The power of being heard: How claims against racism are constructed, spread and listened to in a hybrid media environment

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Introduction

This chapter examines four mediated instances of intensified claims-making related to racism and racialization in Finland and Sweden. Two of these public debates centered around events that can be characterized as everyday non-violent acts of racialization in public space: nightlife harassment and ethnic profiling by the police. These testimonies caused uproars, but neither changed the dominant national narrative on racism nor shook the ingrained hierarchy of voices or the division of space within the media sphere. The other two public debates occurred after violent attacks conducted by neo-Nazis; in one attack, the victim was severely injured, the other was fatal. The first attack was the stabbing of Showan Shattak by a 30-year-old neo-Nazi on Möllevångstorget in Malmö in 2014; the second, was an aggravated assault that took place on the Helsinki Railway Square in 2016 and lead to the death of Jimi Karttunen.

In Sweden, Shattak soon became a symbol for the resistance to the normalization of extreme rightwing ideologies. His face and name were used as devices in anti-racist rallies and in public space in the form of graffiti and banderols, and much of the mainstream debate centered on him as an individual. In Finland, the fatal attack on Jimi Karttunen was continuously referred to on anti-racist social media sites and in campaign meetings as evidence of failed policy and lawmaking, but Karttunen himself, a white youth with a dubious past, did not become a symbol for the anti-racist struggle in the same sense as Shattak. Despite their differences, these two events became loci of the partially interconnected anti-racist movements in Sweden and Finland and soon developed into so-called “critical events” (Das, 1995; Espeland & Rogstad, 2013; Sökefeld, 2006) containing strong transnational dimensions and allowing a variety of new voices and perspectives to challenge the ingrained national narratives on racism and racialization.
In the longer run, however, the political significance of the four public debates on race and racialization remains ambivalent due to a variety of simultaneous processes: the tendency of elite and civil commentators alike to understand racialization as an individual problem rather than a social and political problem; the tendency to contest experiences of racism, even in the context of “support talk”, while relying on a paradigm of well-meaning colorblindness; and the tendency of elite politicians to engage publicly in racism scandals without a clear vision as to how to move forward on the level of policy and governance.

In this chapter, I will develop the points above in more detail by providing findings from an empirical analysis of mainstream newspapers, online discussions, and interviews, and by framing the discussion with the concepts of claims-making (Koopmans et al., 2005; Koopmans & Rucht, 2002) and political listening (Dreher, 2009; Abu Hamdan, 2015). My ambition is not to prove that these four events are examples of racism, but to evaluate how political claims, as understood by Koopmans et al. (2005), are constructed and circulated in a hybrid media sphere (Chadwick, 2013) when racism and racialization are discussed. I am interested in the meanings and consequences of these claims. In this chapter, I consider the claims of anti-racist activists within the broader frame of media and communication scholarship, identifying the demands of these claims-makers and of whom the demands are made, and answering the question of whether their claims are listened to, and how.

**Two forms of Nordic exceptionalism: Finland and Sweden**

The four events described above should not be seen as isolated events or individual tragedies with “lonely lunatics” as villains. Instead, they should be seen as evidence of the continuous and systematic infringement of individual rights and as events marked by the present understanding of history, contemporary political, ideological, and environmental developments in Europe, and the urban political culture in Helsinki and Malmö. Despite Finland and Sweden being neighboring countries, the differences in the above-mentioned areas are significant. In addition to differing
numbers of migrants and the dissimilar role of anti-racism in Finland’s and Sweden’s imagined national identities, there are also differences in the countries’ historical relations to scientific racism.

For example, in 19th-century Sweden, when scientific racism was invested with political ideology and the theory of evolution and hence became deplorable with the purpose of reducing the rights of racialized groups, Finns were objects of racism, rather than supporters of scientific racist ideologies (Kemiläinen, 1993; Palmberg, 2009). In racial classifications, Finns were often thought to be related to the Mongolian “race” (Isaksson & Jokisalo, 1998). However, although the Finns themselves have been colonized by both Sweden and Russia and racialized by scientists, they have been far from innocent when the protection of national minorities is concerned. Discriminatory practices and outright racism towards Finland’s so-called “old minorities”—the Sami, Roma, Tatar and Jewish minorities—have flourished in historical times and today occur in both institutional and non-institutional settings (Isaksson, 1996; Nordberg 2007). In contemporary postcolonial writing, a common understanding of Finland’s relation to the outside world in general and the colonial project in particular is that Finland was indeed a case of exceptionalism, but also a case of complicity in colonialism (Vuorela, 2009).

Evidently, the different roles of Finland and Sweden in expansionist and colonialist projects and Finland’s late history of migration and lower number of migrants in general and post-WWII migrants in particular, have influenced the development of two contemporary societies that, despite similarities in their social welfare policies, today differ from one another in terms of demographics, migration politics, and the role of anti-racism as a main signifier for national identity. At least so

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1 Prior to the 1990s, Finland was a country of emigration, with more than 700,000 emigrants heading abroad, mostly to Sweden, between 1945 and 1999 (Korkiasaari & Söderling, 2003, p. 3). Today, the difference between the two countries in the number of citizens with a foreign background: at the end of 2016, more than 2.3 million people in Sweden—23.2% of Swedish citizens—were either born abroad or born in Sweden to parents born abroad (SCB, 2017), whereas in Finland, 6.5% of 358,000 citizens were born abroad (Statistics Finland, 2017). However, the sudden increase in asylum applications during 2015 (32,477 in Finland according to Migri 2017 and 162,877 in Sweden according to the Swedish Migration Agency 2017) influenced both migration policy and public debates on ethnic relations, race and racialization.
far, Finnish cities have been spared suburban riots or other significant “unarticulated” social justice movements with violent tendencies (see Dikeç, 2007 for the notion). Nor does there appear to be in Finland the kind of profound mistrust towards the police that exists in Swedish suburbs, which have become security hotspots subject to continuous police surveillance, identity raids, and stop-and-search raids (Schierup et al., 2014; Peterson & Åkerström, 2008 for Sweden; and Poliisibarometri, 2016 for Finland).

Figure 1. Poster on a street near Möllevångstorget in Malmö in spring 2014 reading: “A cop is a cop. We don’t trust them.”

