration populism. Populism's epistemologies are multifaceted but often absolutist, as is populism's relationship to power and democracy.

Keywords: countermedia, conspiracy, epistemic authority, fake news, Finland, knowledge, populism, post-truth politics, topic modeling

Introduction

Dramatic populist upheavals are now familiar in most Western democracies. A peculiar point of interest in these developments internationally has

been so-called 'post-truth' politics, which allegedly takes an ambivalent relationship to the truth and bases itself on feelings and identity rather than fact (for example, *Economist* 10 Sep 2016, *Guardian* 15 Nov 2016). 'Alternative news sites' or 'countermedia' such as *Breitbart* in the US and *Fdesouche* in France have contributed to the popularity of politically-charged 'fake news'.

Finland has been no exception; in fact, it is a forerunner. During the 2010s, Finland has seen a right-wing populist uprising in parliamentary politics (Arter 2010), online activism (Pyrhönen 2015) and street gangs such as the Soldiers of Odin, who have also spread internationally (ADL 2016). Online activism has played a significant role. The anti-immigration scene was quickly consolidated after the 2008 founding of Hommaforum.org,[1] an online forum for self-proclaimed 'critics of immigration'. This led many activists to join the right-wing populist Finns Party and contribute to the enormous 2011 success of the party (Ylä-Anttila & Ylä-Anttila 2015). Encouraged by the 'migrant crisis' from 2015 on, several 'countermedia' websites[2] sprang up, spreading political news often of questionable truth value. They have accused immigrants of serious crimes, mainstream journalists of covering them up, and politicians of facilitating a destructive assault on Finnish society by immigrants. They combine facts with fiction and rumours, sometimes intentionally blurring the lines or spreading outright lies, other times cherry-picking, colouring and framing information to promote a radical anti-immigrant agenda. Despite quickly being called out as 'fake news' by the mainstream media, these websites

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[1] 'Homma' (lit. 'thing' or 'job') comes from the somewhat obscure idiom 'homma nousuun', literally translated as '[let's put this] thing onto an upward path/trajectory', meaning roughly 'a toast to the advancement of our cause'. This is an ironic reference to historical Finnish neo-Nazi leader Väinö Kuisma using this expression in the documentary film *Sieg Heil Suomi* (1994), in which Finnish neo-Nazis are presented in a rather unflattering light; as such the name of the forum is likely a piece of self-deprecating humor rather than a positive self-identification with Nazism.

[2] The most popular of these is *MV-lehti* ('WTF Media'), founded by Ilja Janitskin, who is a suspect in multiple crimes and wanted by Finnish police. Others include *Magneettimedia* ('Magnet Media'), a neo-Nazi news site originally started by businessman Juha Kärkkäinen; and a myriad of blogs. These often share content with each other.

became immensely popular, while street violence against immigrants intensified simultaneously and the government asylum policy was tightened.

Thus, in Finland and elsewhere, it is more relevant than ever to study the linkage between *populism* and *the production and communication of knowledge*. Populism politicizes issues by framing arguments as representing 'the people' against a 'corrupt elite' (Aslanidis 2015, Berezin 2009, Canovan 1999, Hawkins 2010, Jansen 2011, Kazin 1998, Laclau 2007, Moffitt 2016, Ostiguy 2009, Taggart 2000).[3] However, most studies of this connection have focused on populism's tendency to valorize experiential folk wisdom and 'common sense' while criticizing expertise (Cramer 2016, 123–130; Hawkins 2010, 7; Hofstadter 1962; 2008[1964]; Oliver & Rahn 2016; Saurette & Gunster 2011; Wodak 2015, 22). This article shows, both theoretically and empirically, that *counterknowledge*, allegedly supported by alternative inquiry, is another salient strategy of questioning mainstream policies in a populist style, at least in my case of contemporary right-wing populism. An analysis of knowledge claims in Finnish anti-immigrant online publics, by computational and interpretive methods, reveals a multi-faceted view: while often subscribing to fringe populist views, many anti-immigration activists nevertheless claim to hold knowledge, truth and evidence in high esteem, even professing strictly positivist views, and strongly opposing ambivalent or relativist truth orientations. They mostly do not oppose expertise on the grounds of 'folk wisdom' or experiential knowledge, like we might assume if applying the literature on populism and knowledge to them (Cramer 2016, 123–130; Hawkins 2010, 7; Hofstadter 1962; 2008[1964]; Oliver & Rahn 2016; Saurette & Gunster 2011). Instead,

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[3] My view of populism is to understand it as a cultural repertoire, a set of political tools which pit a valorized 'people' against a corrupt 'elite' (Swidler 1986; Lamont & Thévenot [eds.] 2000), rather than an as an overarching and coherent value-system such as an ideology (also see Aslanidis 2015; Jansen 2011; Moffitt 2016 on this emerging cultural sociological understanding of populism). As for argumentation, I understand it through the pragmatist sociological perspective of Boltanski & Thévenot's justification theory (1999, 2006) as a communicative activity based on moral habitual practices which are not only discursive, linguistic, or fully relativist, but embodied and contingent on the material reality. Despite the many differences, there is also significant potential for compatibility between Boltanski & Thévenot's theory and that of argumentation theory, particularly the concept of *endoxa* (Van Eemeren 2010, 111) as well as Wodak's (2015) framework of *topoi*, but this discussion will have to take place elsewhere.

they advocate a particular kind of objectivist counter-expertise. For them, it is the 'multiculturalist elite' who are 'post-truth'.

This article contributes to the study of populism and provides a more nuanced analysis for public debates on 'post-truth politics'. As I will show, there are reasons to believe that counterknowledge is a primary strategy of contemporary anti-immigration radical right-wing populism. The valorization of experiential 'common sense' in favour of expertise is more likely typical of rural populism, on which the 'epistemological populism' literature is mostly based (Hofstadter 1962, Kazin 1998). In this sense, this article also contributes to the ongoing discussion on the relationship between populism and the radical right (see Stavrakakis et al. 2017), by noting a possible divergence in the epistemological argumentation of these interconnected but distinct political modes, and highlights the need for further empirical work on varying populisms.

Epistemological Populism and Counterknowledge

A political epistemology that valorizes "the knowledge of 'the common people,' which they possess by virtue of their proximity to everyday life", has been termed *epistemological populism* by Saurette & Gunster (2011, 199). Such a tendency to eschew experts in favour of 'folk wisdom' is a well-known tool of populism (Cramer 2016, 123–130; Hawkins 2010, 7; Hofstadter 1962; 2008[1964]; Oliver & Rahn 2016; Wodak 2015, 22), while something similar has been identified in recent public debates in Europe over Brexit, and the presidency of Donald Trump in the US. Such arguments often claim that 'the common people' have had 'enough of experts telling them what to do', and that it is the 'common people' who hold true knowledge, gained via their everyday experiences, from which the experts are claimed to have become estranged. But this is an overly simplistic view of contesting epistemic authority (Harambam & Aupers 2014) in contemporary populist politics.

While epistemological populism eschews expertise altogether and seeks knowledge in the 'hearts' or experiences of the 'common people', I propose the concept of *counterknowledge* to mean contesting epistemic authorities by advocacy of alternative knowledge authorities. These two concepts, epistemological populism and counterknowledge, can be used for a more

nuanced analysis of 'post-truth politics', I argue. In the case at hand, I ask whether Finnish online anti-immigrant activists and countermedia employ epistemological populism, counterknowledge, or both. How do they use them, what does this tell us the about link between populism and knowledge, and 'post-truth politics' more broadly?

