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Abstract

The radical right often appears as anti-science. In this chapter, we explore how science and knowledge have a key role to play in the Finns Party, a radical right party with connections to the wider alt-right field in Finland and abroad. It appears to us that science is in fact hotly debated, criticized along its own political lines, and it gains support. The Finns Party's practice on science consists of multiple tactics such as denialism, censorship, co-optation, and the desire to produce alternative information that follows the party's line. In the Party, science and academics have a solid position in the party leadership, which today consists of distinctively educated citizens, a civilized elite. This invites us to consider the party not from the perspective of science scepticism but alt-science and hegemony.

1. Introduction

The relationship between knowledge and power is vital. Ignorance or indifference are not just lack of knowledge but can be related to cultural and political struggles (Proctor, 2008). The attempt to define correct or permissible information can be seen as a "cultural war" that seeks to shape power and values (Hervik, 2014). Current cultural wars are waged on social media and are associated with misogyny and white supremacy (Nagle, 2017). Anti-intellectualism, linked to anti-elitism, also thrives (Aktas et al., 2019). Complicating the position of researchers and academic institutions is linked to authoritarianism—even in Finland, a Nordic country in the European uUnion with high education and literacy rates, attempts to silence and ignore scholars in decision-making are recognized as major threats (Väliverronen & Ekholm, 2020, 8).

According to the Finnish Science Barometer survey, there is no fear of an anti-scientific atmosphere and spread of misinformation in Finland, on the contrary: people believe in scientific knowledge. However, Finns Party supporters differ from others: While almost nine out of ten Green party

supporters trust science, only every other Finns Party supporter does so by the same token, half of the Finns still trust science according to this survey (Varpula, 2019). The difference in attitudes

towards climate change is particularly clear, as the Yle news (Sandell, 2019) highlights: the Finns Party supporters side with the claim that too much "zero research"—that is, study on what we

allegedly already know, is done in Finland, have less confidence in research data than supporters of any other political party.

The struggle over science-based knowledge not only deals with the academia but also

addresses schools and the education system, as we demonstrate below. In several cases of political change attention has been put on school curricula and even books, from minor reforms of conceptualisations to wholesale renewal that addresses typically the way in which nationhood is dealt with or how to think about the past (e.g., Kazlauskaitė, 2018). Typically, counter knowledge is produced through blogs, discussion boards and think thanks. Alt-science as the scientific knowledge is also on the rise. Introducing new voices, non-traditional knowledges, and new supporters through engagement in the knowledge field is part of the wider overall alt-right movement, where the Finns Party spearheads with institutionalized support in Finland.

Indeed, the Finns Party is one of the most popular parties in Finland. Since 2011, they have reached considerable electoral success as one of the large parties in the proportional electoral system that supports coalition governments. In 2015, they took part in the government, until the leadership change in 2017. After the leadership change they managed to retain their position, and became the third largest party in the 2019 elections (see e.g., Palonen, 2020). Before the pandemic they lead the polls in a sovereign

manner, while in the end of 2021 with circa 18 per cent support rates they compete between the Social Democrats and the more moderate right-wing National Coalition over as the three largest parties in the YLE polls, as the Centre Party's support has been on long-term decline (Tikkala, 2021).

Defining and controlling the production of knowledge has always been at the heart of the Finns Party, although it is one of the basic principles of science that it is not constrained by interests outside science itself (Väliverronen & Ekholm, 2020, 7). The results of science are commonly rejected when they conflict with your own worldview (confirmation bias), and this is clear with the Finns Party. Most often, it gets reflected in environmental and health issues, including views and moral perceptions towards climate change or vaccination. The same attitude is reflected in takes on social sciences and cultural studies. Sometimes they rely on knowledge and science (as in the "studies" on immigration and other controversial issues published by their own think tank Suomen Perusta), and sometimes they abandon the academic elite and emphasize popularity. In what we have uncovered, the discourse is not anti-science, although for a scientist it may appear anti-scientific.

As Tuukka Ylä-Anttila (2018) has pointed out the Finns Party engages in an epistemological critique of contemporary science. In this thinking, the problem of ideological leftist intellectuals is that they do not see the reality for what it is. Science or scientists are perceived as a threat when they question traditional values and moral perceptions. Gender is a particular field that has been seen in the need of rewriting (Graff & Korolczuk, 2022). Considering that what we explore is a process of providing an alternative science and institutionalised forms of knowledge rather than conspiracy theories (see chapters "Knowledge, Counter-Knowledge, Pseudo-Science in Populism", "The Role of Experts in Populist Politics: Towards a Post-foundational Approach", and "QAnon and Its Conspiracy Milieu: The Italian Case" in this volume) in online discussions, we operationalisze here the term of alt-science that Casarões and Magalhães (2021) developed in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, although Ylä-Anttila's term counter knowledge captures the wider field of contestation. Irrespective of the exact vocabulary, we see this as a transnational hegemonic battle over knowledge and power, where the Finns Party offers just a case.