With regard to anti-racist organizing, Finland and Sweden differ in the history of their movements, their strategies, and their vocabularies (for Sweden, see Jämte, 2013; Malmsten, 2009). One of the biggest differences is the “whiteness” of the field in Finland in comparison to Sweden, where members and activists represent a variety of backgrounds. There are also differences in the means chosen for the struggle. In Sweden, anarchists are more numerous and visible in anti-racist settings such as demonstrations, while in Finland, whose civil society has been organized since the late 19th century into traditional NGOs, collectives, and networks (for Finland, Metsämäki & Nisula, 2006), members tend to put forward claims more or less in line with the public political culture (see Lentin, 2004, p. 2 for the notion), leaving little space for more radical anti-racist organizing. However, during the last few years, there has been more diversity within the anti-racist
field in Finland than before (Keskinen’s ongoing project Postethnic Activism in the Neoliberal Era, 2014-2019; Seikkula, 2015), and we have also seen that with the growing presence of neo-Nazi groups and anti-immigrant street patrols, such as the Soldiers of Odin, the protesting crowds, with a variety of affiliations, have grown as well (see Figure 1).

Further, the differences between the urban milieus of Malmö and Helsinki are significant. The Malmö region functions as a nexus for various types of transnational mobilities, is marked by a working-class past and a long and dense history of migration, and has a strong radical right-wing movement with a long record of brutal crimes (Wigerfelt & Wigerfelt, 2001)—but also a lively street politics scene maintained mainly by young people sympathetic to the left (Brink, Pinto, & Pries 2013). Helsinki is less diverse in its demographic composition (Selander, 2013) and lacks a tradition of protest culture, at least in comparison to other European cities (Luhtakallio, 2012). For example, in the Helsinki region, anti-racism cannot be said to constitute a significant and recognizable movement, in contrast to the Malmö region, where the movement, despite its inner factions, has a long history among both registered organizations and independent actors in the field (Brink, Pintos, & Pries, 2013; Malmsten, 2009 for Sweden).

In sum, Finland and Sweden form interesting but divergent cases of the history of racist thought in the Nordic countries and beyond. In terms of the history of biological racism, current demographic developments, and public political culture (Lentin, 2004, 2), there are some significant differences between the two urban mediated milieus that are of interest for this chapter. I refer here, in particular, to the numbers of refugees and migrants, the local histories of migration, and the ways in which street politics and the recent, but growing, claims of safe spaces for racialized people are generally related to. When compared to Sweden, Finland has a shorter history of migration, fewer migrants, and a stronger tradition of a political culture of consensus, and it is only recently that racialized youth in Finland have started to organize and pose questions concerning who has the right to put forward anti-racist claims in public and who does not.
The role of critical events in claims-making practices and listening strategies

In examining the claims put forward by the various actors who, in and through the media, testify about racist abuse or actively work against racism and racialization, the theoretical and methodological starting point for my study is political claims-making theory. In accordance with Ruud Koopmans et al. (2005), I see claims as strategic actions in the communicative space that consist of purposive and public articulations, such as political demands, calls to action, proposals, and criticisms, and that actually or potentially affect the interests or integrity of the claimant and other collective actors. A claim can be articulated in a declaration, a decision, a demonstration, in the mainstream media, in social media, etc. In theory, claims can be put forward by or accompanied by violent actions, but in this study, my understanding of claims is limited to appeals made in verbal and textual articulations: mainstream media content, Twitter, Facebook pages (groups, the pages of public figures, and public material on private pages), discussion forums and blogs, and in a few complementary interviews with activists and journalists.

A crucial oversight in Koopmans et al.’s scheme on how claims are formed (2005) is whether claims are listened to and responded to and, further, who does the listening and in what manner. In today’s hybrid media environment (Chadwick, 2013) where more people now have the opportunity to produce and stream content and give voice to claims, the aspect of listening becomes crucial. The theoretical idea of political listening has developed within different strands of scholarship—forensic architecture, phonetic linguistics, the arts, gender studies, and studies on media and democracy—and the notion has come to mean somewhat different things, particularly concerning whether listening refers to auditory experiences in a literal or more symbolic sense. Whether one understands listening as purely auditory, as in non-visual processes, like Berit Fischer (2014) and Lawrence Abu Hamdan (2015), or as the more cognitive and political processes of giving attention and recognition to the voices and claims of vulnerable groups, such as asylum seekers and minorities, like Tanja Dreher (2009) and Susan Bickford (1996), the main idea is
consistent: We may be free to choose the way we speak and claim rights, but we are not free to choose the ways in which we are being heard (Abu Hamdan, 2012).

Some scholars, such as Fischer (2014), argue that to listen refers to an active act: not merely hearing, but hearing with intent. According to Fischer, while the verb to hear usually refers to automatic or passive sound perception, the verb to listen connotes intentional or purposeful use of the sense of hearing. It implies intensified concentration and an awareness of what one is listening to (Fischer, 2014). Listening may not be as fully intentional on the part of the listener as Fischer claims, although intentionality is certainly intertwined with politics. Since we cannot listen to everything we hear, we sometimes have to choose what to listen to, or someone else may choose for us. This selection process makes listening political, particularly when public and collective selection processes are concerned. However, listening as a choice and as a political act does not imply that a listener of an anti-racist claim, for example, would have to be sympathetic to the claim (Bickford 1996, p. 11). Instead, my understanding of political listening acknowledges the centrality of conflict and inequality in politics and communicative interaction. Hence, when listening occurs, the listener does not have to feel friendship, empathy, or shared interest, but need only pay attention to what is said and how it is said, despite possible skepticism or distrust towards the claims-maker.

In today’s hybrid media environment, where consumers are producers and social media is intertwined with mainstream media, it is difficult to predict which claims will be listened to by media users, journalists, and political decision-makers and which will be neglected. Stories about racism and racialization that are produced and circulated by unconventional and marginal media platforms sometimes serve as a trigger for extensive mainstream media coverage that can lead to politically challenging agency, but there is no guarantee that this will happen. In this chapter, I argue that two of the four aforementioned mediated events that lead to intensified debate on racism and racialization can, despite certain limitations, be approached as “critical events”. The concept of critical event is not just the outcome of a particular historic situation, but also the consequence of
collective action framing, as Espeland and Rogstad (2013, p. 128) state. In other words, whether an event becomes critical depends not only on the magnitude, topicality, or policy-changing potentiality of the event as such, but also on how “sticky” claims become and how well they are listened to. Sara Ahmed (2004, p. 11) has used stickiness to describe how objects that are shared and circulate socially can become “saturated with affect” as sites of personal and social tension. As items “go viral”, they are stuck together by affect, and the stickiness can be measured by how often people reply to comments, share, or like content on social media or mainstream journalism sites (Lindgren, 2017; Paasonen 2015.)

In order to understand more profoundly how individualized and collective experiences of racism and racialization are discussed in public, I will examine how claims against racism are constructed, circulated, and listened to in a hybrid media sphere in four intensified moments of claims-making. An understanding of these processes will shed light on the premises and challenges of public debate in the context of hybridization (Chadwick, 2013), the crises of journalism (Alexander et al., 2015), and the “end of multiculturalism” (Titley & Lentin, 2011). Who gets to define what racism is and to put forward opinions and experiences of racialization in Nordic societies, and who listens to these claims?