Counterknowledge was usefully defined by Gosa (2011, 5) – in a very different scene, black American hip-hop culture – as "an alternative knowledge system ... challenging white dominated knowledge industries such as the academia or the mainstream press". In Gosa's case, artists and hip-hop fans try to explain experienced racial inequality in a political sphere that claims to adhere to racial equality by constructing 'alternative knowledge' about elite dominance. It is claimed, for instance, that successful black rappers (such as Jay-Z, Nas and Kanye West) are puppets of the Illuminati – that a Masonic plot of white supremacists has hijacked hip-hop to manipulate blacks and keep them subjugated, and blacks should "wake-up and reclaim hip hop as a tool of black empowerment" (Gosa 2011, 9) and "question the information they regularly receive from school and the mainstream media" (Gosa 2011, 12). The creation and dissemination of counterknowledge has political aims. This may seem like a leap from Nordic nationalists, but Gosa notes that very similar epistemological argumentation can be used by right-wing counterknowledge:

> In this respect, my case of hip hop conspiracy theory is analogous to the Barack Obama conspiracy theories forwarded by the conservative Tea Party and the 'Birther Movement.' Since the 2008 election of Obama as the first black president of the United States, these groups have used Internet media to spread the rumor that Obama is a Kenyan-born Muslim, a socialist, and that he attended terrorist training schools in Indonesia during his childhood ... these conspiracy theories are used by some whites to voice racial anxiety and concern over the shifting racial demographics of the country (Gosa 2011, 15).

The creation and communication of counterknowledge is also noted by Mosca and della Porta (2009) as one way social movements mobilize, by creating *epistemic communities* to counter those of the establishment, and construct new identities. Thus, counterknowledge can be defined more broadly as *alternative knowledge which challenges establishment knowledge, replacing*

knowledge authorities with new ones, thus providing an opportunity for political mobilization. What makes both 'epistemological populism' and counterknowledge particularly usable for populist mobilization is the fact that populism typically challenges the elite in terms of *political* power, while epistemological populism and counterknowledge challenge *knowledge* elites. These strategies both complement a populist programme.

Knowledge in a Social Context

Recent research in social psychology highlights the potential impact of political strategies which challenge mainstream knowledge, since it shows that (alternative) knowledge authorities can easily overshadow the evidence behind this knowledge in a social and political context. Firstly, people are uncomfortable with gaps in causal narratives and tend to fill them with anything (Lewandowsky et al. 2012a; 2012b), emphasizing the importance of narratives for understanding knowledge. Moreover, the phenomenon of *cultural cognition* means we tend to believe knowledge claims that confirm our existing socially held world-views, rather than basing assessments of claims on analysis of truth value (Bessi et al. 2015; Kahan 2010; Kahan et al. 2010; Kahan et al. 2011; Lewandowsky et al. 2012a; 2012b). Even corrections of clearly false information are rarely accepted if they are dissonant with peer group beliefs (Nyhan & Reifler 2010). If the results of a belief lead to political implications that run counter to what you and your peer group believe is 'right', those beliefs tend to be rejected even in the face of hard evidence (Lewandowsky et al. 2012a; 2012b). Moreover, knowledge that is relevant for politics is often social knowledge, which is "justified by contextually, historically, and culturally variable (epistemic) criteria of reliability" which "implies that a community may use, presuppose and define knowledge as 'true belief' what members of another community or period may deem to be 'mere' or 'false' belief, ideology, prejudice or superstition" (Van Dijk 2014, 21). These findings help us understand the social mechanisms of accepting knowledge.

Sociology, on the other hand, has long since noted both the cultural bases of cognition (Brekhus 2015) and the proliferation and deterioration of knowledge authorities in modern public spheres, which is a discursive opportunity for counterknowledge production, since most of our knowledge

is acquired from others via discourse (Van Dijk 2014, 68, 141). Since we cannot live our lives based on self-researched evidence-based knowledge, we must rely on epistemic authorities (Baurmann 2007; Giddens 1991, 22; Levy 2007). Even though "the knowledge incorporated in modern forms of expertise is in principle available to everyone" (Giddens 1991, 30), not all have "the available resources, time and energy to capture it" in all cases (Giddens 1991, 30). If this is the case, "how do you choose which expert to believe?" (Knight 2000, 24). Belief in 'alternative knowledge' is not mere irrationality, but something that results from the realities of modernity, particularly "ontological insecurity" (Aupers 2012, 22). But to switch from believing traditional knowledge authorities to counterknowledge authorities is merely "a transfer of faith" (Giddens 1991, 23). And through the deterioration of established knowledge authorities (Aupers 2012), questioning established knowledge in one field tends to reinforce a tendency to believe counterknowledge in other fields as well: "The more seriously conspiracies are taken, the less trust can be placed in the centres of authority. If conspiracy is everywhere – embedded in the churches, universities, government, banks, the mass media – then no knowledge promulgated by such institutions can be trusted" (Barkun 1994, 249).

The sociological understanding of counterknowledge advocated here is in clear distinction from Thompson's popular definition of counterknowledge as *misinformation* – knowledge that "purports to be knowledge" but "can be shown to be untrue" (Thompson 2008, 2). Most counterknowledge does *not* counter knowledge that is in fact (easily) falsifiable, at least by the layperson, nor is counterknowledge *necessarily* wrong; even conspiracies have been known to exist (Bale 2007; Keeley 1999). Taken together, these insights suggest that 'fact-checking' has limited utility in public debates. Instead of truth value alone, the social origins, meanings and implications of knowledge claims are crucial. In this work, I do not seek to confirm or falsify knowledge claims, but to study their political use.

The Sociology of Conspiracy Theory

Conspiracism, or conspiracy theory, is by far the most commonly identified form of counterknowledge in connection with populism. It is a type of counterknowledge particularly suited for populist framing, because it

posits that *the common people are misled in secrecy* by *an elite* – making conspiracism explicitly political in a populist fashion. The connection was most famously made in 1964 by Hofstadter, who defines the "paranoid style" as "a way of seeing the world and of expressing oneself", in which "the feeling of persecution is central, and it is indeed systematized in grandiose theories of conspiracy", while "the spokesman of the paranoid style" feels "righteousness" and a "moral indignation" (Hofstadter 2008[1964], 4). It is a Manichean outlook in that the world consists of good and evil, in perpetual combat – and as such, is very similar to the political outlook of populism (Oliver & Wood 2014).

However, the scholar whose work on conspiracism is most relevant to a sociological understanding of populism is Fenster, who defines conspiracy theory as "the conviction that a secret, omnipotent individual or group covertly controls the political and social order or some part thereof" (Fenster 2008, 1). It carries a promise of redemption, much like populism (Canovan 1999): "anyone with enough fortitude and intelligence can find and properly interpret the evidence that the conspiracy makes available" (Fenster 2008, 8). Conspiracy theories are, indeed, a particular view of democracy: "embedded within many conspiracy theories and their understanding of power [...] is a longing for a better, more transparent and representative elected government" (Fenster 2008, 12). As such, Fenster understands conspiracy sociologically, in terms of cultural practices, positing that "while [conspiracism] operates distinctly in different cultures and historical periods, some of its basic forms and practices remain consistent" (Fenster 2008, 19). For him, conspiracy theory is "an interpretive framework" (Fenster 2008, 95) more specifically "a complex political and cultural rhetoric and means of seeing the world" (Fenster 2008, 36). Conspiracism provides ontological security by explaining the unexplained (Nefes 2013), or as Thompson (2008, 146) puts it:

> it is comforting to believe that a psychic can put you in touch with your loved ones, or that eating broccoli will prevent you getting cancer; it is oddly reassuring to know that apparently random acts of evil are being coordinated by a satanic conspiracy. The practitioners of counter-knowledge teach us that the universe is not arbitrary, that things happen for a reason.