In the wider alt-right field, ideological othering does not mean abandoning education or science but studying the "right things" in the "right way". This echoes the Althusserian understanding that the role of schools, media, church, and so on are vital for maintaining the consciousness that the political subjects are hailed by and without realizing that they are practising ideology. We suggest discussing the phenomenon the through the Gramscian concept of organic intellectuals and Althussers' theorizing of ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses. We combine this with Laclau and Mouffe's (1985) insights into discursive contestation, which also offers a broad methodological base for our research exploring a range of documented narratives from policy papers to social media and biographies.

Our chapter discusses the ways in which Finns Party engages in criticism of information and seeksto define appropriate information. We analyse the guidelines of the Finns Party cultural policy programme (2020) and the municipal election programme (2021) on knowledge and teaching. In addition, we present examples of Finns Party's science relations published in the media (online magazines, social media platforms and discussion forums but increasingly traditional media) and their key themes: gender, climate change denialism, criticism of the main public funding body Academy of Finland and the quality of information produced by Suomen Perusta, the Finns Party think tank, as well as the party leadership's personal connection to science. Exploring the phenomenon, recognised particular strategies of information management: denialism, censorship, distortion, co-optation, reclaiming, and the production of alt-science—as a hegemonic praxis. Saresma (forthcoming) has done closer analysis and reduced these to three means denial, censorship and production of alt-science.

The chapter is divided into four parts. The first one outlines our analytical framework of hegemony theory. The second explores the role of the leadership and elite recruitment introducing the party's current leaders and fellow travellers, including co-optation. The third explores the policies and praxis of engagement culture and education through censorship and distortion. The fourth, explores the key nodal points that provide elements to the party's discourse beyond its primary focus, migration. Here denialism and alt-science production have an important role.

2. Organic Intellectuals and Hegemony (Challengers)

Attention to the use of media and politics—and the need to produce vision from the movement's own perspective was realized early on and in the modern politics by the Italian political theorist Antonio Gramsci. Gramsci argued that movements needed organic intellectuals to communicate the knowledge of the class within the class and to the others. Gramsci's point was that intellect was a capacity of anyone, but not everyone would be an intellectual. Rather, these people would come either from within the group itself or through assimilation of traditional intellectuals in it: "One of the most important characteristics of any group that is developing towards dominance is its struggle to assimilate and to conquer "ideologically" the traditional intellectuals, but this assimilation and conquest is made quicker and more efficacious the more the group in question succeeds in simultaneously elaborating its own organic intellectuals." (Gramsci, 1971, 116.)

Developing on Gramsci's work, the French philosopher Louis Althusser (2008[1971]) pointed at Ideological State Apparatuses (ISAs) that are relevant to societal knowledge production. In fact, he makes a difference between repressive and ideological state apparatuses. "Ideology never says 'I am ideological'," Althusser (ibid., 49) notes. The political subject becomes "hailed" or "interpellated" by the ideology and does not realize they are in ideology (ibid., 47). In this way, ideology for Althusser "acts" in a particular way of "recruiting subjects." To contest the ISAs, progressive forces would need to establish their own state apparatuses or take control of the established ISAs. These range from party organs and related think thanks to policies and social media communities. It is important to see that the Finns Party in the same way as other movements, and particularly the wider field of the alt-right, have generate these starting from websites and discussion boards now moving into more labour intensive and tech-heavy state apparatuses. At the same time, they contest the established ISAs such as education, media, and schools.

Thinking further on theory of hegemony, building on both Althusser and Gramsci, Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe (1985), working in the UK under Thatcherism, discussed about the role of hegemony in mobilizing strategy. Counterhegemonic movements would need generate their own nodal points, myths, and political frontiers—to challenge the status quo with an alternative imaginary. Drawing on their theorizing we will investigate the process of generation of a counterhegemony through approach to knowledge as alt-science.

The key to contemporary mobilizsation of the radical right mobilization, or the alt-right is that they do not merely want to establish a political "us" just as the populists do to get to power through making clear an antagonism that they see as constitutive to their existence centring around an unfulfilled demand in a cause or confrontation that unites them (Laclau, 2005; Mouffe, 2018). More precisely, they want to carry out transformation at the level of mindsets and what is not just the status quo but the (new) normal. This transformation links several forms of information (true or false) and negates conventional sources of knowledge so that through this new confrontation they constitute their own position and define the pertinent questions and answers to them.

Understanding online mobilization and claiming of institutions of knowledge can benefit from theorizing politics and communication in Deleuze and Guattari's footsteps (Guattari & Deleuze, 1987; Hardt & Negri, 2000). We refer to alt-right beyond the Finns Party precisely because of this rhizomatic political practice.

