Jyväskylän yliopiston julkaisuarkisto
Jyväskylä University Digital Archive

UNIVERSITY OF JYVÄSKYLÄ

This is an electronic reprint of the original article.
This reprint *may differ* from the original in pagination and typographic detail.

Author(s): Jouhki, Jukka

Title: Global Issues, Western Foci: Banal Occidentalism in a Finnish Newspaper

Year: 2016

Version:

Please cite the original version:

Jouhki, J. (2016). Global Issues, Western Foci: Banal Occidentalism in a Finnish Newspaper. Suomen antropologi, 41(2), 32-46.
http://ojs.tsv.fi/index.php/suomenantropologi/article/view/59641

All material supplied via JYX is protected by copyright and other intellectual property rights, and duplication or sale of all or part of any of the repository collections is not permitted, except that material may be duplicated by you for your research use or educational purposes in electronic or print form. You must obtain permission for any other use. Electronic or print copies may not be offered, whether for sale or otherwise to anyone who is not an authorised user.

Jukka Jouhki

GLOBAL ISSUES, WESTERN FOCI: BANAL OCCIDENTALISM IN A FINNISH NEWSPAPER

ABSTRACT

'The West' is an imagined community par excellence with a plethora of connotations that often contradict each other. Although it is often not at all certain exactly what the West or things Western refer to, the concepts are used as if there was some distinct cultural reality corresponding to them. Like any other ethnic group, tribe, nation state, or even village, the West is both fantasy and real, a social construction and, to some extent, an observable social formation. The Western world exists because people believe in its unity and share the connotations but also for a more mundane—or banal—reason: because these are constantly expressed in text and speech. This article examines the news texts of *Helsingin Sanomat*, the leading Finnish daily newspaper, and focuses on what I call banal Occidentalism, the way the West is evoked and reproduced by virtue of repetition of its name and its derivatives. According to the data I have analyzed it seems that the usual building blocks of a community–symbolism, ethnicity, myths, and memories–are not the only way to strengthen a sense of the West's unity. Like any collective rituals, the product of journalism is partly a communal ceremony with a phatic function in the Malinowskian sense.

Keywords: banality, imagined community, journalism, Occidentalism, phatic communion, the West

EXPLORING THE WEST AND ITS BANAL EXISTENCE

The word 'Western' is used to describe a shared way of acting and thinking among people living mainly in Europe and North America (Gress 1998; Ifversen 2008; Huntington 1996). Geographically, the West, or Western countries, is a fuzzy, scattered and fluctuating set of states that are mainly inhabited by what are often viewed as people of European descent. People also tend to talk about the West as synonymous with 'industrialized countries', 'the First World', 'the global North', 'wealthy states', 'white people', or even 'the free world'. At times, countries such as Japan, South Korea, or Singapore, which are often excluded from the definition of Western countries, are included in the West because of being highly developed technologically and economically, geopolitically aligned with certain Western military powers, or economically tied to the West (Bavaj 2011, 23; Jouhki 2015: 165–166; Korhonen 2013; Kelly 2014: 47–48; cf. Nyamnjoh and Page 2002; Thompson, Kitiarsa

and Smutkupt 2016). The West has also been constructed more implicitly or indirectly by looking at 'non-Western' cultures in continents such as Asia or Africa or at different ideologies, such as socialism or Islamism, to point out phenomena that are considered non-Western (e.g., Said 1978; Puschmann-Nalenz 2010: 373; Zarycki 2014: 1–3: see also Makdisi 2002: 772–785). At the same time, people of the non-West have been essential in contesting, complementing, and even inventing their own version of the West (Bonnett 2004: 1–2; Nasser El-Dine in this issue; see also Pennanen and Jouhki 2016). Although it is often not at all certain exactly what the West or Western refer to, the concepts are used as if there were some distinct cultural reality that corresponds to them (Coronil 1996: 51; Jouhki 2006: 59).

Finland used to be seen as a nation *between* East and West but now, because of factors like the fall of the Soviet Union, membership of the EU, or economic liberalization, Finns have come to identify themselves more with the Western community and culture. Finland is nowadays 'more Western', which has a plethora of connotations, some more vague than others: more freedom of speech, more consumption, more democracy, more equality, more wealth and technological development, more Western European, more military ties with NATO, more business and politics with European and North American countries–whatever all these things may mean in practice (see, e.g., Antonsich 2005; Buruma and Margalit 2005; Jouhki 2015; Khanna 2009: 23–26; Vihavainen 2013).