Besides conspiracy theory being a "populist theory of power" (Fenster 2008, 89), I would like to add that it is also a populist theory of *knowledge*. It proceeds from the assumption that 'the truth is out there' – that is, *secret knowledge exists, withheld by the establishment, but attainable, assuming sufficient dedication.* The elite holds not just secret power, but secret knowledge – which should be challenged, claims the conspiracist. In fact, the conspiracist raises herself to the position of an alternative knowledge authority, a true expert instead of 'false experts leading us astray'. As such, conspiracism is a type of counterknowledge *par excellence.* As it longs for truth and liberation, its objectives are laudable, even though its methodology is often defective (also see Dixon 2012). It constructs a narrative which attempts to "restore a sense of agency, causality and responsibility" (Knight 2000, 21) in a complex world.

Conspiracy theories tend to be supported by those cynical about politics in general (Miller et al. 2015; Swami et al. 2010) – particularly by minorities and the underprivileged (Stempel et al. 2007). This supports their role as counterknowledge salient for populist mobilization, since they are not mere rumours believed by irrational people, but alternative explanations which challenge the mainstream, providing political fuel. They often reverse the power-relations between the in-group and the out-group. Sapountzis & Condor (2013) show that Greeks who voice nationalistic sentiments against the Republic of Macedonia used conspiratorial arguments to present Macedonians as benefiting from an unjust secret international power game, claiming that they are in fact the oppressors and the Greeks the oppressed – when the mainstream understanding is the reverse (see also Koronaiou et al. 2015). A similar dynamic is reflected in Western fears of Islamization: the minority is presented as a conspiratorial global threat to justify strong countermeasures, as I will show in my empirical analysis.

All in all, 'alternative' orientations to knowledge seem to be integral strategies in populist politics. However, these orientations may take many forms, not only valorization of experience-based 'common sense', called 'epistemological populism' by Saurette & Gunster (2011), and often identified in the past decades of populism studies (Cramer 2016, 123–130; Hawkins 2010, 7; Hofstadter 1962; 2008[1964]; Oliver & Rahn 2016). Another, less studied form is counterknowledge, in which alternative knowledge and authorities are proposed – sometimes in the form of conspiracy theory.

Data

As empirical material, I look at an anti-immigration countermedium founded in 2014 *(MV-lehti*, 'WTF Media'), widely considered by the mainstream media as a 'fake news' site (YLE 16 Sep 2016), and an anti-immigration online forum *(Hommaforum*; see footnote 1 on p. 2), both popular in the Finnish online public sphere (see Table 1). While the WTF dataset contains less posts because of the nature of the medium (only administrators can post), since it gets more views per post, the societal relevance of the two datasets is roughly comparable.

Table 1. Data.

Name	Description	Popularity	Dataset (06/2015–05/2016)
MVlehti.net (WTF)	"Mitä Vittua?!" ("What the Fuck?!"), anti-immigration populist countermedium founded in 2014	800,000 weekly unique visitors; in top 20 of Finnish websites (Kaleva 25 Mar 2015)	N = 13,497 news articles and other posts
Hommaforum.org (Homma, see endnote 1)	Well-established anti-immigration discussion forum founded in 2008	2 million weekly views (Hommaforum statistics 2016), 10,000 registered users, the top 10 of which account for 10% of posts	N = 318,081 forum posts

The data collection timespan for both was a full year during the most intense debates over immigration, ignited by the refugee crisis, from June 2015 to May 2016. As can be seen in Figure 1, the crisis was clearly visible as a peak in Hommaforum posts, whereas WTF has gradually increased

its activity, posting three times as often in May 2016 as it did in June 2015 (see Figure 2).
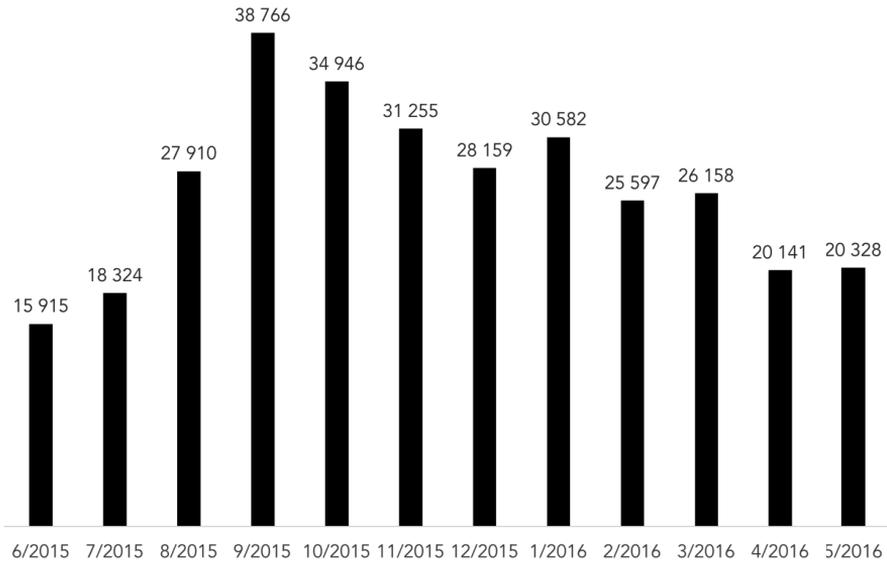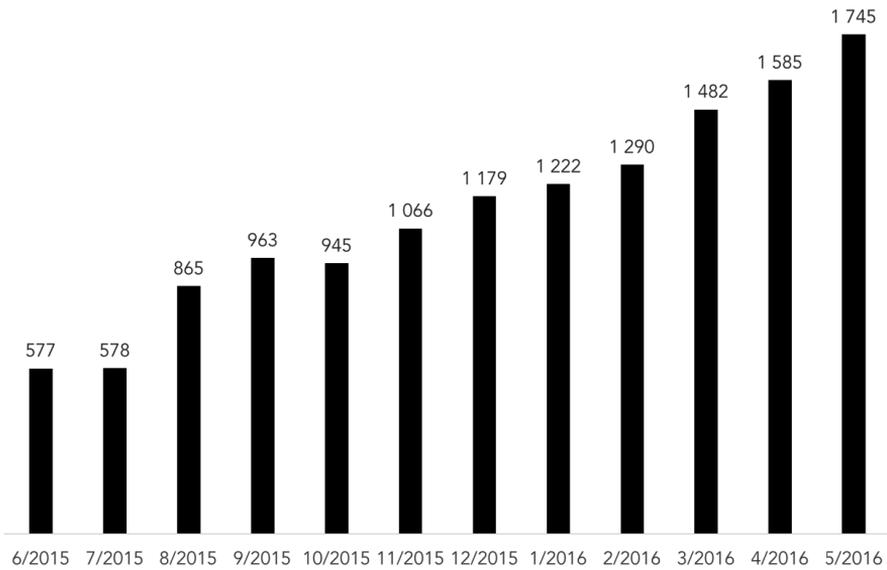

Figure 1. Posts per month on Hommaforum.

Figure 2. Posts per month in WTF Media.

