

## FINAL REPORT FOR THE HELSINGIN SANOMAT FOUNDATION

### **Mobilizing the Disenfranchised: Post-Truth Public Stories in Finland, France and the United States**

Grant awarded in 1 June 2017.

Total grant awarded: 95 400 euros.

Project ended: 31 December 2018.

Additional funding for the project: Working space and research facilities for two researchers provided by University of Helsinki.

#### **Responsible project leader:**

Karina Horsti, docent, Academy of Finland fellow, Department of Social Sciences and Philosophy, University of Jyväskylä

#### **Research team:**

Niko Pyrhönen, postdoctoral researcher, CEREN, University of Helsinki

Tuukka Ylä-Anttila, postdoctoral researcher, University of Tampere

Gwenaëlle Bauvois, university lecturer, CEREN, University of Helsinki

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#### **Summary of the project:**

Mobilizing the Disenfranchised –project studied how countermedia mobilize a “disenfranchised” community of people, those who are losing trust in the mainstream media. We analysed data from Finland, France, the United States, and Poland on polemic news event coverage in the so-called hybrid media space, using a mixed-methods approach; qualitative methods from media studies and sociology complemented a computational big data toolkit.

#### **The key findings of the project:**

- The project further developed the notion of “countermedia”, which we define as ultrapartisan media outlets that position themselves in opposition to the mainstream media and “the establishment” more broadly, in typical populist style.
- The project critically assessed the notion of “post-truth” and argues that other terms, such as “reinformation”, “counterknowledge”, and “counter-expertise” may be more appropriate.
- Our analysis of conspiracy stories in countermedia in France and the United States suggests a range of more nuanced approaches for studying “post-truthfulness”, beyond the juxtaposition of facts and lies. These conspiracy stories all draw from a common “reinformative” toolkit designed to erode trust in “the elite” but their *modus operandi* – more of less “strategic” or “organic” - takes highly divergent paths and does impact their success in the hybrid media space.

- It is often claimed that populists are “post-truth”, “against experts” and “anti-intellectual”. By studying the political use of knowledge on the anti-immigration websites Homma and MV, we found that those writing for these websites actually often use what we call “counterknowledge” and “counter-expertise”: they justify their arguments with knowledge and expertise, but in simplistic and politicized fashion.
- In Finland we examined how Jussi Halla-aho’s nationalist anti-immigration faction in the Finns party gained victory of the simmering malcontent by the radicals and broke a decade of impasse in the power relations between the nationalist faction and the “softer” populist faction led by Timo Soini. Countermedia has been instrumental in the rise of Halla-aho as a political character and in his later victory in the party.
- One news event we analyzed was the coverage of Independence Day in two countries where populist right has gained a significant political power: Poland and the United States. Countermedia outlets in both countries positioned the populist right as the protagonists of national pride that shield the ‘patriots’ from the leftist/liberal ‘pedagogy of shame.’ In addition, the populist rise to power in the two countries elevates the importance of history and its evaluation in the countermedia coverage as a key polarizing theme.

### **Aim of the project:**

The aim was to produce research knowledge on alternative news outlets and how they mobilize “disenfranchised” constituencies.

### **The aim was achieved (scale 1-5)**

5

### **Peer-reviewed research publications of the project, published or accepted for publication**

Ylä-Anttila, Tuukka (2018) Populist knowledge: ‘Post-truth’ repertoires of contesting epistemic authorities. *European Journal of Cultural and Political Sociology* 5:4, 356–388. <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/23254823.2017.1414620>

Horsti, Karina (forthcoming, accepted for publication in 2019) Refracting the analytical gaze: Studying media representations of migrant death at the border, in Kevin Smets, Koen Leurs, Myria Georgiou, Saskia Witteborn and Radhika Gajjala (eds.) *Sage Handbook of Media & Migration*, London: Sage.

### **Peer-reviewed research publications of the project, submitted and under review**

Ylä-Anttila, Tuukka, Gwenaëlle Bauvois and Niko Pyrhönen, Politicization of migration in the countermedia style. Manuscript submitted for review in *New Media & Society* in December 2018.