The Western world exists because people believe in its unity and share the connotations but also for a more mundane—or banal—reason: because it is constantly expressed in text and speech. The West is used in speech and writing, uttered and narrated over and over again. People, things, and actions are labeled and framed as Western. This is what may be called banal Occidentalism (see, e.g., Bozatzis 2014; Bozatzis in this issue; Jouhki 2015): the everyday, undramatic and mundane, narrated existence of Western people. As it is a sign of banal nationalism, to follow Michael Billig (1995), to say 'we Finns celebrate Christmas' or 'Finland is pretty in the summer', the mere act of using the words 'Western(ers)' or 'the West' buttresses the banal existence of the community. Geographically, culturally, socially, and geopolitically, the West might be scattered, divided, and at odds with itself, but narratively the West is more unified. It is, to draw on Appadurai's (1996: 49) view of diasporic communities, 'partly invented, existing only in the imagination of the deterritorialized groups, and it can sometimes become so fantastic and one-sided that it provides the fuel for new ethnic conflicts'.

In this article, the question I am seeking to answer is, *How does banal Occidentalism uphold the image of a Western community in a Finnish newspaper?*[1] In answering it, I am not interested in what the actual cultural content or real social existence of Western society is. I am not studying the ways or mores of Western people, nor am I engaged in media ethnography of the West or trying to find out how the West is or should be defined–although there would be plenty of data for that, and it is a topic that would be anthropologically almost automatically justified. For example, many news articles, columns, editorials, and opinion pieces describe what a Western person is or should be like: critical (*Helsingin Sanomat*, henceforth: HS, 21.6.2013), courageous (HS 27.7.2013), altruistic (HS 11.7.2013), and moral(istic) (HS 8.7.2013). A science article even claimed that it was Western people who invented religion and the intellect (HS 31.8.2013). I am not focusing on these 'diacritical inventories' (Kopytoff 1986:

73; Harrison 1999: 10), however relevant they might be to understanding the construction of a Western identity in Finland. Instead, what I am interested in here are the more subtle cases, those in which things are written (or categorized, narrated, framed, uttered, or phatically communicated) as Western with the purpose of reproducing the existence and upholding the idea of a Western world (or society, culture, etc.), rather than describing what it actually is. These cases in the data that I analyzed might be faint and almost undetectable—as all banal community-construction in the Billigian sense is—but I would say it is just this kind of unobtrusiveness (Billig 1995: 6, 107) that makes the technique so effective and important as a subject of study.

To analyze the occurrence of banal Occidentalism I explore articles in *Helsingin Sanomat*[2], the leading national daily newspaper in Finland (Levikintarkastus Oy 2013: 2). The data analyzed here include all the articles that contained the word Western or its derivatives[3] within the eight-month period between March 1st and October 31st, 2013. The search for data from the digital archives of *HS* revealed 469 articles that included the word Western, which is more than enough for a saturated sample (see, e.g., Charmaz and Mitchell 2007; Saumure and Given 2008), even if saturation is not relevant in an approach that is more qualitative and essayistic (e.g., Cornelissen et al. 2012: 198–199; Jackson 2011) than quantitative. From the collected data I have chosen what I believe to be representative examples to quote and discuss more closely. Following Lakomäki et al. (2011: 12; see also Gupta and Ferguson 2001), my approach tries to find meanings 'between the lines', or to actively 'interrogate the text' to reveal meaning(s) that the text in question does not seem to contain explicitly.

I acknowledge that it is relatively rare for an anthropologist to examine the news media (Peterson 2003, 2; see also Postill 2003). Nevertheless, I view my textual field in the same way that anthropologists have traditionally seen the rituals, customs, and symbolic acts occurring in their distant, more physical fields: as vehicles of culture. They give audiences ways of seeing and interpreting the world. This, ultimately, shapes people's very existence: how they act and take part in their own society and—importantly—how they view other peoples of the world. This is not to say that the mass media define reality but, rather, that they are dynamic sites of struggle between representations, where subjectivities and identities are constructed and contested. In other words, consuming the media does not mean only passive viewing or reading, but it can be seen as a ritual activity, a way of speaking and playing a form of social organization (see, e.g., Spitulnik 1993, 294–302; Rao 2010, 9; Peterson, 2003: 2). As Appadurai (1996: 3) describes it, the mass media help to construct 'imagined selves and imagined worlds', or a 'community of sentiment' that imagines and feels things together (Appadurai 1996: 8). It is that kind of *Western* community I am interested in, and I suggest that such a community is reproduced in *HS*.

