FINAL REPORT

(5 September 2018)

Project name

“Abroad this would create a storm”. A Study on Populist Parties' Racism-related Scandals and Journalistic Choices.

Project concept (as formulated in the application)

The study discusses the racism accusations aimed at the Finns Party and the presentation of these accusations in the media between 2010 and 2016. The project is internationally comparative and its goal is to identify the best practices to support journalistic work and to foster societal discourse.

Grant received
2015

Amount granted
Funding received from other organisations (amount and granting entity)

Travelling grant for Mari K. Niemi from the Finnish Association of Science Editors and Journalists supported the project indirectly by providing the opportunity to follow Donald Trump's presidential campaign in the United States.

Person responsible (name, position, and organisation)

Dr. Soc. Sc., docent Mari K. Niemi. Senior Researcher at the Centre for Parliamentary Studies until 31 December 2017, after that the Director of InnoLab research platform at the University of Vaasa. (Locations during the project: University of Strathclyde, University of Gothenburg, and University of Valencia.)

Project summary

The project explored the media scandals of populist parties, the handling of racism, and on a wider perspective the populist parties' relationship to media drawing international comparisons. The central theme of the study was the critical analysis of journalistic choices and developing journalism on the basis of the analysis. The development work was often done together with journalists (e.g. interviews with journalists, workshops, etc.) in both the studies included the project and the segments invited to the project's main publication. The project additionally placed much effort into creating and maintaining a dialogue with the representatives of populist parties and their voters.

Project goal

The goal was to generate new research on the media strategies of right-wing populist parties and on how journalism has been produced under the pressure of populism. As a more practical continuation of this analysis, the project also aimed at providing tools for journalists for handling populism and to produce high-quality, critical and fair journalism. The goal was also to support societal discourse that allows everyone to participate.

The goal was reached (on scale 1–5; 1=bad, 5=excellent)

The project reached well (4) the academic goals project director had set for it. On the other hand, discussion on the topic is still ongoing: only time will tell how much practical use this study is able to provide for journalists dealing with these issues.

Project publications, articles, and writings

The project's main publication in Finnish is published by Vastapaino (2018, jufo 2) and titled Media ja populismi. Työkaluja kriittiseen journalismiin (Editors Mari K. Niemi and Topi Houni, 359p.). Planning the book, coordinating the book project, and editorial work were done with the help of the project funding, as well as the research on which chapters 1-2, 4-6 and 11 and guiding principles 1 of the book were based on. Also the communications about the study and marketing of the book were carried out as part of the project, particularly in social media.

Annu Perälä & Mari K. Niemi: Asylum Seekers Arrived, Elites Occupied the Air. Topics and Interviewees in YLE’s Magazine programs during the “Asylum Seeker Crisis”. Nordicom (jufo 1).

Additionally, the following book chapter is currently in the review process:


Presentations in scientific conferences


Other presentations, lectures, and trainings

2018


Mari K. Niemi and Matti Välimäki, teaching visit to the University of Valencia in spring 2018 with a two-day workshop for international students (from Europe and Latin America) on human rights issues through a course titled Legal English Workshop. Multi-mode teaching with the following lectures:

1. 'Post-WWII Western Europe: Migration & Politics'. (Välimäki)
2. What populism is and why is it relevant with regards to immigration and minority rights? (Niemi)
3. 'Right-wing populist parties' views on immigration and immigrant politics'. (Välimäki)
4. Populism, media dynamics and journalistic choices (Niemi)


Completed (or soon to be completed) doctoral theses

Of the articles published in the project, Hatakka, Niemi & Välimäki (2017) will be included in the article dissertation in political history of both Hatakka and Välimäki.

The project's media coverage (articles of the project, TV and radio programmes or other media coverage)

Of the researchers who have worked in the project, many have appeared in public as experts of their research topic during the project. To economise the effort, we will report here only the media hits from the first week of the Media ja populismi book's publication (see below)

Mari K. Niemi also often discussed the themes of project in her Ylämaan kettu blog (Suomen Kuvalehti), in her columns for the Nykypäivä magazine, and in her guest blog posts for the Tiedekeskiviikko blog of the Finnish Association of Science Editors and Journalists. Niemi and other authors also discussed the themes of the blog in the blog of the Centre for Parliamentary Studies.

In addition, the project’s theme was discussed in e.g. Niko Hatakka's blog post: (https://blogit.utu.fi/ekeskus/2017/01/05/voiko-rasismia-vastustaa-vaarin/) and in an opinion piece by Hatakka, Mari K. Niemi and Emilia Palonen published in Helsingin Sanomat: "Populismi ei kuihdu vaan valtavirtaistuu.” (21 May 2017) https://www.hs.fi/mielipide/art2000005219143.html?share=6d446df4efcf1b201e5e3e1641998d93

A Facebook page was created for the Media ja populismi book and in connection separate event pages for three events organised during the week of the book’s publication.

Newspaper articles and TV and radio programmes in the week of the book's publication

Yle News (21 May) Monday at 12:00 pm (at 2:20-3:00) (https://bit.ly/2sf6lwt)


Ilkka / Lännen media (21 May) Tutkija: Populismi ei ole hyvä tai paha ilmiö – media ei tartu perussuomalaisten provosointiin enää niin helposti (https://bit.ly/2x1GCwr)


Kansan Uutiset (22 May) Mari K. Niemi: Jos populistipuolue ei saa julkisuutta, se korottaa ääntään ja väittää, että media on eliitin puolella (https://bit.ly/2s2xYb7)

Suomen Uutiset (22 May) Turhaa teoretisointia populismista – politiikan tutkijoiden uutuuskirja yrittää selittää monimutkaista ilmiöä yhdellä yksinkertaisella käsitteellä (https://bit.ly/2kfc80C)


Visibility of the hashtag #mediajapopulismi on Twitter by 28 May 11:00 am:

- Posts: Total number of tweets with #mediajapopulismi
- Users: Total number of users who have used #mediajapopulismi in their posts
- Reach: Total number of users who have seen #mediajapopulismi on their Twitter wall
- Impressions: Total number of times #mediajapopulismi was seen on Twitter

Source: keyhole.co/#mediajapopulismi

Potential problems during the project

Problems did not occur. The biggest aberration with the project plan concerns the use of funds – money was left over. (See separate financial report).

Feedback for the foundation

Besides the most visible results, the project enabled the doctoral students who took part in it to develop themselves as experts in a versatile manner. Important aspects in this regard were conference trips abroad, possibility to work on peer-reviewed referee articles and book chapters outside their dissertation (in material acquisition we also used students as paid assistants/trainees), opportunity to
edit a book and learn about scientific communication during the project, and getting to teach the themes of the project in a foreign university.

The project also enabled the main author of the study Dr.Soc.Sc. Mari K. Niemi to work abroad – although none of the three visited universities charged a bench fee, the flexibility of funding and being able to cover travel expenses through the project supported internationalisation and enabled, for example, a two-month visit to Gothenburg, during which Niemi conducted journalist interviews in Sweden, Finland, and Denmark.