Pyrhönen, Niko and Gwenaëlle Bauvois, Conspiracies beyond Fake. Producing Reinforcement on Presidential Elections in Transnational Hybrid Media System. Manuscript submitted for review in *Social Forces* in January 2019.

Kazlauskaitė, Rūta, Gwenaëlle Bauvois, and Niko Pyrhönen, Shaming the Pride of Lions? Countermedia Coverage of the Independence Day in Poland and the US during the Populist Breakthrough. Manuscript submitted for review in *The Sociological Quarterly* in January 2019.

Ylä-Anttila, Tuukka, Social media in the emergence and establishment of the Finns Party, in Emilia Palonen and Tuula Vaarakallio (eds.) *Populists in and out of power: Emergence of the Finns Party and their populist rhetoric*, London: ECPR Press.

Pyrhönen, Niko, The Re-Emergence of Radical Nationalism in Finnish Populist Mobilization, in Emilia Palonen and Tuula Vaarakallio (eds.) *Populists in and out of power: Emergence of the Finns Party and their populist rhetoric*, London: ECPR Press.

### **Publications intended for the general public, published or accepted for publication**

Bauvois, Gwenaëlle (forthcoming, accepted for publication in March 2019) “France has never been and never will be a multicultural country”. (Super)-diversity in Macron’s France. *Siirtolaisuus-Migration Quarterly*, Migration Institute of Finland.

Bauvois, Gwenaëlle (2018) Anti-fake news law: Macron’s impossible challenge? *Totuudenjälkeinen aika* -blogi, <http://www.totuudenjalkeinen.fi/anti-fake-news-law-macrons-impossible-challenge/>

Kazlauskaitė, Rūta (2018) Shame and Pride in the Populist Rhetoric in the US and Poland. *Totuudenjälkeinen aika* -blogi, <http://www.totuudenjalkeinen.fi/shame-and-pride-in-the-populist-rhetoric-in-the-us-and-poland/>

Pyrhönen, Niko (2018) Faktantarkistus mielipidejournalismissa ja mielipidetarkistus faktajournalismissa. *Totuudenjälkeinen aika* -blogi, <http://www.totuudenjalkeinen.fi/faktantarkistus-mielipidejournalismissa-ja-mielipidetarkistus-faktajournalismissa/>

Ylä-Anttila, Tuukka (2017) Totuudenjälkeinen politiikka, populismi ja vastatieto. *Totuudenjälkeinen aika* -blogi, <http://www.totuudenjalkeinen.fi/totuudenjalkeinen-politiikka-populismi-ja-vastatieto/>

Pyrhönen, Niko (2017) Paul-Erik Korvela ja Johanna Vuorelma, Puhun niin totta kuin osaan. Poliitikka faktojen jälkeen, *Poliitikka*: Valtiotieteellisen yhdistyksen julkaisu.

Pyrhönen, Niko (2017) Mitä ihmettä perussuomalaisille tapahtuu nyt?, *Vihreä lanka*.

Pyrhönen, Niko (2017) Tutkija: Halla-aholle täydellinen värisuora, *Vihreä lanka*.

Pyrhönen, Niko (2017) Populismia ja politiikkaa, *Yliopisto*: Helsingin yliopiston tiedelehti.

### **Presentations at scientific conferences**

Pyrhönen, Niko and Bauvois, Gwenaëlle (2018). Protecting the Threatened People? Hybrid Mediation of Anti-Immigrant and Anti-EU Narratives in the Aftermath of the Cologne Incident and the Establishment of Soldiers of Odin, IMISCOE conference, Barcelona.

Bauvois, Gwenaëlle and Niko Pyrhönen (2018). Saying “Shithole” in Vernacular and Vehicular. Recontextualizing a Populist Vulgarity in Transnational Hybrid Media Space. Political Discourse – Multidisciplinary Approaches #2: New discourses of populism and nationalism. Edinburgh Napier University.