IMAGINED WEST

In *Imagined Communities* Benedict Anderson (2006 [1983]) observed that nations are imagined entities. Although he did not focus on the Western community as a whole but on nation states, I suggest that the Western world is an imagined community par excellence. As Jacinta O'Hagan describes it, even though Westerners neither share one language nor constitute an ethnic group, like a nation they

> have an identity constituted by boundaries, symbols, myths and histories and a broad, if dispersed, sense of fraternity. The West is an imagined community in the sense that it is a transnational community that extends over a broad geographical and temporal canvass, encompassing people who may have no immediate contact with one another, but who perceive themselves, or are perceived, to share a common identity and some element of common interests, ideas and values. No common language unites the West, but the 'language' that constitutes it draws on concepts and principles whose lineage is traced deep into history. (O'Hagan 2002: 45)

Hence, Western people are part of an amoeba-like culture and a diasporic, transnational society unfettered by national borders. The West is a cultural category similar to a nation (Anderson 2006: 4), and it exists—like the nation-state—because it is imagined to exist and is believed in. Benedict Anderson (2006: 6) talks about *imagined* communities but at the same time he acknowledges other, stronger choices of words, such as Ernst Geller's 'fabricated' or even 'falsified' communities. Charles Taylor (2004: 143) relates to communities and nations in the same way, as products of social 'imaginaries' and 'inventions'. It is a matter of taste how strong the attributes used to describe such community construction are. The point is that a community—whether a local village or an aggregate of nations such as the West—is a social imaginary, and the discourses about it tell us 'how we stand to each other, how we got to where we are, [and] how we relate to other groups' (Taylor 2004: 24).

The West is thus similar to the Orient that Edward Said (1978) portrayed as a product of the European imagination, but with the difference that Orientals have rarely seen themselves as the Orient as strongly as Westerners see themselves as the West (see e.g. Aydin 2007; Saaler and Szpilman 2011). Marko Lehti (2016; also O'Hagan 2002) talks about the West as a civilizational identity, and describes how narratives about particular civilizations attempt to minimize the heterogeneity of identities within them and ignore the fuzziness of borders between them. Civilizations are uniform and bounded in such narratives, but less so in reality, Lehti observes. In discourses, narratives, and texts there might indeed appear a coherent whole called the West, but as Appadurai (1996: 35) says, realistic and fictional landscapes have interpenetrating boundaries. Nevertheless, Western countries are not mere make-believe; there are significant economic, political, geographical, and cultural factors that are common among Westerners as well as Western countries. Imagining a community is not just fantasy or something irrational but, actually, essential to societal agency, a social fact in itself, and 'the key component of the new global order' that is a 'complex transnational construction of imaginary landscapes' (Appadurai 1996: 31; see also Taylor 2004: 2). Moreover, there are a billion people who call themselves Western. They believe they have something in common with each other. They are led to think that they believe in things like individualism, democracy, freedom, economic development, and scientific reasoning, concepts that Anthony P. Cohen (1985: 14–21) would call 'hurray words'. These words are loaded with emotion, easy to remember and share, and flexible enough in their interpretation to accommodate various, even contradictory, connotations.

Hence, in Cohen's view such communities should be thought of more as 'aggregating devices' than integrating mechanisms. The 'triumph of community' is, according to Cohen (1985: 19), to contain its variety so

that 'its inherent discordance does not subvert the apparent coherence'. So, to see the West unproblematically as a single entity and a united community is misleading and falls into the same trap as nationalism often does in assuming the homogeneity of a nation. It might be fortunate for community construction and the sense of belonging, but it hides the fact that in reality Westerners are a culturally diverse and socially heterogeneous population to such an extent that it is hard even for an observing anthropologist to detect cultural similarities (Gewertz and Errington 1991: 82; Jouhki 2006: 59).

Like any other ethnic group, tribe, nation state, or even village, the West is both fantasy and real, a social construction and, to some extent, an observable social formation. The West might be an invention to some extent but, as Eileen Julien is quoted (by Al-Dabbagh 2010: 86) as saying, it is 'of immense persuasion and consequence'. It is buttressed by feelings of family relations among its inhabitants, and its unity is reinforced by the mass media. Although Michael Billig (1995) never focused on Western society as a whole in his *Banal Nationalism* but, like Anderson (2006), discussed the techniques by which a nation state is upheld, it is evident that the existence of Western society in people's minds is reproduced just like nationalism: by people's everyday word choices and utterances that are buttressed by the mass media.[4]