Organized political forces such as the radical -right parties do not merely seek to feed into the uncontrollable field of production of meaning. Rather, they want to be in control of the mechanisms that give it structure and direction.

Though it may sound odd to study the radical right through the (post-)Marxist tradition, we argue that these theories shed light on the workings of counterhegemonic mobilization and its knowledge production. These insights could be applied in several other contexts, but the theorizing seems particularly apt for the Finns Party as a case of radical right party promoting wider alt-right and alt-science perspectives.

3. The Finns Party Leadership and Fellow Travellers: The Party of the Intellectuals

One piece of evidence on the relevance of alt-science is provided in the Finns Party General Election video from 2019. V niin kuin Ketutus was a 6:40 long short film on a monster that emerged from the anger of people and sought to conquest the ruling corrupted elites (Finns Party, 2019). While the video spread within Finland and beyond its borders and it has been analysed for international audiences (Horsmanheimo et al., forthcoming; Sakki & Martikainen, 2020, 2021), what was interesting about it was that it really started at the symbolic home of knowledge. As many populist radical right imageries it includes a relatable, recognizable historical setting in the heart of the capital city—the main cathedral. But where the video starts, is the Finnish National Library, where a figure reads a comic book in the dark. After the film returns from the comic to the reader for the final scene in the starting location, the figure is revealed as the party chair Jussi Halla-aho who issues a reassuring message: "there is no pissed-off monster" but instead that it is you who have a say in the general elections.

In fact, it was the same library as where Jussi Halla-aho had spent his formative years at the university—even receiving his PhD at the University of Helsinki. His postdoc did not come to fruition despite funding he received for compiling a dictionary, which he never did (Nurmi, 2020). Instead, he launched a blog Scripta – Kirjoituksia uppoavasta Lännestä (Scripta – Writings from the sinking West) with which he reached wide audiences— much more excited audiences than his colleagues at the university who were worried about the tone of his argumentation of Western civilizationism. This knowledge that was framed as something that? cannot be spoken in the public about is secret knowledge about the dangers of immigration that was politically incorrect and thus forbidden—generated the affective appeal of his followers (and a bunch of trolls) who were calling him "Master" (Mestari) from the mid-2000s. He managed to make his way to the party list although Timo Soini, the party chair at the time, was not fond of him and on the one hand, did not estimate the appeal and on the other, needed a boost in Helsinki. Following the argument of journalist Lauri Nurmi, Halla-aho, in contrast, appeared as much in control and needed a job, as his university career did not take-off after the PhD (Nurmi, 2020).

The current party chair Riikka Purra studied international relations at the University of Turku. She discovered that IR was not diplomacy that she hoped to have studied and has openly discussed about the disjoint between her colleagues and her own beliefs (Suonpää, 2021). She never finished her funded PhD, and it is a bit unclear what she did in the years between studying and moving to politics to become the vice-chair of Jussi Halla-aho in 2017. In the traditional media, her urban, healthy lifestyle has been portrayed. She is depicted as an eager reader – —there are photos of her home with large bookshelves and books also piled on the floor (Myllymäki, 2021), and on the social media her Instagram features green smoothies. This gives some contrast to the very fact-driven presence in the print media and Twitter. Purra would be the first one to deny the label populism on her party. It is patriotism that she advocates. She found her way to the party also through the blogs and engagement with Jussi Halla-aho's circle.

In a recent book, Markku Jokisipilä, director of the Centre for the Study of Parliament and a leading commentator of politics in Finland, discusses the Halla-aho and Purra's party. The book projects the picture

of highly educated party elites. The leadership is trusted, but the actives have a different educational background. For example, in the Uutissuomalainen poll, both Jokisipilä and one of the authors commented in November 2021 the persons rating Riikka Purra as the most successful party leader in the recent poll after two years of her stay in power are dominantly from the two least educated demographic groups in the study. In contrast, the poll's lead PM Sanna Marin of the SDP received support evenly from all demographic groups. Purra's ratings are strong, constituting two-thirds of the party supporters although not three fourths like Halla-aho did before his sudden decision to step down in the summer of 2021, two years prior to the next scheduled general elections, after leading the party for four years. One of the speculations is that Purra is seen as less extreme in views.

Jokisipilä purports to have repeatedly interviewed and met Halla-aho and he is widely expected to become the person in possession of a famed letter that outlines reasons for Halla-aho's decision to step down. Jokisipilä's book is not a scientific study in the strict sense but was widely discussed as an attack against his colleagues suggesting that they (just like the mainstream media) mock the party and present it in a bad light, because they themselves support values other than nationalist ones. The study made claims that 1.5 million Finns (voters in the previous elections) cannot be labelled far right or that historically it is not possible to see that fascism would exist in Finland given the lack of ideological tradition in the past. The style would indicate one of the forms of becoming a Gramscian organic intellectual: adaptation from the other social groups. The key argument in the book is to deny prior knowledge on the Finns Party as ideological and offer a neutral observer's account of the facts.