In order to answer this, I present an analysis of two mediated scandals of “everyday” racism in Finland (night life harassment and ethnic profiling) and two cases in which intensified debate on Nazism, racism, and anti-racism occurred in the aftermath of severe racist violent attacks, one in Helsinki and one in Malmö. The cases of nightlife harassment and ethnic profiling were brought to public awareness by reality tv-personality Alexandra Alexis and rap musician James Nikander who posted their testimonies of racism on their Facebook-pages whereafter they went viral.

**Material and methods**

The material consists of a wide range of Facebook pages, blogs, discussion forums, online comments on web-based news sites, and mainstream news media and magazines in Finland and
Sweden. In order to better understand a controversy uncovered in the preliminary findings, I also interviewed key claims-makers in the Malmö case; two activists from the activist network Skåne mot rasism (Skåne against racism) – a network for non-parliamentary anti-racist groups in the region established in 2008 – and two journalists from the newspaper Sydsvenskan.

The search for data was a three-step process. First, with the help of a research assistant, I manually collected everything we could find on the web that had been written about the four cases. We stopped collecting when the material no longer provided new insight into how the cases were discussed. To contrast this first stage with bid data analytics, I call this method the “hand net fishing technique”. Using Google\(^2\), I searched for anything written on “Alexandra Alexis AND racism OR Teatteri” (name of nightlife establishment), “James Nikander AND mother OR ethnic profiling OR handcuffing”, “Showan Shattak AND assault OR Möllan OR Möllevångstorget” and “Jimi Karttunen AND Helsinki Railway Square OR nazi*”.

The purpose of this broad Google-aided search technique was to obtain an overview of how the events were discussed in general, and on the basis of this stage I managed to distinguish a certain anatomy of the first two mediated events of everyday racism in public and semi-public space (see Appendix). I was also able to relate the overall publicity of the events to aspects of listening and to select central pieces of data for the second stage, a more detailed analysis of claims-making.

In the second stage, I used a more targeted “fish-hook technique” to select certain texts and discussion threads for in-depth examination. Especially in cases involving news agency bulletins that spread to various media, resulting in identical or very similar stories, this is a crucial stage for organizing the data. It is important to underline that many comments, texts, and threads containing outright racism and hate speech were not selected for a more detailed analysis in the second stage, which influences the findings and conclusions of my study. This choice is partially due to the large

\(^2\) Using Google for research purposes can be problematic, since algorithms steer the prioritization of content, therefore possibly listing different sites for different researchers. I used three different IP addresses in order to improve my chances of compiling as varied a data set as possible.
number of overtly racist comments with features of hate speech. Many of the comments are very similar to one another and contain claims that center around two issues: that borders should have been closed a long time ago and the sooner they close, the better, and that people with experiences of migration or who work against racism or support humanitarian border policies are less worthy than others, naïve, or deserve unjust or bad treatment. In my study, I do not wish to echo outright racist comments or to promote the distribution of videos produced by members of far-right movements. Instead, the material for the second stage was selected in order to examine the more implicit, complex, and perhaps unexpected ways in which “ordinary” media users, journalists, bloggers, and decision-makers relate to claims against racism.

In the third stage of data collection, I manually searched four newspapers—*Helsingin Sanomat* and *Ilta-Lehti* for the periods 20–30 May, 10–20 July, and 17–26 September 2016, and *Sydsvenska Dagbladet* and *Dagens Nyheter* for the period 9–19 March 2014—to ensure that no crucial texts and articles were missing.

I am aware that some news articles and discussion threads might still have gone unnoticed, since not all newspapers publish all their articles online and because of algorithmic challenges. Another weakness of this kind of broad research technique at the first stage of the data-gathering is its genre-blindness. When referring broadly to online discussion threads and forums, as I do, one must be aware of the fact that these forums may differ from one another—they may follow different moderation and subscription policies and may serve completely different purposes. Some of these forums are targeted towards people with certain types of interests or professional backgrounds, while other wide-ranging forums host a broad range of topics. These forums are, however, united by the unique characteristics of online communication, namely, the ability of participants to transcend time and space while maintaining anonymity. This characteristic has democratizing potential, but it may also turn against itself. When allowing people to form and express frank opinions without (in
most cases) having to be afraid of the consequences, there will always be “trolls” who post racist, extraneous or off-topic messages⁴ (Paasonen, 2015).

In addition to gathering material from social media and mainstream newspapers, and the interviews, and analyzing the texts through close reading (DuBois 2003), I also observed and documented several street events organized during spring 2014 in Malmö and autumn 2016 in Helsinki, focusing particularly on the claims presented in slogans, symbols, and speeches. It is worth to underline that I do not aim to compare the public debates on racism and racialization in the two countries or urban milieus. Instead, I seek commonalities between the claims against racism put forward by the victims of racist abuse, their relatives, or anti-racist activists, and I seek to understand listening processes that occurred during these two intensified moments of claims-making.

**Two cases of “everyday” racism: Contesting testimonies of racism**

On 19 May 2016, Alexandra Alexis, a Finnish-American singer, was verbally and physically molested by two middle-aged white women at a VIP party at one of the classier nightclubs in Helsinki. The pejoratives used by the abusers were exceptionally harsh and referred clearly to phenotypical features and biological dimensions of racial inferiority (for example, ‘murjaani’, which is something like ‘Negroid’). Humiliated by the abuse of the other guests and the staff of the nightclub, Alexis was asked to leave the party while the white molesters were allowed to stay. The next day, Alexis wrote a lengthy status update on her Facebook page, made it public, and included a picture of her two molesters, asking people in her network to help identify the two women. Alexis’ post got 1,437 shares, 1,700 reactions and 197 comments (Alexis 2017)⁴. Soon after, Finland’s

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³ An example of this is a thread on the website MV-lehti, in which commenters start a discussion of the Alexis case but soon shift to a discussion of the role of the Swedish language in Finland—another topic popular on certain so-called “immigrant-critical” forums, such as MV-lehti and HOMMA (Saukkonen 2011; Pöyhätäri et al., 2013, on online hate speech involving hate against the Swedish language minority in Finland). I have chosen not to provide direct links to racist forums but the thread that I am referring to is titled “Hillitön causti ravintola Teatterin ‘rasistisesta’ tapauksesta”, started by “Rasmus” on 21.05.2016 at 04:26.