Analysis

Topic modeling (Blei 2012; Evans 2014; Meeks & Weingart 2012; Mohr & Bogdanov 2013) is a computational methodology associated with computational social science and the 'big data' movement (Bail 2014; Lazer et al. 2009). In brief, it recognizes repeating patterns of word usage in text. When used by humanities scholars, topic models are used to assess which 'topics' (themes) texts are 'about'. But when word usage patterns are taken to be traces of social activity (Babones 2016), and especially when we know the data contains texts about a particular theme, they may be interpreted by sociologists as frames or other cultural constructs (Ylä-Anttila, Eranti & Kukkonen forthcoming, DiMaggio et al. 2013, Levy & Franklin 2013). The potential advantages of topic modeling are the ability to analyse larger datasets than would be practical manually; the exploratory, inductive, 'grounded' discovery of unexpected patterns; reproducibility; and the ability to quantify qualitative observations, such as the prevalence of a discussion.

I use MALLET's (Machine Learning for Language Toolkit, McCallum 2002) implementation of the most common topic modeling algorithm, LDA (Latent Dirichlet Allocation, Blei et al. 2003), an unsupervised machine learning method, which means that the researcher offers no input as to how the data should be classified.

> LDA [...] assumes that there are a set of topics in a collection (the number is specified in advance) [...] Terms that are prominent within a topic are those that tend to occur in documents together more frequently than one would expect by chance [...] each document exhibits those topics with different proportions (DiMaggio et al. 2013, 577–578).

In even more simplistic terms, the researcher gives MALLET a dataset of documents and the number of topics she wishes to find, which returns that number of word-clusters consisting of words which often occur in the same document. While interpreting conversations based solely on word frequency may seem crude, the word-clusters are surprisingly meaningful, as I will show. In this paper, I consider them to represent frames: particular ways, practices and habits of interpreting issues (Ylä-Anttila, Eranti &

Kukkonen forthcoming, Entman 1993, Nisbet 2009). Frames identify relevant themes and present interpretations of them, and as such, the same themes are often discussed in my data using different frames. For example, there is clearly much thematic overlap in the frames labelled *understanding, truth* and *beliefs* below, but their framing differs.

Both datasets were included in the same model to look for frames that may or may not be used in both (WTF and Hommaforum). I use a 200-topic LDA model. Nearly all the 200 word clusters were distinct, recognizable frames in the data, which indicates good model fit – but most were about themes not directly relevant to the study at hand (for example: economic policy, football, motorcycles). After a qualitative examination based on the literature discussed above, I discarded 186 frames and selected 14 dealing with knowledge in one way or another, and named them (see Table 2). Details on the modeling, selection and interpretation of data can be found in the methodological appendix. Next, I qualitatively analyse the Hommaforum threads selected (11 threads, 1,442 messages out of 318,081 total) and WTF posts (81 posts out of 13,497 total) in which the selected frames were used. In this research design, the topic model is used to select material for qualitative analysis in a way that is more reproducible and less subjective than qualitative selection would be, and permits the use of a larger dataset. The sample quotes were selected to be as representative as possible of the described frame, but only cover a fraction of the material used for the analysis.

Table 2. Selected frames categorized in the themes of knowledge, counterknowledge and conspiracy, named by the author, their top words translated by the author, and their frequencies.

KNOWLEDGE

truth (#73)	understanding (#110)	beliefs (#151)	research (#163)	academia (#186)
truth (2028)	understand (1278)	believe (1385)	research (1748)	university (1786)
conversation (1909)	complete (710)	actually (905)	relate (752)	professor (1167)
media (1796)	reason (681)	realise (878)	example (742)	researcher (1029)
opinion (1743)	thought (542)	understand (866)	result (726)	research (noun) (783)
present (1546)	problem (531)	feel (759)	effect (634)	expert (447)
claim (noun) (1527)	reality (491)	live (739)	reason (595)	helsinki (432)
fact (1450)	habit (467)	reason (737)	found (582)	science (307)
claim (verb) (1291)	about (426)	know (731)	difference (554)	political (282)
try (1108)	think (388)	reality (709)	often (538)	research (verb) (261)
speak (1076)	belief (377)	business (692)	phenomenon (508)	discipline (234)

COUNTERKNOWLEDGE

climate change (#7)	medicine (#108)	quantification (#133)	intelligence (#162)	wtf (#166)
temperature (522)	doctor (1241)	amount (3171)	intelligence (795)	wtf (6506)
degree (305)	treatment (781)	percentage (2668)	race (508)	newspaper (6394)
rise (341)	patient (695)	number (2402)	gene (457)	mainstream media (1790)
climate (322)	disease (586)	great (1566)	evolution (445)	story (1611)
cause (303)	hospital (577)	last (1545)	intelligent (441)	media (1602)
warm (288)	illness (472)	finland (1400)	african (421)	reader (1270)
warming (260)	medicine (438)	statistics (1199)	species (410)	publish (1080)
atmosphere (257)	treat (421)	calculate (1039)	iq (363)	ilja[4] (1056)
water (257)	cause (397)	part (908)	test (348)	write (1029)
climate change (254)	hiv (304)	research (822)	africa (345)	finland (943)

CONSPIRACY

power (#11)	jews (#37)	mainstream media (#128)	eurabia (#183)
political (4203)	jew (2656)	media (5251)	europe (3175)
power (1970)	israel (2072)	journalist (4273)	people (1030)
politician (1690)	nazi (419)	story (3601)	world (845)
act (1361)	palestinian (370)	yle[5] (2782)	great (816)
politics (1287)	arab (273)	article (2662)	european (803)
great (1200)	palestine (262)	news (2157)	war (793)
people (1043)	holocaust (256)	hesari[6] (2066)	new (731)
benefit (962)	israeli (254)	newspaper (1501)	power (691)
leader (914)	germany (249)	read (1362)	destroy (600)
action (893)	area (244)	write (1227)	country (556)

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[4] Ilja Janitskin, founder of WTF Media.

[5] The Finnish national broadcaster.

[6] Colloquialism for *Helsingin Sanomat,* the largest Finnish daily newspaper.

Knowledge

The model did not find frames the researcher could identify from the outset as dealing with experiential knowledge or 'common sense'. This is a first sign that they may not be very prevalent in the data. However, it did find four frames dealing with *knowledge* more broadly; if valorization of 'folk wisdom' suggested by the 'epistemological populism' literature plays a significant role in the discussions, it should be found here. First, identified by words such as 'truth', 'opinion' and 'fact', the obviously epistemological frame of **truth** (#73, see Table 2) is salient both on WTF and Hommaforum. On WTF, the mainstream media are branded liars, as WTF identifies as a 'truth medium' (4 Nov 2015) instead of 'fake news' (as the mainstream media claims) because it has no journalistic limitations on what can be published, thus avoiding bias. To uphold truth, it is claimed, freedom of speech must be absolute:

> There is no partial censorship, it either exists or doesn't ...
> Freedom of speech is democracy's most important foundation, without it democracy doesn't exist ... They don't want to silence WTF Media because it's lying, they want to silence us because we tell the truth they don't want to hear (WTF Media, 4 May 2016).[7]

At the outset, it is evident that the framing of truth, here, looks similar to populist framing of power and democracy, in the sense that all limitations by liberal-democratic institutions and mainstream media – checks and balances that are in place to protect minorities – should be lifted to uphold true freedom and democracy. More specifically, the absolutism on truth on Hommaforum, takes the form of an explicit empiricist-positivist philosophy of science and an 'engineer mentality' in that truths about society are assumed to be accessible by scientific methods, and these truths could be adopted for governance; but the multiculturalist-relativist hegemony and the corrupt research community prevents such work. This is exemplified in several quotes below. An empiricist-positivist attitude could cut

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[7] All translations from Finnish by the author. WTF often re-publishes other sites' posts verbatim, and does not always make this clear. I assume content nevertheless reflects WTF Media's positions, and apologize if I have misattributed quotations.

through the 'lies' of multiculturalists, who are accused of basing their arguments on feelings and moral relativism instead of empirical data.