With also the party's secretary Arto Luukkanen having a post as lecturer in Russian and East European Studies at the University of Helsinki, the outlook tells a story of an educated elite led party whose supporters are still the same socio-economic groups as they were in the early days, or the landslide victory of the party led by Timo Soini in the "Jytky" elections in 2011 (Arter, 2012). We discussed the road to Jytky in the framing of the party in the largest Finnish national daily Helsingin Sanomat and the party's own discourse, where it had received sympathy among the "elite" newspapers, and the persona of Timo Soini, who at the same time highlights his degree master's in political science and appears streetwise among the masses (Palonen & Saresma, 2017).

A Gramscian question is whether the demands, themes, and values among the intellectuals come organically from the social group—or class—they represent. And how fast is the generation and recruitment of organic intellectuals. The Althusserian point here would be to expand the organic intellectuals so that the hitherto hostile ISAs could be occupied from within, this including the party leadership passing through the institution of the Finnish parliament and on the way to the government, as educated elites.

4. Reclaiming Traditional ISAs: The Finns Party Cultural Policy And Municipal Election Programmes

In this section, we study cultural policy programme and the municipal election programme of the party. The programme The Finns Party media and cultural policy, published on 13 January 2020, immediately brings out a message on the cover that summarizes the message of the declaration—the effort to teach "Finnish" culture: "The Finns Party do not accept censorship of opinion or the fact that accusations of hate speech or painting silence the debate. We strongly defend the inviolable right to freedom of expression. We also want our nationalist and Finnish-proud way of thinking and culture from our historical background to be strengthened. Finnish culture must also be present in the daily life of schools and in curricula. We want the teaching of culture, civilization, and the arts – not multicultural propaganda or political ideology as a headache for children." (Finns Party, 2020, 1.)

The eight-page statement consists of the sections "Freedom of speech, hate speech and social media," "The role of the Finnish Broadcasting Corporation," "For Finnish culture and the Finnish language," "Something

limits even art," "Art and culture as factors of well-being" and "Physical culture and movement for life." Freedom of speech is at the centre, but the cornerstone of freedom of speech, public communication, is being slandered. The activities of the non-affiliated Finnish Broadcasting Corporation, Yle, which engages in independent information transmission, are criticized. On the one hand, Yle's importance in recognizing "high-quality documents as a provider of program content and music and other art programs co-produced by the European Broadcasting Corporation" and as a "guardian of Finnish culture and language." On the other hand, concerns are expressed that "in immigration and EU news, for example, Yle has not cared that its task is not to proclaim its own "truth" to the people, but to present facts and leave it to the reader to draw conclusions" (Finns Party, 2020, 4). The party attacks Yle for disseminating information coloured by its own, false perspective.

The state-owned broadcaster's independent, fact-based communication, committed to the ethical conditions of journalism, is criticized: "The activities and journalistic level of the Finnish media are in many places at a worrying level." The programme recalls that the activities of the Broadcasting Corporation are financed by tax funds and that its "activities can be influenced by political decisions if we wish." (Finns Party, 2020, 4.) The cultural policy programme thus suggests that Yle's programme activities should be politically controllable. In particular, the party criticizes the current "promotion of cultural diversity added to Yle's mission" and the obligation to produce a "programme that seeks to present a multicultural social project supported by other parties in a positive light" (ibid., 4). The attempt to take over the broadcaster, determine its programming policy, and thereby control media publicity is familiar from other countries. This form of anti-elitism where journalists and experts of Yle are depicted as the antipode of what the real people know, trust, and believe, matches with the Althusserian idea of seeing media as an ideological state apparatus that would need to be into the control of the counterhegemonic movement.

The programme emphasizes Finnish, distinctive culture, without defining it. Such a (fictional) "common culture strengthens the identity and community of a nation" (Finns Party, 2020, 4). Therefore, "Finnish culture must also be present in the everyday life and curricula of schools" (ibid., 5). At its best, art and culture "evoke emotions, increase active citizenship, and encourage discussion and critical thinking." However, critical thinking is defined as preservative rather than reformative: "We want the teaching of culture, civilization and the arts – not multicultural propaganda or political ideology as a headache for children." (Ibid., 5.)

In their municipal election programme, published on 25 January 2021, Finns Party emphasizes Finnish traditions and tackling bullying in connection with schools. The Ministry of Education and Culture had simultaneously prepared an extensive programme of measures to prevent bullying, violence and harassment in schools and educational institutions. The Board of Education in addition to developing education, early childhood education and lifelong learning, promotes internationality (OPH, 2021a), and produces materials to address cultural diversity in education (OPH, 2021b). Finns Party line is strictly the opposite declaring, how "The Summer hymn (*Suvivirsi*) and Christmas parties belong to Finnish culture and schools. (…) Finnish culture must be visible and heard." (Ibid., see also Ruotsalainen & Saresma, 2017.)