⁴ The number of reactions, comments and shares are as of December 7, 2016.
major national newspaper (*Helsingin Sanomat*, 2016, 20 May) wrote about the case, and the story went viral (see Appendix for a more detailed description of the anatomy of the mediated scandal).

Six weeks later, on July, 10, another celebrity, musician James Nikander (stage name Musta Barbaari, “The Black Barbarian”), wrote a lengthy status update on his personal Facebook page describing how his mother and sister were victims of ethnic profiling (which is illegal in Finland according to an act to amend to the Aliens Act 301/2004, §129 a and 129 b, amendment 193/2015.) in a stop-and-search raid in central Helsinki and forced to the ground with force. The case of Nikander’s mother quickly went viral; the original post got 15,000 emoticon reactions, was shared over 2,000 times, and was commented on one thousand times⁵ (Nikander 2016). The national news agency STT and all the major newspapers in Finland reported on the case; journalists wrote follow-ups and editorials, and the case was the subject of a current affairs television program at the national broadcasting company (A-studio, 11 July 2016) (see Appendix for the anatomy of the scandal).

These two stories may not seem as exceptional as the two other events—the death of Jimi Karttunen in Helsinki and the stabbing of Showan Shattak in Malmö—which evoked protest demonstrations with thousands of participants and came to function as symbolic cases of merciless Nazi violence. The two testimonies on racism on the streets and in the public places of Helsinki are, however, analytically interesting, because they highlight some common tendencies in how claims opposing racism are discussed and responded to in social and mainstream media.

The data revealed a handful of differing but related reactions to these two cases that influenced the framing of news stories. Firstly, we discovered a “anti-racism as mere rhetoric” reaction, in which racism is condemned, but at the same time, discriminatory behavior is legitimated in some way. In most cases, the behavior is legitimized discursively through references to security, a lack of reliable (often meaning white) witnesses, or by speculations as to the unintended nature of the racist behavior. This discourse is similar to the idea of “I’m not a racist,

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⁵ The number of reactions, comments and shares are as of 7 December 2016.
but…” In cases where anti-racism appears to be mere rhetoric, we can see a close association with various representatives of the authorities and the nightclub. This discourse is also associated with civil commentators who mitigate the racist experiences presented in personal testimonies. These mitigation strategies, used mainly by white people to deny racialized experiences of discrimination, are numerous, and may take the form of disbelieving the one who has witnessed or experienced racism, referring to the case as an exception to the norm, and speculating that the claimant has a hidden or desperate agenda, such as seeking media visibility to advance one’s career, as seen in the thread below.

**Commenter 1** We don’t know what happened until we’ve ALSO heard what the other party has to say. The R-card\(^6\) [i.e., accusing someone of being racist.] is so easy and tempting to use, particularly if you are a person who likes to be in the spotlight anyways.

Like · Reply · 16 · 22 May at 02:21

**Commenter 2** There is no "R-card" here. If this happened, it literally is a textbook definition example of racism. If it didn't happen, then nothing happened, and that would be a different issue. But there is absolutely no "alternative opinion" way to interpret comments like that.

Like · Reply · 29 · 22 May at 09:13

**Commenter 3** Never heard about R-card 😂

Like · Reply · 22 May at 22:34

**Commenter 4** R-card has an incredibly bad bonus plan.

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\(^6\) “Playing the race card”, an expression used in the thread, refers to social situations in which a non-white person falsely accuses another person of being racist in order to gain personal advantage. On social media, to say that someone has used the race card tends to cause discursive jamming, because it often leads to a situation characterized by short arguments (“yes, she/he did”, “no, she/he did not”). Moments of reflection may occur (“maybe she did, maybe she did not” and “well, there is no way to tell”), but when new people join the discussion, the yes–no game resumes.
So, you are saying that the story is a lie?

[One irrelevant comment in the thread removed.]

Indeed, one should always apply rational thinking before being absorbed in the pleasures of a web scandal. In a democratic state, we must also listen to the “accused” person, and we aren’t even talking about legal charges here yet. It may be that the “prosecutor” and her loyal fans soon will be charged of defamation. So be patient with the R-card, despite the temptation to use it.

(Public thread on Alexandra Alexis’ Facebook-profile 2016, May 25) 

The most common logic in these cases of mitigation from non-official claims-makers is drawing on “well-meaning colorblindness”. Commenters may claim that nightclub quarrels occur all the time and that there will always be a few drunken lunatics on the streets and a few rotten eggs in the police force, but that mostly, native Finns are “nice” and that Finland would be a much nicer for everyone if the victim-claimants would not engage in the “public lynching” of their molesters. Interestingly, the lonely lunatic logic and the discourse emphasizing niceness even to racists is used to mitigated racist experiences by commenters who self-identify as non-white and “white natives” alike.

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The post and the thread are public, but for this publication, profile pictures have been removed, names anonymized, and the posts by Commenter 1 have been translated from Finnish to English.
The use of the niceness discourse and well-meaning colorblindness to mitigate racist experiences is not detached from “support talk”, which flourishes online and was particularly evident in the Alexis case. Gendered support, therapeutic expression, and an excessive use of icons representing love and strength are sometimes combined with an encouragement to act (“Report them to the police!”), but most often are not. However, the online consolers of the claimant are acting spontaneously and position themselves as consumers. Many commenters wrote that they had visited the website of the nightclub and given the place bad reviews.

Many of the mechanisms through which Alexis’s claim against racism was questioned and mitigated came into play in the case of the stop-and-search of James Nikander’s mother and sister, as well. However, partially due to the fact that one party in this case is the police, the discourse reached a more general and critical level than in the Alexis case, which circled around the accused racists and their presumed backgrounds and identities. The Nikander case was dealt with extensively in the mainstream media and on online forums, and on the one hand, the debate was more polarized than the Alexis case. On the other hand, it was also more targeted towards relevant social problems, i.e., whether the police and other authorities are implementing the new law prohibiting ethnic profiling (Aliens Act 301/2004). Nikander has also been more actively involved in anti-racist campaigning than Alexis. Nikander and what he represents (rap and hip-hop culture, an idol for young people, an anti-racist symbol) seemed to provoke those who are “critical of immigration” more than Alexis, who was less well-known to the broader audience.