> When statistics are published that the 'musulmaniacs' rape 17 times more than native Finns, they argue you shouldn't publish statistics because someone might be offended (Hommaforum user, 30 Dec 2015).

> Rational, evidence-based thought is our weapon against opinions based on feelings (WTF Media, 22 Apr 2016).

Perhaps not incidentally, several nicknames on Hommaforum, as well as self-reported professions, hint at a high percentage of engineers and other technical professionals, and the users are mostly male (Hommaforum statistics 2016). Gambetta and Hertog (2016) have recently noticed that engineers are disproportionally represented among not only right-wing extremists but Islamist terrorists, and explain this with a mindset that seeks order and hierarchy, often found among engineers.[8] In my data, explicit and implicit blame for 'distorted', 'subjective' and 'biased' views on truth is typically imputed to post-positivist social science, which is linked with the false belief – it is argued – that reality can be studied through texts. 'Real' knowledge could be found by 'real' science, which many contributors claim to represent and/or advocate, not common sense and certainly not the humanities. Interestingly, in this respect the activists studied here diverge strongly from the conspiracy theorists studied by Harambam & Aupers (2014), who were strongly critical of science precisely because its claimed material reductionism. In fact, many Hommaforum writers engage in specifically the kind of 'boundary work' identified by Harambam & Aupers, protecting the perceived 'purity' of science from non-scientific (non-measurable) claims.

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[8] See also van der Waal & de Koster (2015), who claim that education tends to decrease conservatism because of *dereification.*

> Apparently, the reporter believes there is no reality outside
> texts and words; that words, like spells, change the reality
> to what he wants (Hommaforum user, 8 Feb 2016).

Frame #110, labelled **'understanding'** and marked by the words 'to understand', 'cause', 'thought' and 'reality', frames understanding of reality in terms of social construction and cognitive bias. These were claimed to make anti-racists unable to see the negative effects of immigration. Many take the position that leftists and cultural liberals are blinded by their cultural relativism, which makes them unable to understand 'the objective truth'. The frame connects understanding with mass media, their reliability, and freedom of speech: if the media are biased and freedom of speech limited, how can an accurate view of reality be formed? What multiculturalists are accused of by Hommaforum contributors and WTF Media is a dishonest and flawed understanding of reality.

> Attitudes towards refugees are an excellent example of
> how cognitive bias affects people. The tendency to skate
> over all negative consequences is a bias, in which one
> thinks one's own impression is based in reason (Hommaforum user, 19 Nov 2015).

This claim of a biased understanding of reality is strictly limited to the political opposition, who are allegedly blinded by their ideology – inhabiting a false consciousness (Van Dijk 2014, 141). The argument is based on social psychological studies of cognitive bias, but is not extended to cover the possible cognitive bias of the immigration critics themselves. In such messages, the contributors are building and strengthening their own epistemic community, one which has particular criteria of validity for knowledge, which are considered superior to others (Van Dijk 2014, 21, 144, 147–152).

> The repression of [the multiculturalists'] own ideological
> rotten evilness is often caused by cognitive dissonance so
> deep they can't fight it any other way than to stigmatize
> others as 'evil' and dismiss their opinions (WTF Media, 16
> Feb 2016).

The frame of **beliefs** (#151) is surprisingly focused on gender, even though this was not apparent from the top words. Women (and particularly gender studies) are blamed for non-positivist and non-rational

worldviews resulting in detrimental policy (immigration). In many Hommaforum messages, women are claimed to be irrational in their beliefs and to make detrimental immigration and multiculturalism possible by relying on feelings (and, indeed, common sense) instead of reason. Feminism, gender and ethnicity studies are particularly branded incoherent madness because of their lack of empiricist-rationalist logic.

> In 2016 we are seeing in all its brutality what happens when the woman gives up her natural role as homemaker and mother, and starts channeling her caring instincts and weak prognostic abilities towards primitive Arab men (Hommaforum user, 8 Mar 2016).

Many messages in frame #163 (**research**) represent a kind of citizen science, framing politics through research and research through politics, while at the same time denouncing academic research that has political aims. Contributors argue that proper research could provide arguments in favour of their own political views, such as showing that Muslims and Somalis are prone to commit rape and avoid paid work. But researchers are corrupt and misled by their ideology. Existing research on immigration was largely condemned as wrong.

> Fem... I mean gender studies' favourite argument is that outsiders cannot have the expertise to comment on the quality of their research. Only those patting the backs of gender studies scholars do. There are scientific disciplines in which that actually applies (as well as specialities of engineering; I don't think there are more than a hundred people in the world who understand the specialty I myself work in), but many 'humanities' have, after being politicized, become totally indefensible (Hommaforum user, 18 Feb 2016).

> [In a discussion about a social-psychological study on how immigrant identities are 'negotiated' within societal structures] Is a Somali rapist somehow 'negotiating' with society? ... That's just abstract poetry, how can you get a PhD in that (Hommaforum user, 19 Feb 2016).

Lastly, and predictably, in frame #186, **academia** is framed as a corrupt insiders' club and academics portrayed as a group of good-for-nothing layabouts (see also Cramer 2016).

> The claims of ideologically and politically biased research-ers are wrong and have been proven as such, which discredits their distorted and deceitful studies (Hommaforum user, 17 Feb 2016).

> Universities produce such 'top-class experts' as sociologists of celebration (this guy was presented as an expert on TV), researchers of light pollution (one of whom I personally know), scholars of the migration of ants and others you'd expect to find only in comic books (Hommaforum users, 4 Feb 2016).

While the quote above echoes a general distrust of academic expertise, I did not find arguments that I could interpret as valorization of common sense or personal experience in either Hommaforum or WTF Media. While this does not mean they do not exist at all, what can be said is that they are not very common. On the contrary, WTF articles and Hommaforum posts often voiced heavy reliance on evidence in knowledge claims, but often not the same evidence as used in the mainstream media, or at least not the same interpretations of it.

Counterknowledge

I will now move on to discussions that were tentatively identified at the outset as likely locations for counterknowledge production. The **climate change** frame (#7) consists largely (but by no means solely) of denialism and takes place mostly on Hommaforum, on which there is a 120-page debate on this subject. Both denialists and 'alarmists' reference a myriad of facts and measurements to support their arguments, and the discussion is largely technical in nature. In contrast, the WTF posts on climate change are unanimously denialist and reflect a more overtly political stance, even moral condemnation of climate change mitigation, rather than the more technical framing on Hommaforum.

> Surface stations 'observe' more warming than in the troposphere, several times more in fact. According to radio sensors, for almost 60 years the troposphere didn't warm at all even though CO2 levels increased. Thus, the anthropogenic global warming theory remains a theory (Hommaforum user, 31 May 2016).

> The climate hoax is a crime against humanity (WTF Media, 1 Nov 2015).

The **medicine** frame (#108) mostly comprises WTF posts on alternative medicine, such as the supposedly cancer-curing effects of baking soda and how 'Big Pharma' attempts to suppress this information. Interestingly, many Hommaforum contributors have strong views on alternative medicine and condemn it as 'quackery' and 'pseudoscience' – consistent with the dominant empiricist-positivist epistemological stance on the forum. WTF's infatuation with alternative medicine is also used by Hommaforum users as evidence of the site's unreliability.