The strong emphasis on Finnish culture is contrary to the Basic Education Curriculum (OPH, 2016), in which global education plays a key role. For example, in the UNICEF Learning Materials, learners are committed to global responsibility while learning the skills they need to make the world fairer and more sustainable (UNICEF). These goals are linked to the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals, which aim to eradicate extreme poverty, promote equality and justice, and protect the planet by 2030. Such goals do not fit into the Finns Party municipal election programme.

Schools and libraries are key institutions for producing information in Finland. The Finns Party Mmunicipal Eelection Pprogramme emphasizes that schools and libraries should be "safe places to focus on learning

new things" and points to the "growing problems" of both with the "exclusion of young people and the increasing side effects of immigration" without elaborating on this. In addition to these side effects, school attendance is hampered by the placement of special needs students in regular classes and dangerous school trips overshadowed by "unsafe traffic solutions" and "wolves and other large carnivores." (Finns Party, 2021, 10–11.)

The municipal election programme does not talk directly about the content of school or university education but warns against "unnecessary and harmful expenditures" such as "ideological upheavals related to immigration, climate, and gender policies" (Finns Party, 2021, 4). When the programme clearly takes a stand against "gender-neutral traffic signs," "ongoing anti-discrimination and anti-racism slogans," "artificial gender awareness" and "anti-hate speech campaigns" (ibid., 6), tolerance and gender sensitivity are obviously not, in the party's view, contents that should be taught in schools.

The Finns Party's municipal election programme echoes the familiar nationalist welfare chauvinism (Keskinen et al., 2016), well-being and security, and depicting migrants as a threat. It also calls for "some limit to ideological upheaval," as defined by anti-racism, discrimination, and hate speech campaigns and "artificial gender awareness," as well as "a sense of proportionality to climate action" (ibid., 2–6).

Intrusion of making sure the curriculum follows the party line is followed through active engagement at schools. Schoolteachers find topics related to politics and history or cultural diversity difficult to teach at schools, as local party activists' campaign against potential bullying of supporters of the Finns Party (Niemonen & Pilke, 2021; Pohjanen, 2021). In 2018, a school was attacked by angry Finns Party supporters after the then MP, currently MEP Laura Huhtasaari posted in Twitter a photo about a poster made by the students of that school as a part of their media course that suggested the Finns Party turns their back to refugees and leaves them drowning in the Mediterranean instead of accepting them in Finland (Ranta, 2018). Another attack implying the efforts to censor knowledge production took place in 2021 as the youth organisation of the Finns Party (STT, 2021) had asked school children to report their experiences of bias in school education. Jani Mäkelä, Finns Party MP, called on Twitter to talk about the bias of teaching (ibid.). The teachers' trade union OAJ and the National Board of Education knocked out the actions, by stating that no external part has a saying about the content of teaching and that there has not been a bias in the curriculum (Ekholm, 2018).

The model for the campaign was taken from an online application launched in 2018 by the right-wing populist Alternativ für Deutschland (AfD, Alternative to Germany) used to report teachers who express critical opinions of the party. In both Germany and Finland, the reports were linked to the content of the information to be taught. Teachers' organizations in both countries opposed the parties' interference in the school curriculum and emphasized the importance of critical thinking. The right-wing populists of both countries, on the other hand, argued that it was the reporting system that would guarantee the impartiality of information (Ekholm, 2018.)

Even the Halla-aho, rebuked the teachers for the uproar in his Facebook post on 17 January 2021: "*Virtually every Finns Party parent with school-age children knows that schools are forced to enter political and partisan views, i.e., mainly to incite immigration, incite climate panic and bark at Finns Party. It is remarkably interesting that when Finns Party want to map this phenomenon, the party is accused of trying to take party politics to schools.*" (Halla-aho, 2021.) Halla-aho's writing describes the party's message, the two tops of which are anti-immigration and climate denialism. Speaking on behalf of the reporting campaign, he himself is taking party politics to schools. Also, the higher education is targeted: on the 22 October 2021, the MP of the party Sebastian Tynkkynen, and an influencer YouTuber, tweeted and asked the students at the Helsinki University of Arts to enrol on a course on structural whiteness and provide him

the materials, adding in a threatening tone: “They will be needed” for mocking or even censoring the course syllabus (Tynkkynen, 2021).

From the Finns Party’s perspective, Althusserian ISAs, in the Finnish society the key ISAs are conquered by alien ideology – —one of inclusion and diversity. The party recommends not to generate alternative apparatuses, apart from using social media as such, but move on to schools as an ISA in control of their others. In the next section, we also see new thematic points of contestation and the establishment of new more progressive institutions, and practices.