To be an Occidentalist (cf. Orientalist) in the way I understand it here is to reproduce a social imaginary in which there is such an entity as the West that has some unique ontology separating it from the non-West. In analyzing banal Occidentalism, it is noteworthy that it is implicit rather than explicit, mundane rather than dramatic, 'cool' rather than 'hot' (Billig 1995: 133–134). The West does not even have a flag to be waved, a song to be sung, or a populist party trying to monopolize its meaning. Having said that, it is not infrequent for politicians and even political parties to refer to and draw on an idea of Western values or Western society in jeopardy, and in times of war troops of a nation-state may have been given extra motivation by ideas about a Western world that needs to be protected against non-Western aggressors (e.g. Pennanen 2016; Tilli 2016; Vuorinen 2016). Western society might also be evoked in situations where a nation whose citizens identify themselves as non-Western is invaded by troops that are felt to represent, for example, immoral Western countries (e.g. Buruma 2004). However, like 'cooler' forms of nationalism, the idea of a Western society is most often reinforced in more subtle and almost subliminal ways that can be called banal Occidentalism, an extended version of everyday nationalism (Billig 1995; Bozatzis 2014: 25; Jouhki 2014a). In speech and text, the West, like banal nationalism (Billig 1995, 8), is so ordinary sounding that it 'slips from attention'; it is embedded in everyday speech routines, almost unnoticed. Banal Occidentalism is a manner of speaking, an option chosen from a vast Foucauldian discursive archive (Foucault 2002: 147–150; see also Schäfer 2012: 159) to name and categorize things Western.

OBSERVING THINGS WESTERN IN HELSINGIN SANOMAT

Before I go on to present samples from the data, I would like to further clarify what I mean by banal Occidentalist discourse. I will do that by presenting two made-up and perhaps naïve examples of news headlines referring to a fictitious conflict, the Martians attacking the Earth. Consider such an interplanetary event being reported in a newspaper using a headline such as this: 'Martians attacking Western countries!' Or with another, perhaps a more globally-sensitive, headline such as, 'Martians

attacking Western and non-Western countries!' Both would be logical and truthful but both of them have an Occidentalist focus that does not seem to serve any other purpose than to buttress the idea of a Western society and/or to create a communal feeling among the viewership that identifies itself as Western. As in the example, the subject of many of the *Helsingin Sanomat* articles analyzed for this study, even if global or at least extended beyond the realm of the so-called Western world, was framed or narrated as Western. By that I mean that an article about an issue, event, or phenomenon, no matter how international, intercontinental and global it was, was often framed and narrated as meaningful only to Western people, happening only in the Western world, or as if Western agency was the only relevant agency involved.

The kind of Western-centrism I have observed is rarely very explicit or straightforward; an article never stated outright anything like, 'This is only important to Western people' or 'In this news report we view the topic as a Western phenomenon'. Furthermore, the purpose of an Occidentalist orientation did not seem to be hostile, xenophobic, or expressing proud superiority over non-Western people or the societies outside of the West. Far from it. Many Western-centric articles even seemed neutral or sympathetic towards non-Western countries and their peoples *if* they were recognized in the article at all. Curiously, many articles simply stated that something had happened 'in the West', and ignored the rest of the world even though the issue was global. Many of the articles that did acknowledge the non-West, and were sympathetic toward it, still reproduced the idea of the West and the non-West as separate (and even opposite) entities, for no apparent reason. Some articles that covered a global phenomenon, and narrated it as something relevant only to the West or Westerners, did not even produce an opposition but left the world beyond the West entirely unmentioned as if it were non-existent or irrelevant.

To begin the analysis of the *Helsingin Sanomat* articles, consider first a short news report in the foreign section entitled 'Saudi Arabia to relocate the weekend next week'[5] (HS 24.6.2013). Briefly but interestingly it describes how Thursday and Friday have been the non-working days of the week—the 'weekend'—in Saudi Arabia. The article continues that 'This has made doing business with Western countries more difficult, because there have been only three shared working days.' The information content here is valid, logical, and truthful but the whole picture is incomplete—or Occidentalist in its banal form. Surely the fact that Saudi Arabia has different non-working days to the rest of the world has made business activities difficult not just with the West but also with countries like China, South Korea, India, and Japan; they are, after all, among Saudi Arabia's most important trading partners (see e.g. Observatory of Economic Complexity 2016) and are conventionally viewed as non-Western countries. The author could have written '*other* countries' instead of 'Western countries' but failing to do so and focusing only on the West makes it a clear example of banal Occidentalism.