> Even the most aggressive cancerous tumours have been eradicated with the help of baking soda (WTF Media, 30 Jul 2015).

> We're not talking about a serious news site here. Cancer is a kind of fungus cured by baking soda, yeah right (Hommaforum, 8 Nov 2015).

A distinct frame (#133) encompasses **quantification:** framing various policy areas in terms of numbers and statistics. Most often this relates to immigrant crime, especially rape statistics, and the over-representation of immigrants in them. The mainstream media and authorities are accused of covering up this issue, and WTF and other countermedia praised for reporting them truthfully. It is true that immigrants are over-represented in Finnish rape statistics (Lehti et al. 2014), and the mainstream media are indeed wary of reporting such statistics, because they may be unreliable for a variety of structural and cultural reasons, including the possibility that rapes committed by immigrants may have higher reporting rates. And the mainstream media does have safeguards in place against stigmatizing minorities, for example, not mentioning the immigrant status of criminals unless it is pertinent to the case. Justified or not, these are portrayed as 'sugar-coating' and/or 'cover-ups' by the radical populist right,

who claim such practices distort the public's view of immigrant criminality. Indeed, the dominant epistemology on Hommaforum claims that statistics can be taken as accurate descriptors of reality 'as is'. This highlights how counterknowledge is not necessarily 'lies' or 'fake', but an alternative *framing* of known facts, claimed to be the only true one. The usage of quantitative measurements on Hommaforum is not often used to *hide* overtly racist expressions, as is sometimes the case in politics, when extreme positions are framed in technical language to make them more acceptable. Instead, overtly racist positions are seemingly justified by statistics:

> In 2014 there were 713 suspected rapes in Finland, and since they estimate in the US that 65% of sexual assaults are not reported, the total number would be 1177 using the same percentage. There are more niggers in the US than we have thus far, so that percentage can be considered indicative at best (Hommaforum user, 30 Jun 2015).

In a similar vein, frame #162 concerns whether Africans have lower **intelligence** scores than Northern Europeans and Americans, whether this is the cause of African poverty and migration, and whether this should affect immigration policy. Engaging in citizen science to produce counterknowledge, these contributors spend considerable time in lengthy debates over this issue, citing studies left and right. They are far from unanimous on this: many are highly critical of claims that Europeans have higher IQ's or that IQ matters. However, those who believe that IQ is relevant claim it is an objective basis for racism – another example of a technical-rational frame posited as the 'only true one'.

> Intelligence testing is a fully neutral and objective yardstick for filtering those who attempt to enter the country. We can't read their thoughts, but we can measure their brain capacity. And it only takes ten minutes (Hommaforum user, 9 Jan 2016).

One contributor, particularly critical of the general tone of the thread, is quoted below at length because of his/her remarkably accurate take on so-called 'discussion board science', making the issue of overblown scientism apparent:

The book *IQ and the Wealth of Nations* is a typical inspiration for 'discussion board science'. It has been claimed again that pro-immigration people have been scientifically proven wrong and the integrity of their research is compromised by their 'unscientific liberalism' ... Where has this 'proof' been found? That's right, on discussion boards ... The hallmarks of 'discussion board science' include a general scientism: a compulsion for 'scientific proof' and the emphasis on how 'science' has 'proven' this and that, even though such an attitude is wholly alien to actual scientific research. Misunderstandings on the possibilities and limits of science, reducing complex moral issues to 'scientific' yes/no experiments ... and a refusal to believe how difficult and often futile it is to apply scientific findings to societal questions (Hommaforum user, 18 Feb 2016).

Frame #166 lets us see how Hommaforum talks about **WTF Media.** The reception is mostly positive, despite some condemning WTF's 'obvious' neo-Nazism and apparent political connections with Russia, using these connections to frame it as unreliable. Many praise WTF for 'saying what others won't'; even though much of the information might be bogus, some of it is correct and not available elsewhere. The participants emphasize that the same scepticism should be felt against mainstream media and countermedia, and that smart media consumers can assess information themselves, without gatekeepers, like a rational *homo economicus* on a marketplace of ideas. The ideal rational individual can make decisions himself and does not need the 'nannying' of media gatekeepers and watchdogs (see Hellman & Katainen 2015). Posts exhibit an absolutist view on freedom of speech: even if they condemn WTF's overtly anti-Semitic and conspiracist content, they are prepared to fight for its right to publish it. This framing of freedom of speech is reminiscent of the populist framing of power: full and absolute liberty would result from 'true' rule of the people, which could be realized if only the corrupt authorities be removed.

Conspiracy

Moving on to the most popularly recognized counterknowledge construction in populism, that of conspiracism: when discussing **power** and its locations (#11), both Hommaforum users and WTF posts often use a conspiracist logic. This claims that 'the elite' holds true power in society be-

hind the scenes. The elite is claimed to comprise – among others – socialists, who have since the fall of the Soviet Union teamed up with capitalists, and formed 'the Euroviet Union' *(Eurostoliitto,* a term possibly coined by Timo Soini, the long-term chairman of the right-wing populist Finns Party, see Soini 26 Apr 2010; WTF Media 10 Apr 2016). They "control the mass media" (WTF Media 22 Feb 2015), thus controlling society through the production of "consensus reality" (WTF Media 31 May 2016). They have enabled supposedly destructive mass immigration through their "elite plan" (Hommaforum user, 29 Mar 2016). But on Hommaforum, there are also sceptics who dismiss conspiracy theories.

> A hierarchic organization can achieve great power and spread the agenda of a small top elite efficiently ... it is imperative that this organization is secret since the common people cannot know who pulls the strings ... the primary channel of furthering this agenda is organizations such as the Bilderberg group, the Trilateral commission and CFR (Council of Foreign Relations). Another channel is local freemason lodges (WTF Media, 4 Jan 2016).

A gender framing also figures prominently in connection with the power frame, as the 'softness' and permissiveness of society, manifested in multiculturalism and immigration, is claimed to result from a 'feminization' of society advanced by the inclusion of women in politics. Women in some posts are said to be those holding power as 'feminism has gone too far':

> Politics, the judicial system, the bureaucracy, the media, the hostility and belittlement of our own men by our women. This is all because of feminism gone too far. Muslim mass immigration is only the symptom, feminism is the disease (Hommaforum user, 1 Jun 2016).

More often, however, women are portrayed as the 'useful idiots' who make the social liberal agenda possible because of their essential biologically-determined caring and compassion; they are being duped by the elite because they cannot participate rationally in politics:

> In the multiculturalist siege, women are mostly so-called useful idiots rather than the ones to blame because multiculturalism is mostly advanced by cynical old men with their own selfish interests and for that the softness of women is an apt tool. Women buy the media sob stories about dead kids in the Mediterranean (Hommaforum user, 4 May 2016).

The WTF posts in frame #37 on **Jews** represent classic anti-Semitic conspiracy theory – Jews are in control of much of society, the Holocaust did not happen, and so on:

> Jews have throughout history been connected to organized crime – usury, human trafficking, narcotics and corruption (WTF Media, 25 Nov 2015).

However, Hommaforum posts mentioning Jews are much more varied: only some posit anti-Semitic attitudes, whereas many frame their views with sympathy for the historical plight of the Jewish people and are especially supportive of modern-day Israel. Some Hommaforum users also were quick to condemn any theories about Jewish global dominance as conspiracist and thus unreliable, as in the following example:

> Here's a new interesting documentary worth watching on Jews [Posts link to anti-semitic documentary film on Youtube] (Hommaforum user, 18 June 2015).