4.1. Distortion and Ridicule: Engaging with the “Zero” Research Awarded in Competitive Science

The broader theme of science scepticism clearly emerges in the Finns Party criticisms against the funding decisions of the Academy of Finland. This has been taking place for the past years, and particularly in 2021, when a counter campaign started (Thornton, 2021). In her empirical analysis, Tuija Saresma (forthcoming) demonstrates that there are three ways of approaching science that are typical of Finns Party, namely (1) the denial of research results, manifested as climate change denialism or “climate change criticality”, (2) the attempt to censor information, especially criticism of the Academy of Finland, and (3) the production of one’s own “alternative” information by Finns Party incubators. We first go through the logic of the attack on the Academy of Finland funding decisions, and in the next section, the themes of contestation in particular. Going through these attitudes briefly here shows that there is a clear desire of Finns Party to dictate what research is along the line of the party and how it aims to defining what constitutes as science.

In the recent years, social media and party related media have directed attention to the types of Academy of Finland funding decisions. The Academy of Finland, the main academic funding body offers is highly competitive funding, but public criticism is used to serve the Finns Party’s aims of highlighting the distinction between the ordinary people with their beliefs and the academic elites with their ideological convictions and the abuse of public funds.

The Finns Party online magazine Suomen Uutiset (2020a) has participated in the smearing of the Academy funding decisions. Suomen Uutiset published a news article with the title “Trans-future, racism, African healers, the importance of racism and meme images” and was dealt with in an amused tone in the body text (Turkkila, 2016). Studies on gender minorities, gender equality, and sexual equality were especially criticized. From 2016, particularly funding for humanities, gender studies, issues related to immigration, research in development studies are sourced and ridiculed on the Finns Party forums and online and presented in a ridiculous light.

In the latest stir, individual researchers were identified and mocked in not only right-

wing but also more mainstream media. The case centring on a tweet in August 2021 is interesting,

as it unveils inner paradoxes in the Finns Party science discourse and raised a huge counterblow on Twitter. Praised and contested.

In the tweet chain, first journalist of Ivan Puopolo, known for his maverick style, shared a link to

the reputable mainstream daily newspaper which in its editorial discusses how a leading civil

servant at the ministry of education argues that scientists need to legitimate them. The cynical

comment stated, “Perhaps in the ‘science community’ they soon understand that calling one’s work science is not enough.” (Puopolo, 2021) The denigration of science community does not devalue

science as such, but it does contest whether current scientists are doing science or not. The

journalist Susanne Päivärinta responded to this with a phone screenshot (presumably) of research at the University of Eastern Finland on "The Poetics of Afroeuropean Mobilities in Francophone African Literatures". The journalist claimed she did not understand it. This aroused a huge discussion where, on the one hand, the research is dismissed and on the other, the study of "student mobilities, tourism and exploration, professional mobilities, criminal mobilities, return travel, and clandestine travel" may indeed be relevant for migrant-focused parties.

It sparked on Twitter a new hashtag #minätutkin (#Iresearch) where academic people all over Finland tweeted in an easily understandable manner what they study and why (see Thornton, 2021). The Twitter active communicators of this impromptu campaign and hashtag public (Rambukkana, 2015) received the Interaction of the Year Prize by the scholarly society on communication Prologos. Some say the campaign backfires on science as it reinforces the discourse of usefulness since what makes science relevant is that it would not be immediately relevant (Jalonen, 2021). Others such as the prize-givers claim that it generated more attention to sciences, particular projects and their diversity as scholars were supposed to argue in a space of a tweet what they research. Responding to contestation always confirms that there is contestation but one of the key issues was that it generated a hashtag public, and a supportive community of scholars online whose main worry was not the alt-right, but funding cuts that the hitherto pro-science government was presenting to them in early autumn 2021. Contestation worked in a reverse logic: it made the science community stronger and more visible, but it kept the doubts present.

As we can read here from the vocal journalists and alt-scientist, the movement is in the need of organic intellectuals. It is worth noting that the term intellectual in Gramscian thought does not merely refer to academics. Organic intellectuals both derive from the social strata of the group, or through assimilating others as their intellectuals, whether journalists or academics.

5. Denial and Production of Alt-Science: The Climate and the Gender Debates as Alternative Nodal Points in the Single-Iissue Party's Discourse

There are some key themes that the Finns Party have sought to pursue in their criticism of scientific knowledge. While a certain value-conservative, traditionalist line has continued throughout the party's existence, the party led by Soini until 2017 was on the side of the underprivileged, while led by Halla-aho (2017–2021) and Purra (2021–) there have been a clearer agenda of right-wing xenophobia and outright racism (Norocel et al., 2021.) However, support growth cannot be built on single issue alone, especially when immigration has declined further during the Covid-19 period. Other themes such as climate and gender can move on to provide more space for identification.