Bauvois, Gwenaëlle and Niko Pyrhönen (2018). Saying “Shithole” in Vernacular and Vehicular. Recontextualizing a Populist Vulgarity in Transnational Hybrid Media Space. 2018 Midterm Conference of ESA Research Network 15 "The Challenge of a Global Sociological Imagination"

Pyrhönen, Niko and Bauvois, Gwenaëlle (2017). Post-truth Era and the Erosion of Trust during the French and American Presidential Elections. Narrating Corruption and Conspiracy in the Hybrid Media Space. Democracy Googled: 12th Jyväskylä Symposium on Political Thought and Conceptual Change.

Ylä-Anttila, Tuukka (2018) Populist knowledge: ‘Post-truth’ repertoires of contesting epistemic authorities. ARENA Centre for European Studies Conference, “The European Union – between Scylla and Charybdis?”, University of Oslo, Norway.

Ylä-Anttila, Tuukka (2018) Populist knowledge: ‘Post-truth’ repertoires of contesting epistemic authorities. “Populism in Europe” Conference, European University Institute, Florence, Italy.

Ylä-Anttila, Tuukka (2018) Familiarity as a tool of populism. “Sites of Populism” Workshop, Einstein Forum, Potsdam, Germany.

### **Other presentations, lectures, and training sessions**

Pyrhönen, Niko, Leena Malkki and Oula Silvennoinen (2018) Pinnalla: Äärioikeisto ja maahanmuuttovastaisuus. University of Helsinki, Tiedekulma.

Bauvois, Gwenaëlle and Niko Pyrhönen (2018) Post-truth politics: a theoretical reflection. NOS-HS workshop: Welfare state, rise of authoritarian nationalism and post-truth politics.

Pyrhönen, Niko and Bauvois, Gwenaëlle (2018) Politicization of the Refugee Crisis in Finnish Hybrid Media Space. Narrating Immigration Politics in the Aftermath of the 'Cologne Incident' and the Establishment of Soldiers of Odin. 19th Nordic Migration Research Conference (NMR Conference): New (Im)mobilities: Migration and Race in the Era of Authoritarianism. University of Linköping.

Bauvois, Gwenaëlle and Niko Pyrhönen (2018). Conspiracies around us. Strategic and organic avenues for generating spread. Platforms, politics, players: assessing digital media in far-right politics. Seminar of the Hybra Project.

Bauvois, Gwenaëlle (2018). Presentation at the workshop organised by the Radicalisation Awareness Network (RAN) working group 'Communication and narratives', Vienna.

Bauvois, Gwenaëlle and Niko Pyrhönen (2018). Sharing Populist Narratives across Media Spaces, CEREN seminar, The Centre for Research on Ethnic Relations and Nationalism (CEREN), Swedish School of Social.

Bauvois, Gwenaëlle (2017). Presentation at the workshop organised by the Radicalisation Awareness Network "Dealing with fake news, conspiracies and propaganda in the classroom; media literacy in the digital era". Budapest.

Bauvois, Gwenaëlle and Pyrhönen, Niko (2017). Tracing the Steps of the Trustbusters The Prodigal of Post-Truth Public Stories on Corruption and Conspiracy During the French and American Presidential Elections of 2017 and 2016, Presentation for the 'Protest and political violence network' at the University of Helsinki

Bauvois, Gwenaëlle and Pyrhönen, Niko (2017). Presentation at Mediakohu. (Dis)informaatio ja tunnemyrskyt internetissä seminar, University of Jyväskylä.

Horsti, Karina (2018) Media and Globalization course, Master's Degree in Cultural Policy, University of Jyväskylä: Workshop on Globalization and the "post-truth" media.

Ylä-Anttila, Tuukka (2018) Studia Generalia public lecture, University of Helsinki: "Kaiken takana on salaliitto? Tieto ja vastatieto verkossa."

Ylä-Anttila, Tuukka (Oct/Nov 2017) Three training workshops for journalists at YLE on how journalists should deal with populism and populists.

Pyrhönen, Niko and Bauvois, Gwenaëlle(2018) Poster presentation, CEREN 20 years seminar, University of Helsinki: "Mobilizing the 'Disenfranchised' in Finland, France, and the United States. Post-Truth Public stories in the transnational hybrid media space."