> The merits of the maker of that 'documentary' include conspiracy movies on chemtrails and fluoride. I bet that's real high-quality investigative journalism! (Hommaforum user in reply to previous, 19 June 2015)

'Media', 'journalist', 'story', and the names of several Finnish **mainstream media** outlets mark frame #128. The media is largely discussed from a conspiracist perspective on both Hommaforum and WTF: it is claimed to be on the leftists' side; publishing lies about nationalists and censoring the truth about immigrants under the false ideology of 'political correctness':

'Mainstream media' has for good reason become an unsavoury concept in the eyes of the citizens. It works in the interest of the political and economic elite by systematically lying to the public about political projects dear to its heart, such as forced multiculturalism and the European Union (WTF Media, 5 Mar 2016).

Finally, frame #183 is about the **Eurabia** thesis: the conspiracy theory that European elites are secretly plotting to Islamize Europe through mass immigration, by weakening European culture and the European gene pool. Per the posts and articles here, the EU was founded by a conspiracy-leading freemason Austrian Jew who wanted to destroy European peoples by mixing Asian and 'Negroid' blood into the European bloodline. For at least a century now, a secret society of Marxists, anarchists, Jews and Freemasons (who some claim are led by George Soros) have been advancing their plot to destabilize and ultimately destroy European societies to create a New World Order, and multiculturalism is just a tool in this project. Again, a gender frame is surprisingly apparent: women are used by the elites, because they are easily controllable, being led by their emotions. A narrative emerges from these posts, both on WTF and Hommaforum, of a secret cabal trying to create a new pan-European race that would be more easily controlled than 'pure' Europeans. This is also why immigrants "do not get deported or even convicted of rape" according to WTF Media (21 Mar 2016). African and Middle Eastern immigrants raping European women is allegedly part of the plan to make the European gene pool more easily controllable by introducing less intelligent genetics. This is an all-encompassing conspiracy theory par excellence:

The New World Order championed by the American billionaire David Rockefeller and the Bilderberg Group, the combination of capitalism and authoritarianism, is coming [...] The Muslim conquest of Europe is a prologue for the destruction of Europeans (WTF Media 21 Mar 2016).

Discussion

The combination of computational and interpretive frame analysis used in this article made it possible to locate and study the framing of knowledge, counterknowledge and conspiracism in a large set of anti-immigration

online discussions and 'alternative news' in the Finnish public sphere – one which has seen an unprecedented right-wing populist uprising in the 2010s.

The discussions on conspiracy revealed a standard set of the 'usual suspects': Jews, Freemasons, Communists, the Bilderberg Society, bankers, multiculturalists, the media, the political left, and other elites, in various combinations depending on the writer, plotting in secret to take over the world while taking advantage of 'useful idiots' such as women in the process. While some of these claims are outlandish, it is not very useful to dismiss conspiracist framing as madness, considering its widespread acceptance in contemporary society. Instead, it should be understood as an absolutist orientation to power and democracy, one which divides the world into good and evil – just like populism – and an absolutist epistemological frame; one which claims most people are ignorant, and true knowledge hides behind the smoke and mirrors. Such interpretations of power currently carry immense weight politically. However, eagerness for 'proof' of the conspiracy's existence leads to glossing over any conflicting information, and an assumption that every clue is connected to the greater conspiracy, an attitude tuned to find proof of nefarious agency.

The clear-cut difference between right and wrong, those who are 'in the know' vs. the 'sheeple' (Harambam & Aupers 2014, 474) helps to explain why the discussions analysed here so often espoused an empiricist-positivist philosophy: conspiracy theory is an absolutist frame of knowledge just as populism is of power. Rather than embracing an ambivalent or relativist stance towards truth, as suggested by the 'post-truth' thesis, or a stance based on first-hand life experiences as more valuable than expertise (Saurette & Gunster 2011), the right-wing populists studied here instead generally endorse radical scientism. Their strong beliefs about using (statistical) science to arrive at truths about society, and to use these truths to manage societies 'objectively' and 'rationally', is their way of building an opposition between themselves – supposedly not only morally but epistemically right – and the 'misguided' elite, in a populist fashion. As crystallized in a final example from the data discussing Jussi Halla-aho, a right-wing populist blogger and leading anti-immigration activist figure: "He uses only unambiguous facts and draws conclusions directly from them. [...] Doing so always results in a text that is indisputable" (Hommaforum user, 25 Mar 2016). In this thinking, multiculturalists do not just have the

wrong opinions: they are wrong even about the basic mechanisms upon which any assessment of opinions should be built.

Populists have often been identified as critical of intellectuals and technocrats (Cramer 2016, 123–130; Hawkins 2010, 7; Hofstadter 1962; 2008[1964]; Oliver & Rahn 2016; Saurette & Gunster 2011; Wodak 2015, 22), but the right-wing populists studied here rather advocate a type of counterknowledge – a kind of 'objectivist' technocracy based on alternative knowledge authorities. This understanding should help us make more nuanced analyses of so-called 'post-truth politics' and populist epistemologies: alternative knowledge strategies can indeed function as populist tools, not only as simple anti-intellectualism but a multitude of critical strategies including a defense of positivism and empiricism. In its absolutism, this kind of counterknowledge does fit well with the populist Manichean frame of politics: opponents are deemed to be wrong not only in terms of morals, or knowledge, but in their view of what constitutes knowledge in the first place, that is, their epistemological premises about the world.

Future research on knowledge and populism should assess whether various populist movements tend to use different knowledge constructions. It seems plausible that the strong emphasis on counter-expertise found in this article is a feature of the particular media studied: an anti-immigration discussion board and a countermedia news site, which strategically focus on opposing dominant discourses on multiculturalism, and are produced by activists with aptitude and skill in information technology and communications. Such an activist profile is fairly typical of contemporary radical right-wing populist movements, which often employ online communications in their strategies. On the other hand, the roots of populism are in anti-modernization rural movements (see Kazin 1998), for which it is quite plausible to assume that valorization of 'folk wisdom' is more typical (Cramer 2016, 123–130; Hawkins 2010, 7; Hofstadter 1962; 2008[1964]), and of which there are still strong echoes in contemporary populist movements including Trumpism and the Finns Party (Ylä-Anttila & Ylä-Anttila 2015; Oliver & Rahn 2016). Many contemporary right-wing populist movements are amalgams of populist and nativist ideation. Their views and strategies regarding knowledge are affected by their specific combination of these repertoires. As such, studying populist knowledge-production

provides a promising avenue to further understanding populism in general, considering its central role as a populist repertoire. Populists are not just 'post-truth'; different populisms seem to have different truth orientations. The particular correlations between types of populism and types of truth orientations are a matter for future empirical work.

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Methodological Appendix to "Knowledge and Contemporary Populism: Contesting Epistemic Authority in Anti-Immigration Countermedia"

This methodological appendix clarifies some technical details about the process of creating and interpreting the topic model.

Firstly, the data for any computational text analysis must be pre-processed into a machine-readable format. That entails *scraping* the relevant text (in this case, from web pages) and *tokenization*, in that all punctuation and special characters must be removed so that the data only contains one word per line (a token). Also, *stop-words* must be removed: function words such as articles and prepositions which are not meaningful on their own. Finally, in the case of a highly-inflected language such as Finnish (words are modified with suffixes to express grammatical categories), the tokens must be *lemmatized*, returned to their dictionary forms, so that words such as *luen, luet, lukee* ('I read, you read, she reads') are recognized by the computer as instances of the word *lukea* (to read). I scraped and tokenized the dataset using the Beautiful Soup library in Python,[9] removed a custom list of stopwords for Finnish,[10] and lemmatized the data using the FinnPos toolkit (Silfverberg et al. 2015).