Research on climate change is constantly belittled elsewhere too. The former president Halla-aho has repeatedly spoken in public about "climate hysteria" and the current president Riikka Purra talks about "climate fanaticism" (Purra, 2021). In January 2020, Halla-aho posted on Facebook a long text that has been liked by more than 6000 people and shared by more than 700 people. In it, he contests the Green Minister of Interior Maria Ohisalo and claims: "Of course, forest fires are not really caused by climate change. (…) Climate flutter is not only stupid, but also dangerous for the economy as well as for people and nature. If we pretend the forest fires elsewhere are caused by climate change, and therefore will stop using and taking care of our forests, the forests will be burning also at home." (Halla-aho, 2020.)

The inaccuracy of the message was contested by many experts and politicians. For example, Minister of the Interior Ohisalo herself suggests that the political right in particular "questions research and the credibility of individual researchers" and even seeks to "subject science to its own purposes" thus crumbling trust to scientists, although "freedom and independence of science are key building blocks of democracy" (Koskinen, 2020).

The uproar over Australian forest fires was not the only one of its kind. Sara Rigatelli (2020) states that the downplaying of climate change and the refusal to reduce emissions, which have been diligently practised among Finns Party, are related to the line that is holding back the climate actions of many right-wing populists in Europe. With the shift in focus from immigration, it is precisely climate change that has "become a favourite destination of populist parties" (ibid.). Halla-aho has embraced scepticism about climate change and the glorification of motoring in pursuit of popularity (see chapter "Populism, Science and Covid-19 as a Political Opportunity: The Case of the European Parliament" in this volume).

Gender was another issue that caused discussion in 2020. The pamphlet *Totuus kiihottaa – Filosofinen tutkimus vasemmistopopulistisen valtamedian tieto- ja totuuskriisistä* (The Truth Excites: A Philosophical Study of the Information and Truth Crisis in the Left Populist Mainstream Media, Hankamäki, 2020) by Jukka Hankamäki, Doctor in Philosophy and in Political Science. The title of the book suggests that the book deals with media, knowledge, and truth as philosophical concepts and their social context. In reality, the book is a mixed compilation that criticizes media, feminism, immigration policy and academia, and concern for freedom of speech. Hankamäki writes, among other things, that rape in marriage is not rape, that women mate with foreigners to take revenge on Finnish society and that the mixing of biological races is dangerous. Hankamäki's perception of women can be considered misogynistic. Such female hatred and antifeminism are familiar from the Internet sphere (Saresma, 2020; Nagle, 2017, 93–94) and is practicsed by right-wing populists around the world (Palonen & Saresma, 2019).

Hankamäki uses language typical of anti-immigrant movements (Saresma, 2017) referring, for example, to the "demographic power" used by women. He refers to "cross-border mating," in which women "modify the genetic heritage of our people" and "violate the equivalence and correlative and confidential relationship between the biological race, the ethnically identifiable people, the politically valid nation, legal citizenship, and the philosophically existing nation-state" (Hankamäki, 2020, **PAGE**). The book expresses hatred of women and ethnonationalism, flooded with words of civilization.

Totuus kiihottaa was spectacularly published in an event where in addition to Hankamäki himself, Marko Hamilo, the director of the think tank, and Jussi Halla-aho, the party's chair, were present. The publication ceremony for Hankamäki's book was advertised in Suomen Uutiset (2020b), and it was promised that Hamilo and Hankamäki would provide "fresh research information on the values, attitudes and influence of journalists". The party clearly wanted the publication to get as much publicity as possible. At the unveiling ceremony, Hamilo praised the book as "fine research" (Mäntymaa et al., 2020). When its hostile and racist content erupted, Matias Turkkila rushed to announce that Hamilo was the only representative of the Foundation or party to read the book. The party leadership withdrew from the book. Halla-aho and then Purra issued a press release emphasizing that they were unfamiliar with the content of the book and that "the party does not usually check the outputs of its think tank in advance." (Parkkonen, 2020.) Thus, the production of information in the party's own machinery is hardly evaluated at all, even though the quality of other researched information is critically criticized. Halla-aho, Turkkila and Grönroos, who knew Hankamäki's style, knew how to expect a stir in the party's media publicity. They focused on contesting authorities of knowledge and generating their own ones.

Features of counterscience and alt-science include calling itself science without being science. Books that copy the format of scientific publications published by the Foundation, such as the Epäneutraali sukupuolikirja – Puheenvuoroja sukupuolikysymyksistä (The Unneutral Gender Book: Speeches on Gender Issues, Grönroos, 2016), on closer inspection turn out to be unsubstantiated opinions that do not meet the criteria of science (see e.g., Keisalo, 2016; Saresma, 2018). But this is the game of devaluing scientific knowledge and producing not scientific knowledge but knowledge that would pass as such.