The “social critic” discourse and claims against ethnic profiling in the Nikander case have not reached anywhere near the intensity that Swedish debates on the REVA project did (Rättsäkerhet och effektivt verkställighetsarbete, “Legal Certainty and Effective Enforcement”). However, in a Finnish context, the debate was fierce, partially triggered by a Facebook update by MP Leena Meri (The Finns), in which she states that “those who are not happy in Finland can just return to their countries of origin” (*Iltalehti*, 12 July 2016). James Nikander and his sister were born
in Finland, and due to the inaccuracy and populist character of the update, the MP was ridiculed in the mainstream media. However, the commentary follows a logic similar to that of the Swedish prime minister on the Husby riots on May 21, 2013 when he talked about “angry young men” who need to overcome cultural barriers—casting young Swedes as strangers (Schierup, 2014, p. 6). The commentary also follows the same logic as hundreds of comments on the Nikander case in various online forums and highlights a common belief amongst many Finnish citizens: that the right to be treated respectfully and as a full member of society depends on the tone of your skin

Commenter 1 [who according to his profile picture is white and male] I’ve been asked to prove my identity on the street and I did. They were looking for a suspect. So why is it so weird that they need to examine [people] when they’ve let in anybody in huge numbers. I think it’s perfectly sound that they check people who look like foreigners, that’s not racism or discrimination. […]

Like · Reply · 11 · 10 July at 20:03

Commenter 2 "who look like foreigners" "that is not racism" okay then

Like · Reply · 6 · 10 July at 20:33

[16 comments marked by inappropriate language and racism removed]

Commenter 20 You people who whine about racism. Don’t you have better things to do than find racism in ordinary events. Find real problems to cry about

(Public thread on James Nikander’s Facebook-profile, 2016, July 10)
Despite the potential of the “social critic” discourse to influence legislation and policy, the effect on decision-making was low in the case of Nikander’s handcuffed mother. A representative of the government’s non-discrimination ombudsman got the opportunity to speak up against ethnic profiling (Yle, 2016, July 11) and there were several television programs discussing ethnic profiling, but little pressure was put on the police despite obvious holes in their arguments, which were built on “mere anti-racist rhetoric”.

One difficulty in mediated and public pressuring of the police (and other authorities) is their right or duty to not comment on individual cases under investigation. In using this right or duty as a shield and avoiding commenting on racist events in concrete terms, spokesmen for the police and other authorities easily shift from discussing the issue on a general level to instead addressing it only vaguely. Besides, as Sigurd Allern and Ester Pollack (2014) argue in their analysis of public debate in Norway on a police action in which a student of African origin lost his life, news coverage on the police and investigations into police conduct are event-driven. In the case of Finland, the news coverage on police operations also appears to be non-critical when issues of racialization and migration are concerned. When trying to produce viable excuses for why innocent bystanders of color sometimes suffer for the sake of security, the police is allowed, without challenge by journalists, to form an argument that police budget cuts somehow explain accidental ethnic profiling, as seen in the quotation from a news article below. As shown by previous studies, the police tend to point out how few resources the Finnish Police have in comparison to other European countries when trying to legitimize dubious actions of its officers (Haavisto, 2011, p. 96).

*Three years ago, the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance determined that the Finnish Aliens Act allows ethnic profiling. [National Police Commissioner] Kolehmainen does not want to speculate how frequent this kind of conduct is in Finland. The police commissioner says that it is illegal and it isn’t done.*
KOLEHMAINEN also commented on the threat of terrorism in Finland.

“We shouldn’t allow ourselves to become hysterical. Instead, we must keep our feet on the ground and stay calm. At the same time, we must understand that [terrorism] can happen here as well. The likelihood of Finland being the target for a terror attack is not significant, but it is possible. So we have to stay alert in these matters.

According to Kolehmainen, the Police struggles with limited resources. Although the capacity to act is high at the moment, adequate preparedness can not be ensured for long-term operations taking place in multiple locations.

(Helsingin Sanomat, 12 July 2016, free translation, caps in the original)

The claims against racism put forward by James Nikander in his original post and later in journalistic interviews were listened to much more attentively than the claims put forward by Alexis. In Helsinki, there is no systematic regulation of how bars and nightclubs minorities, as there is Oslo, for example⁹, so one possibility for action-oriented claims-making could have been the need for policy change. However, no such discourses took place. In other words, although Alexis’s testimony was visible in the media, no spaces opened up for discourses that could lead to policy change in particular or collective action or intervention in general (other than giving bad ratings to the establishment online). When there are several hundred NGO-driven projects actively working against racism in Finland, it is noteworthy that not one organization saw a window of opportunity here. In contrast, in the Nikander case, socially relevant aspects came up and space was created for public administrators to come together in and through the media to discuss whether the recently added amendment on ethnic profiling was being implemented or not. However, as time passed and the legal aspects of the arrest became more complicated (see the anatomy of the event in the

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⁹ This is an initiative of Gunnhild Haugen and overseen by the Norwegian authority Næringsetaten. Three warnings to a bar or nightclub result in the temporary suspension of the establishment’s liquor license, which effectively means it must shut down until further notice (LDO, 2011). Haugen was interviewed in English by the magazine Vice on 18 February 2016.
Appendix), the supporters of Nikander’s claim went silent\(^\text{10}\). Despite growing criticism, particularly on anti-immigration forums, Nikander continued to support the viewpoint of his family members in the mainstream media (e.g., in the talk show *Enbuske, Veitola & Salminen*, 9 September 2016), hence keeping the spotlight on the recent amendment to the Aliens Act and thereby indirectly contributing to the pressure on authorities to comply with the amendment in their daily operations.

**Two critical events: Opening up spaces for street politics but restricting the right to witness**

The anti-racist claims circulating in the hybrid media environment in the Malmö region during spring 2014 were formed during a “red alert” month marked by crises, high alertness, and even severe post-traumatic stress, as interviews with the two main anti-racist claims-making activists indicate. On the night of March 8, 2014, after a peaceful feminist demonstration, Showan Shattak, an anti-racist activist and football supporter, was stabbed by a Nazi near Möllevångstorget, a popular square in Malmö. Besides the severely injured Shattak, a handful of other people, both Nazis and people with connections to leftist or feminist groups, were also injured. As a protest to the nightly neo-Nazi presence in an urban space with a multicultural identity and working-class past, and as a protest against the violence of March 8, two anti-fascist demonstrations were organized on March 9 & 16, 2014. According to estimates, the second demonstration gathered around ten thousand people (*Kämpa Malmö 2014, Sydsvenskan* 17.3.2014 ). While Shattak himself was in a coma and fighting for his life, demonstrations against Nazi organizing and violence were organized in several cities in Sweden, as well as at the Narinkkatori square in Helsinki on March 15, 2014.