Pyrhönen, Niko (2018) Minority Profile Public Lecture, Åbo Akademi: "Kurjistettuja kutsumassa. Kansallismielisten tarinoiden kaaret uudesta vanhaan mediaan."

Pyrhönen, Niko (2018) Vaihtoehto Eskolle -toimittajatapahtuma. Kaskas media. Training workshop for Finnish journalists on how to develop immigration coverage.

Pyrhönen, Niko (2018) Training session on populism for high school students and teachers: "WeQ Pedagogy goes to Populism: Meet the Expert Workshop for High School Students."

Pyrhönen, Niko (2017) Public lecture, University of San Francisco: "Countermedia Beyond Lies. Tracing Back Three Public Stories on US and French Presidential Elections."

Pyrhönen, Niko and Bauvois, Gwenaëlle (2017) Public lecture in "Näkökulmia nationalismiin Euroopassa. Mitä on rakentava isänmaallisuus?" Magma-akatemia.

#### **Doctoral dissertations: –**

#### **Media exposure of the project**

Bauvois, Gwenaëlle and Pyrhönen, Niko, Soc&kom forskar om alternativa mediers makt – får nästan 100 000, 19.4. 2017, *Yle Svenska*.

Pyrhönen, Niko Oikeus paalutti rajoja vihapuheelle Suomessa, 5.11.2018 *Sveriges Radio*.

Pyrhönen, Niko De inåtvändas utrikespolitik, 28.10.2018, *YLE Spotlight. TV*.

Pyrhönen, Niko *Miten Jussi Halla-ahon ja Timo Soinin puoluejohtajaretoriikka eroavat toisistaan?*, 1.8.2018, *YLE Aristoteleen kantapäätä. Radio*.

Pyrhönen, Niko Valemedia, valtamedia, vastamedia, 8.4.2018, *Kansan Uutiset. Print*.

Pyrhönen, Niko Vastamedioita ja uudelleentulkintaa, 4.4.2018, *Turun Sanomat. Print*.

Pyrhönen, Niko Vastamedioita syntyy nyt nopeaa tahtia - mainostajat arastelevat sekalaista joukkoa, 19.10.2017, *YLE Uutiset. TV*.

Pyrhönen, Niko Suoraa puhetta radikalisoitumisesta, 31.8.2017, *YLE Puhe. Radio*.

Pyrhönen, Niko Kun kaikki muut ovat paholaisia, 21.6.2017, *Seutu-Sanomat. Print*.

Pyrhönen, Niko Mitä tapahtuu suomalaiselle populismille?, 16.6.2017, *YLE. Radio*.

Pyrhönen, Niko Perussuomalaisten puheenjohtajavalinta, 9.6.2017, *Vihreä lanka*.  
Podcast.

Pyrhönen, Niko Entä jos Suomen kansallistunnus valittaisiin nyt? Tutkija:  
isänmaallisuuden merkitys on kasvussa, 6.5.2017, *Keski-Uusimaa*. Print.

Ylä-Anttila, Tuukka 25.9.2017 *Vihreä Lanka*

Ylä-Anttila, Tuukka 26.9.2017 *STT*

Ylä-Anttila, Tuukka 26.9.2017 *Uusi Suomi*

Ylä-Anttila, Tuukka 26.9.2017 *Helsingin Uutiset*

Ylä-Anttila, Tuukka 21.11.2017 *Aviisi, Tampereen ylioppilaslehti*

Ylä-Anttila, Tuukka 3.8.2018 *Yle Radio 1 Ykkösaamu*

Ylä-Anttila, Tuukka 10.9.2018 *Xinhua News*

Ylä-Anttila, Tuukka 10.9.2018 *Seura*.

### **Data sets produced by the project**

- 1) All articles published by Helsingin Sanomat 2015-2017: 131,957 articles.
- 2) All articles published by MV-lehti 2015-2017: 15,015 articles.

### **Data storage and possible use of the material after the project ends**

The data sets are under copyright so unfortunately they cannot be shared or archived by the project.