Knowledge is not disregarded by the Finns Party. It is quite the contrary. It provides key elements and signifiers which are spreading as the counterhegemonic discourses among the masses, where they gain ground and may become a new discursive horizon, and imaginary, to follow the theory of hegemony of Laclau and Mouffe. During the covid-19 period, vaccinations alt-science talk is moving strong in the party.

This last section that showed how the Finns Party seek to determine appropriate or acceptable information actively in cases of immigration or gender—by providing knowledge. The think tank Suomen Perusta close to the party publishes reports and pamphlets in line with the party's agenda, for example on the costs and gender of immigration. For a populist, any publicity can be useful. The party, which promotes conservative values, cannot be harmed by the fact that a publication criticizing immigration for restricting women's sexuality rises in the headlines.

Above, we presented the ways the Finns Party aims at controlling and utilizing knowledge production. We chose to focus on the party's activity for two reasons: Firstly, because they already are a very powerful party with a clear aim to become even the prime minister party, and in that position, they could affect the country's science policy in many ways. And secondly, because the Finns Party is a schoolbook example of an authoritarian alt-right party manual of how to gain and execute power.

We have analysed the party's cultural policy programme, the municipal election party programme, and the social media attacks on the Academy of Finland's funding decisions and Suomen Perusta as a producer of information, we have discussed strategies that describe the Finns Party's own media debates in 2020. These strategies are not mere attitudes to science but rather active tactics in the party's aim at controlling knowledge production. The party's participation in the discussion of information is condensed into different means: the denial of the researched information, the effort to censor the research, and the production of alternative information. Of these strategies, climate change denialism is intentional ignorance, agnotology.

A further desire to define research to be funded and thus to censor research topics that do not fit into one's own agenda, is a chatter on social media and in the party's own voice supporters, who are not committed to the journalist's instructions. Where these means of managing information go unhelpful only in response to existing knowledge, the generation of knowledge itself is proactive. The denigration of scientific knowledge and the production of alternative knowledge are in the strategic use of the party, and the aim here is to weaken the public trust to academic knowledge production and to academic freedom. It is a form of censorship and it also weathers the belief on the school system and to the whole democratic system more broadly.

The finally there are strategies of producing alternative knowledge, is yet another but a more forceful attempt to set the agenda of science and knowledge. It emphasizes that in the alt-right knowledge production the aim is not only to censor or to question "wrong" kind of knowledge but also to promote one's political agenda by producing alt-science that is fabricated to answer the needs of this agenda.

Because of the various responses to existing knowledge—denying it, questioning it and censoring it—and also because of the active effort to producing counter-science, we suggest that what we are witnessing is not only anti-science or even only counter-science, but a new mixture of tactics, alt-science. This strategy includes co-optation of existing knowledge, generating or occupying organs of knowledge (ISAs) and working through organic intellectuals either from the movement's own ranks or through integrating intellectuals from other groups. In this article, we sought to read the discursive practices on science of the Finns Party from the perspective of the theory of hegemony, with reference to Gramsci and Althusser. From the Laclau and Mouffean perspective,

the Finns Party are bringing for both nodal points of their discourse and through confrontation. Just as Althusser suggested, they also generate and make use of ISAs in the hybrid media but also traditional fields

such as schools and universities. The Finns Party further seeks to recruit youth and others to join as "intellectuals" able to contest the existing knowledge. Organic intellectuals have done this through social media channels—their own blogs and discussion board but increasingly general and hybrid media where they also recruit from other groups. These work as ISAs besides writing the electoral programme and going to schools to propagate takes place open the field. Assimilating persons engaged in the exiting ISAs to counter the "ideology" is part of the strategy.

While empirically speaking the Finns Party itself is not a homogeneous social group, it has a well-educated leadership that has the support of the masses as persons who know better and confirm their beliefs to them. Noteworthy is that the well-educated leaders are not those who have been particularly successful in scientific careers, but engagement with the party has offered them another way to contribute to the Finnish society with their knowledge.

The story of science is "a constant struggle against ignorance and religious or political restraint attempts," Väliverronen and Ekholm (2020, 15) write. In the case of the Finns Party, it is not only challenging production of knowledge with censorship, but they produce alternative knowledge for their own purposes. When immigration has stalled and anti-immigration is no longer enough, the agenda also includes denying climate change, questioning gender equality and the rights of sexual minorities, and mumbling research into them. The Finnish Academia has not remained silenced. They have also found new ways to self-legitimate and network, responding with engaged "'hashtag public"' to the challenge posed by the alt-science actives contesting the status quo. Academics are however not a unified field but there are organic intellectuals of the Finns Party also within who seek to generate scepticism of the status quo and propose their own perspective, which is not always as distinct as it claims to be. The idea, however, is to generate a confrontation where "ideology" is contested as ideology, and the alternative provided would be science, or at least "common sense." As Ylä-Anttila (2018) argues, at stake is an attempt to provide a true(er) depiction of the world with better methods and premises, not the rejection of information or science, in name at least.

References