While Sweden seems recently to have returned to 1990s levels of far-right racist violence (Fekete, 2014, p. 1) including several life-threatening attacks since 2013, in Finland, the attack on Jimi

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\(^\text{10}\) According to YLE (2017, 1 September), Nikander’s mother was finally prosecuted for resisting an officer and his sister for insubordination.
Karttunen in September 2016 was the first fatal Nazi assault since WWII. Karttunen was walking past a group of demonstrating Nazis in the middle of the day at the Helsinki Railway Square, possibly insulting the neo-Nazis verbally and spitting on the ground whereafter he was assaulted by Jesse Torniainen, an active member of SVL, the Finnish Resistance Movement, with a remarkable criminal record (Andersson, Brunila, & Koivulaakso, 2013). Immediately after the attack (a jump kick making the victim hit his head on the ground), SVL activists bragged about the assault on Twitter and in Youtube videos, as shown by the anti-racist collective Varisverkosto on their webpage. A week later, Karttunen died of head injuries, which were related to the assault one week earlier. The connection of Karttunen’s death to the Nazi demonstration was initially revealed by his father through a Facebook post on September 17, 2016. The event was reported widely in the days that followed in both Finnish and international media. A demonstration was organized on September 19, followed by another mass demonstration on September 24, 2016, with about 15,000 participants, which, in a Finnish context, is a remarkable number of people coming together for a joint cause.

The two tragic events have certain features in common, but also contextual differences. While Shattak was already a public figure, known locally as a football supporter and anti-racist activist, Karttunen was unknown to the public before the Nazi assault. As noted earlier, the debate in Sweden around far-right organizing and, in particular, the claimed failure of the police to take the organizing seriously has been fiercer than in Finland. Therefore, in Sweden, the debate on the Shattak case formed a continuation of the ongoing public debates on media bias, the government’s standpoint on extremism, police passivity and culpability in discrimination and neglecting to investigate racist violence, projects and events such as REVA, the racist events in Kärrtorp in 2013, and the unauthorized Roma register maintained by the police. The debate involved established

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11 The legal aspects of the case are still unsolved since the case has been taken to the Court of Appeal, according to MTV 2016, December 30. Karttunen left the hospital earlier than recommended by the medical personnel and he used medication classified as drugs in Finland, which complicates the case.
collective actors, such as the Researchgruppen network of freelance journalists, activists, journalists, and political elites with various standpoints on violence, democracy, and anti-racism. The debate took place in a variety of forums, such as the mainstream media, social media (e.g., under Twitter hashtags, public space (stickers, posters, graffiti) and in face-to-face discussions between politicians, journalists, scholars and activists (e.g., a debate organized at the cultural center Inkonst on 13 March 2014\(^\text{12}\)).

![Image](image.jpg)

Figure 2. “Kämpa Malmö—Antifascism är självförsvar” (“Stay strong, Malmö—Antifascism is self-defense”), the main slogan of the anti-racist rally in Malmö on 16 March 2014, evolved from the earlier slogan “Kämpa Showan” (“Stay strong, Showan”).

\(^{12}\) The event was titled “Bilden av politisk extremism” (“Picturing Political Extremism”), and the invited debaters were Diana Mulnari, Heidi Avellan, Behrang Kianzad, Agneta Nordin and Petter Larsson. The auditorium was filled to capacity.
In Finland, the debate around the Karttunen case involved fewer claims-makers and the discourses were not as multidimensional and sprawling as in Sweden. Instead, they mainly centered around two questions: whether political extremism is on the rise and whether there is need to criminalize certain organizations representing far-right ideologies. The latter question divided the main claims-makers across political lines. A citizens’ initiative promoting a legislative amendment restricting the assembly of racist groups was initiated within days\textsuperscript{13}, but some claimants also expressed concern for how hastily introduced legislative changes may not be what society needs in a post-crisis situation.

\begin{quote}
It’s not only the laws or the politicians who make them that are the problem, but rather the common air that we breathe. Today, if not earlier, it has become very stuffy and thin. Let us say it in a loud voice: the Europe marked by peaceful societies is dead, there is no neutral ground to stand on, no auditorium for the neutral observer, no option to safely observe political events without forming an opinion on them. In order to break the silence, new laws or police intervention alone are not enough. Instead we all have to act together—to call the game off—not just today, but every day.
\end{quote}

(Section of an activist’s speech that circulated widely on anti-racist Facebook groups in the days after the \textit{Peli poikki} (Enough is enough) demonstration in Helsinki on September 24, 2016.)

The debate in the mainstream media first focused on providing a clearer picture of the Helsinki attack. The main claims-makers at this stage were representatives of the police, who without much push-back from journalists were allowed to make valid-sounding excuses for why they had not supervised the neo-Nazi demonstration despite the fact that a picture depicting a police car nearby at the precise time of the event was circulated widely (YLE, 2016, September 16). Soon after, in the second stage of reporting, politicians from various parties appeared in the mainstream media (\textit{Helsingin Sanomat}, 2016, September 18). They also commented on the events through their

\textsuperscript{13} The initiative has been named Huominen ilman pelkoa – järjestäytynyt rasismi rikoslakiin 2016 (A future without fear – add organized racism to the criminal law 2016).
own Facebook and Twitter accounts. Generally speaking, violence was condemned in their comments, but a discourse on extremism flourished in which activities by the far right and far left were lumped together. Politicians of the Finns party made some provocative claims about the government’s migration policy and the assault, but when pressured by journalists to elaborate on the causality between the two issues, one of the MPs, Ritva Elomaa, was unable to explain herself (*Iltalehti*, 2016, September 19).

While journalistic effort was put into ridiculing comments such as Elomaa’s, a comment by MEP Jussi Halla-aho (the Finns) was allowed to stand without much scrutiny. Halla-aho downplayed the significance of the tragic event and told YLE that “The event is used in order to shift attention away from the security threat posed by asylum seekers and immigrants /…/” (YLE, 2016, September 22). As journalist Jens Finnäs has shown in a non-scholarly but convincing explorative data graphic (*Dataist*, 2011), Halla-aho is a significant thought leader within the anti-immigrant blogosphere (also see Horsti, 2015; Keskinen, 2013; Pyrhönen, 2015). Therefore, it comes as no surprise that in the aftermath of the event, Halla-aho’s view on the case and his unwillingness to condemn brutal violence from the far right is echoed in various forums frequented by supporters of the Finns party, among others.\footnote{It is difficult, if not impossible, to study Google’s algorithms, but even six months after the tragic event, the top ten sites suggested by a Google search on “Jimi Karttunen” link to far-right webpages and unreliable “news media” in which various versions of Halla-aho’s reasoning, given above, are put forward. Strikingly, when the name of the prime minister, “Juha Sipilä”, and the name of the main Finnish newspaper, “Helsingin Sanomat”, is added to the Google search field, seven out of ten hits still lead to far-right sites such as Vastarinta.com.}

At the third stage of reporting, more analytical views on the events were presented. On the one hand, they often concerned growing political extremism in general and related the present to historical events that took place in Finland in the 1920s and 1930s. On the other hand, particularly in the aftermath of the demonstrations on September 19 & 24, activists and representatives of human rights NGOs were also allowed to make claims (*Helsingin Sanomat* 2016, September 24). The main claim of the activists at this time was aimed at getting the political elite, particularly
Prime Minister Juha Sipilä, to more actively and clearly take a stance against hate crimes in general and racist violence in particular. A fiercer pressuring of decision-makers to take a stance against racism occurred on Twitter, and politicians were encouraged to at least use the word *racism* instead of euphemisms when talking about the event (e.g., Honkasalo 2016).