How should the number of topics be chosen? There are two main approaches: a quantitative and a qualitative one (see Chang et al. 2009). Since my study is of a mixed-methods bent, I used both quantitative and qualitative methods in choosing the topic count as well. Firstly, MALLET can calculate a measure of *model fit:* how likely would the actual data be, given the model we created? This measure is shown in Figure A1 for models of 150, 200 and 250 topics, each with 256 iterations of the model.

Also shown are models with two different MALLET settings regarding *hyperparameter optimization.* In brief, hyperparameters affect the distribution of topic probabilities, since optimizing them between iterations of the model lets some topics 'weigh' more (as is natural in text collections, some word-

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[9] https://www.crummy.com/software/BeautifulSoup/

[10] Available at http://counterknowledge2017.wordpress.com/

clusters being more prevalent than others). This generally improves model fit by enabling the model to include marginal topics, not just those associated with the most-used words, but can also go too far. High variance in topic probabilities creates models that comprise *mostly* these relatively rare topics, missing more general trends (Schöch 2016).
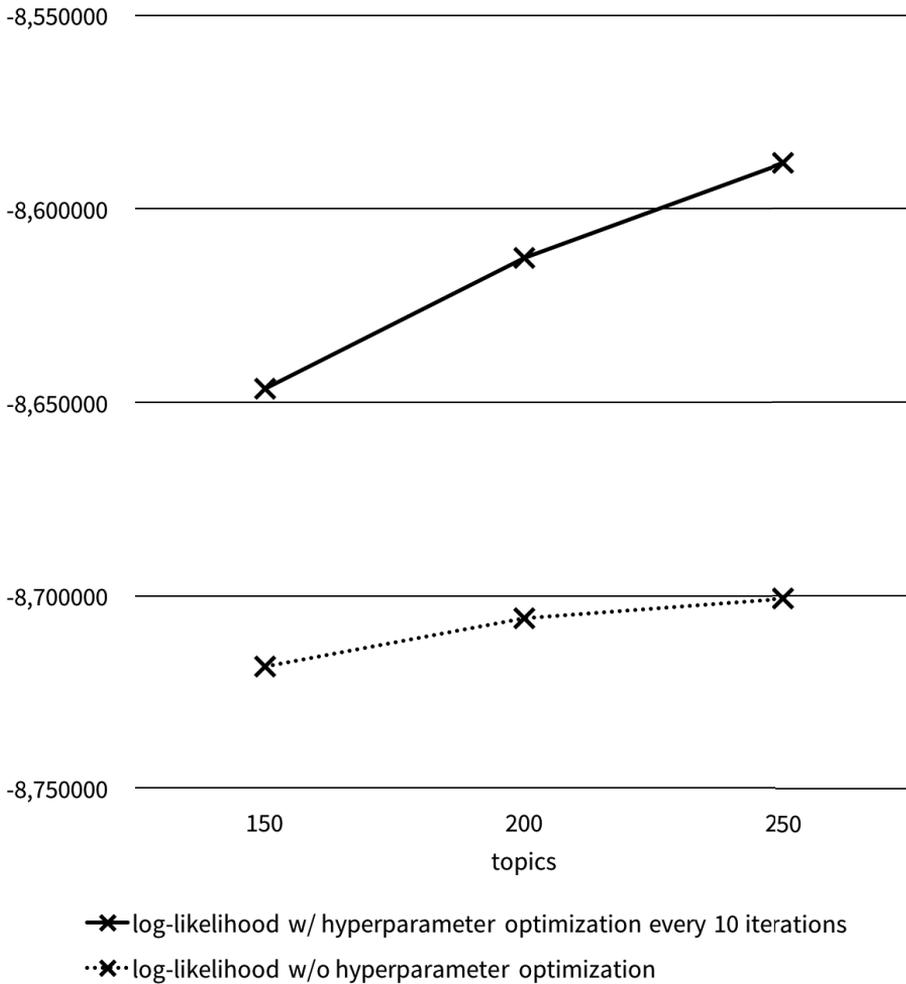

Figure A1. Model fit with different topic counts and MALLET hyperparameter optimization ON or OFF.

This leads us to the importance of qualitative work, the quantitative measure of model fit being meaningless if the model does not help in interpreting the data. As Figure A1 shows, in this data, topic counts of 150, 200 and 250 give an increasing log-likelihood number for model fit (measuring how likely it is that the model would generate the data), but increasing the topic count also means diminishing returns from topic modeling, as the researcher must interpret a larger number of word clusters. Hyperparameter optimization also clearly gives a better model fit here, letting the topics reflect both more and less prevalent discussions in the data.

Since I am interested in potentially marginal discussions as well, rather than the general trends in the data, I selected the model incorporating hyperparameter optimization. Qualitatively, looking at the word lists, this created a larger number of relevant topics for my research design, whereas without hyperparameter optimization the topics were too general. The model fit likelihood measure was also better quantitatively. As for topic count, I qualitatively compared the top words of the 200- and 250-topic models and noted that the same topics of interest were present in both models. Thus, despite the 250-topic model having better model fit likelihood, I selected the 200-topic model to make the qualitative work somewhat less laborious (with hyperparameter optimization, centre dot on the solid top line in Figure A1).

After running the model, the qualitative interpretation starts with the selection of relevant topics. We have previously documented a suggested procedure for this (Ylä-Anttila, Eranti & Kukkonen forthcoming). In a nutshell, I first use the lists of top words per topic (in this case, the top 20 words) to identify a preliminary label for the topic. If one cannot be distinguished based on the top 20 words, the topic is discarded as not coherent enough. If one can be distinguished but seems irrelevant for the research question, the topic is discarded as irrelevant. In this first phase, 17 of 200 topics were selected and the rest discarded – overwhelmingly because of irrelevance, not because of lack of coherence. Almost all 200 topics clearly represented a distinct frame, indicating good model fit.[11]

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[11] Word lists in Finnish for all 200 topics are available online at
http://counterknowledge2017.wordpress.com/

In the next step, I read through the top 10 documents (posts) for each of the 17 topics selected to check if they matched the preliminary label assigned in the previous step. In all 17, all 10 top documents matched the preliminary label, but three topics were identified in which almost every message was by a single author. This revealed that these word clusters were not actually formed from a socially shared frame but because of the idiosyncratic vocabulary of one prolific author. These three were discarded, leaving 14 frames for qualitative interpretation.

This selection of topics and their interpretation is of course to an extent subjective – but less subjective and more reproducible as a typical human-coded qualitative study of texts, since the classifications themselves are only based on measurable patterns, co-occurrences of words, rather than interpretation. I argue that this makes it a 'best of both worlds' approach, combining some of the quantitative measurement and reproducibility of computational methods with the sociological interpretation of qualitative analysis, with the former lending credibility, robustness and representativeness to the latter.

With regards to framing theory, which underlies the approach I have taken, it needs to be noted that rather than a sophisticated understanding of frames as non-conscious interpretive schemata used in face-to-face interaction, including non-verbal cues, in the vein of Goffman (1984), a computational method based on texts and word counts like used here is clearly not tenable. Instead, frames are understood here as implied linkages between two concepts present in texts, in which the other concept provides an interpretive frame for the other (see Ylä-Anttila, Eranti & Kukkonen forthcoming; Entman 1993; Nisbet 2009).

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