Figure 3. The *Peli poikki* demonstration in Helsinki on September 24, 2016. The speaker’s podium was under the red canopy on the left, where an entire symphony orchestra also squeezed in to play the Finlandia hymn. The choice of hymn and the use of the Finnish flag indicates an attempt to “take back” nationalistic symbols from the far right and to ascribe to them different meanings.

These activist claims put forward by anti-racist activists in Helsinki in autumn 2016, echo the ones put forward in the case of the attack on Shattak in Malmö in spring 2014. Within an “Elites, you are not doing enough” master paradigm, the criticism of anti-racists targeted the police, the governing parties, and the media. Claims critical of the media were presented in the form of letters to the editor, Facebook updates, comments on the Facebook pages of various media, and phone calls and e-mails to journalists demanding the correction of “biased” media representations that did not clearly state whether it was anti-fascists and feminists or Nazis that started the violence on Möllevångstorget (interviews with Journalist 1 and Journalist 2).

In interviews, Activists 1 and 2 claim that the media in southern Sweden has neglected their claims for years and that their right to “witness” racist violence has been restricted. The activists
claim that the reasons for their restricted right to witness are the divergence of the political views of most mainstream journalists and anti-racist activists and the unwillingness of allegedly white middle-class journalists to accept that Sweden, despite its self-image as an anti-racist haven, has serious social and political problems. In addition, journalists are afraid for their well-being and their lives and are afraid of “pissing off right-wing people by telling the truth” (Activist 1). The journalists, on the other hand, argue that the claims of radical anti-racists are listened to and taken seriously in the newsrooms. Journalists say that the reason the concrete claims of anti-racists are not always voiced in the media is because it is increasingly difficult to get in touch with activists and to persuade them to give interviews.

*This is my personal interpretation: As journalists we do not accept their truth right away. That makes the anti-racist activists so furious that they refuse to continue cooperating with us* (Journalist 1).

The problematic relationship between journalists and anti-racist activists in the Malmö area that has led to a power struggle over voice, withdrawn voice, visibility, and listening strategies must not be seen as a temporary or isolated issue. First, the actions of the mainstream media, which anti-racist actors see as a crucial part of the establishment, had been previously criticized by activists after similar events elsewhere (for example, after the reporting on the events in Kärrtorp). Second, the tone of journalistic writing, such as the use of the word *squabble* instead of *attack*, was as a major provocation to activists.

*So, if you look at our media strategy, it’s not about getting as much visibility as possible. Instead, it’s about getting through with issues that we believe in. So of course our slogan is controversial, because the media gives the interpretative prerogative to right-of-center Liberals [borgerliga liberaler], and this is why it is controversial to point at conflicts in society that make antifascism*
self-defense. . . In one of our first meetings we said that we want a slogan that we can stand behind, not something like “this is a day against stupid people” but something political—what we believe in—and we want to push that forward. Then if a more liberal or mainstream Social Democrat says that she or he can’t march behind that slogan then we just say, “okay, that’s bad but maybe you just have to organize your own demonstration then, because this is ours”. Then it’s in the media’s interest to make it appear as something more than a non-political ballyhoo. . . . Either they want to make it into a non-political ballyhoo or then they want to make it into an event where masked activists ruined the demonstration. There was not one daily that re-printed our slogan [“Antifascism is self-defense”]. . . I think this kind of thing [i.e., that ten thousand people marched behind that slogan] just doesn’t fit into their conceptual world. . . For them, anti-racism is humanism, non-violence and stuff like that, you know.

(Activist 2 representing Skåne mot rasism)

**Concluding remarks: Critical events become the new loci of movements—but only for a while**

In recent years, a number of campaigns against racism have emerged online and on the streets in the Nordic countries in support of victims of racist abuse and to demand that the political elite not disregard racism in nightclubs and ethnic profiling in their own operations and address the intensified neo-Nazi organizing taking place across national borders. The four mediated debates analyzed in this chapter illustrate how various discursive power struggles are played out in a number of mediated arenas—online, offline and in between. These power struggles are related to the ideological and demographic changes taking place in the Nordic countries; they are debates on how to govern societies undergoing these changes. They are also related to the role of cultural capital in the formation of voice: not everyone has the qualifications required to put forward testimonies of racism and racialization in the media sphere and and to be heard through all the noise that marks it.
In this chapter, I have shown how moments of intensified anti-racist claims-making sometimes lead to the transformation of a personal tragedy into a public issue and other times do not. The nightclub quarrel with racist overtones remained on a personal level and did not transform into a public issue, while the three other cases, to varying degrees, were more easily dealt with as political issues highlighting contemporary social problems. The legal twists in the case of alleged ethnic profiling in Helsinki and journalists’ disinterest in looking into similar cases, which may have helped make a stronger case to present to politicians and the police, contributed to the story’s slow retreat from the spotlights.

On the other hand, the two cases involving severe neo-Nazi violence prompted the emergence of social movements that mobilized through social media. Thanks in part to these movements and the mass demonstrations they managed to put together in a short time, two potentially critical events emerged—with both events reported on both within and beyond national borders. Due to ongoing legal processes, published books (Rasmussen & Shattak, 2016) and other cultural productions (e.g., a play based on the Shattak case, which was planned but later cancelled according to Sydsvenskan, 2016, October 20) and due to the fact that the two resultant anti-racist movements continue to construct and distribute claims against racism, the visible role of these two events within the anti-racist civic field has remained intact. It is worth underlining that these two new players in the area of anti-racism strengthened their roles after having organized mass protests. It is an important political and symbolic signal to the far right, the political elite, and the media alike that demonstrations against racism attract large numbers of people—and not just anarchist youths, but also families and centre-liberal citizens who are utterly tired of neo-Nazi presence and symbols in their own neighborhoods.

There was more than one factor that made these events potentially critical. The mainstream media showed great interest in the cases, the cases were returned to in mediated debates when

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15 E.g., Al Jazeera, 2016, September 24.
associated issues were reported on months and even years later, and after initial silence and activist pressure, elite politicians in both countries publicly condemned the violence and said that they would examine whether there is need for policy change.

However, the true potential of these two critical events to influence policy is more ambiguous due to the fact that during the process of becoming critical events, listening processes were marked by truth contestations and restrictions of the right to witness and testify. This was also the case with the two more everyday cases of racist abuse.

As such, it is not a surprise that not all critical events that become new loci of discourse effect a change in policy, practice, or structure. Consider such examples as police brutality against Blacks in the US, the Dakota Access Pipeline protest or previous series of ruthless racist crimes in the Nordic countries. Nick Couldry (2010, p. 101) has even argued that this is a common problem of contemporary neo-liberalism: we are offered a proliferation of opportunities to speak up about important issues both as individuals and as part of claims-making collectives, but all too often this voice does not matter or does not have an influence on policy and power hierarchies.

In my view, the low to moderate odds of critical events maintaining their “criticalness” over time and their alleged powerlessness to actually change policy underlines the political nature of the act of listening. Listening is an active choice (Abu Hamdan, 2015), and the act of listening should come about as an open process despite potential underlying conflicts or suspicion (Dreher, 2009).

Hence, listening should not be simple act of hearing—an act on the basis of which decision-makers can form responses intended merely to mitigate potential political scandals or placate large crowds who they believe are inclined to violence. Besides, it is not only the loud claims-making of high alert periods that politicians must listen and react to, but also claims that are made when the collective feeling of urgency has faded. It is during the calm periods that NGOs, autonomous groups, and networks should remind decision-makers of their claims, and it is during these periods,

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16 I am here referring, in particular, to the Twitter storm “Where is Reinfeldt”, protesting against the Swedish prime minister’s initial silence on the Nazi violence in Malmö (Fekete, 2014, p. 5).
when there is no immediate need to respond for the mere sake of responding, that political elites should really engage in listening practices. They may soon notice that the deepest expertise in questions of Nazism, racism, race, and racialization lies somewhere other than on the office desks of their public servants. In Finland, this became all too clear when, in response to the Karttunen case, the political elite said that they will “investigate” the need for more state intervention against neo-Nazi organizing. Only a few months later, on December 6, Independence Day, neo-Nazis marched in central Helsinki while simultaneously bragging on social media that the alleged killer, temporarily freed from custody, was marching along. This case demonstrates that although critical events such as public racism scandals produce spaces for new voices, when it comes to making elites accountable for double standards in policy and governance, critical journalism and civic engagement groups have failed. The reasons to this failure are not weak media and lobbying tactics but rather an ideological climate that neither aknowledges nor encourages political listening in general and the listening to vulnerable social groups with experiences of racism in particular.

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17 One policy change was implemented as a consequence of the event but the change does not relate to the organizing of rightwing organisations but rather to the procedures of the Government Situation Centre that produces real-time reports and situation pictures to the PM. PM Sipilä was abroad during the assault and got the information only on the following day, which woke concern about slowness in the crisis information system (HE 261/2016 vp, ESS, 24 September 2016.)


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Appendix

A manually assembled description of the becoming viral of the original post by Alexandra Alexis

Alexandra Alexis posts the original post in the evening of the 20th May 2016, https://www.facebook.com/alexandraalexis/posts/10154240514753724, right after discussion starts on the RASMUS-pages which is lively group maintained by a national network against racism, https://www.facebook.com/groups/114311111913455/permalink/1158480620829827/, soon after the nightlife establishment publishes their view on what had happened https://www.facebook.com/ravintolateatteri/posts/483684211824677 where after the main newspaper Helsingin Sanomat reports on the case http://www.hs.fi/kaupunki/art-2000002902329.html. In the interview conducted by Helsingin Sanomat, the representative of the nightlife establishment manages to turn the attention to the choice Alexandra Alexis has made in publishing a camera picture of her abusers, which come to influence the tone of the debate thereafter. The Metro-newspaper publishes a story on the event http://www.metro.fi/uutiset/a1387817846478, another thread starts in the RASMUS-group and the tone of the discussion is more condemning of Alexandra Alexis than the previous one. One day later, on the 21th May, discussion escalates on the major forum for so-called immigrant critics and supporters of the Finns party, the HOMMA-forum and on the discussion forum for MV-lehti where commentators follow attentively the discussion on the RASMUS-page on Facebook. On the same day, both Alexandra Alexis and the nightlife establishment post new posts on their own platforms. Iltalehti, another major paper publishes an article on the scandal http://www.iltalehti.fi/uutiset/2016052121599602_uu.shtml which makes the tone of the debate on MV-lehti even worse. Alexis and her fans are accused for forming a lynch mob against the accused racist abusers whose identity stays more or less dissolved throughout the entire scandal. Two days later on the 23rd of May Koko Hubara, one of the most influential racialized bloggers in Finland,

**A manually assembled description of the becoming viral of the original post by James Nikander**

On the 10th July 2016, James Nikander publishes the original post on his Facebook page, https://www.facebook.com/mustabarbaariofficial/posts/700302376788030, *Iltalehti* makes two news articles of the case the same night, http://m.iltalehti.fi/uutiset/2016071021882940_uu.shtml, http://m.iltalehti.fi/uutiset/2016071021883605_uu.shtml, on the following day, the YLE writes two stories on the case with one update, which is a separate story, http://yle.fi/uutiset/3-9017554, http://yle.fi/uutiset/3-9018028, *Aamulehti* writes a story http://www.aamulehti.fi/kotimaa/nain-politiisi-komentoi-mustan-barbaarin-aidin-ja-siskon-tapausta-23780774/ and *A-studio* deals with the case on 11 July 2016. Simultaneously, at the main immigrant critical forums, HOMMA and *MV-lehti*, Nikander is accused for being biased, for lying and for only seeking publicity to boost his career. The span of the mediated event is much longer than in the case of Alexandra Alexis testimony of racist abuse, which partially is due to an extensive portrait article done by the monthly to *Helsingin Sanomat, Kuukausiliite*, in http://www.hs.fi/kuukausiliite/art-2000002914036.html about a month later. The public prosecutor announces in September that they will not raise charges against the Police officers accused by Nikander and his family to have adapted ethnic profiling when handcuffing the Nikander’s mother. James Nikander appears on a live television show giving support to his family members version of the story, http://www.mtv.fi/uutiset/kotimaa/artikkeli/musta-barbaari-pysyn-aitini-ja-siskoni-kertomuksen-takana-totuuden-on-tultava-esiin/6066970. Later on, in December 2016, the prosecutor announces that Nikander’s mother and sister will be pressed charges for assaulting a public servant trying to do his job. The Finnish news agency takes up the new twist in the story, which spreads to a variety of