Another similar, albeit geopolitically more grave, example is a column entitled 'Syrian War Swims into Germany's Election Battle' (HS 14.9.2013). It discusses, rather analytically, German Chancellor Angela Merkel's stance on various international conflicts. The author of the column describes how the G20 countries had convened in St. Petersburg, Russia, recently and discussed how they should react to the reported use of war gas in the conflict in Syria. According to the text, a statement disapproving of the use of war gas was written and signed at the meeting

but Merkel was carefully trying not to involve Germany in the conflict. Thus, according to the column, only '[t]he other Western countries signed a document demanding an international response to the gas attack carried out in Syria in August […].' Although the column does not say this, the G20 consists of twenty ('Western' and 'non-Western') countries. The joint statement discussed in the column was circulated by the representative of the USA and signed by eleven countries (G20 2016; The White House 2013) of which four—Japan, Republic of Korea, Saudi Arabia, and Turkey—are not conventionally viewed as Western countries.[6] Nevertheless, the author of the column chose to describe the signatories as Western countries, or thought that it was important to compare Germany's actions only to those of the other Western countries. Journalistically this sort of inclusive style might be understandable, harmless, and productive of an easy reading experience, but its narrative is still Occidentalist. To make this clear, one could engage in a short thought experiment and imagine seven men (instead of seven Western countries as in the column) and four women (instead of four non-Western countries) doing something news-worthy together. If a newspaper reported what went on as men doing something, it would be true and logical but at the same time peculiarly male-oriented, if not sexist.

In the foreign section once again, an article under the headline 'Flaws in Zimbabwe's election' (HS 31.7.2013) discusses honesty and dishonesty in the elections in Zimbabwe. The insightful and informative article ends in a short, single-sentence paragraph which states that 'Western election monitors have not been allowed to enter Zimbabwe'. Again, there is no doubt the statement is true, but one is left wondering if non-Western election monitors were allowed to enter Zimbabwe, or if there were no non-Western election monitors present at all. Alternatively, perhaps a more pessimistic explanation would be that the author felt that election monitoring is only relevant when it is done by Westerners, not for example by the African Union or non-Western members of the United Nations. The choice of wording leaves an Occidentalism-sensitive reader baffled about which particular international election monitoring organizations the author thinks are Western, and whether it is the author's opinion that election monitoring is such a Western (= politically neutral?) activity that even if a non-Western organization is engaged in it, it is ideologically something essentially Western. The article does not provide enough information to reach any conclusions on these questions, but only implies that election monitoring and the West are somehow intrinsically connected to each other, and connotes that (perhaps only) Western election monitoring is relevant.

To understand the long tradition of banal and more pronounced Occidentalism, it is important to note how Islam and Muslims are one of the conventional, imagined polar opposites of the West for many people who identify themselves as Western (see, e.g., Said 1978; Curtis 2009). Likewise, just as there are Westerners who see Islam as something essentially different from the West, there are Muslims who view the Western world as the opposite of the Islamic way of life (Ahiska 2010: 16–18; Rane et al. 2014: 12). In the data, other cultural categories were also presented as the opposites of the West: Russia(ns), the Soviet Union (and communism), Asia(ns), Africa(ns), religiousness, emotionalism, native peoples, underdevelopment, and so on. However, I chose to focus on analyzing the articles about Islam, as it has received such a large amount of attention in *Helsingin Sanomat*. The hegemonic view of the West / Islam opposition appears in numerous

examples in *Helsingin Sanomat* in which the West is discursively activated when Islam or Muslims are discussed (e.g. HS 6.4.2013; 27.6.2013; 15.7.2013; 3.9.2013). Militant Islamic organizations and people in the West, in particular, are talked about as almost obvious or natural enemies. Again, however, as in the G20 example above, it seems that in discussing the topic it is only the West or Western people to whom the topic is relevant, as we can see in the following example.

An article in the foreign section of *Helsingin Sanomat* (24.9.2013) talks about *al-Shabaab*, a militant Islamic organization based in Somalia. The author writes that 'Al-Shabaab's activities in Western countries are on a small scale'. However, one might think that it would also be journalistically interesting to know if the organization has cells in other parts of the world, if not in the West. Is the organization perhaps active all over the world but not in the West? A quick look at studies reveals that al-Shabaab operates mainly in Somalia, but also in some of its neighboring countries, such as Kenya (see, e.g., Hansen 2013; Mapping Militant Organizations 2016). Since that is the case, why not report that Al-Shabaab's activities *outside of Somalia and Kenya* (not just in Western countries) are on a small scale? A likely explanation for this is Occidentalism: the non-West does not matter to the author or the assumed reader even if the issue is global. It is as if the subtext in the article says that al-Shabaab might or might not have cells in countries in the non-Western world, but it is relevant to report only what might be of immediate concern to Western people. After all, the average reader of *Helsingin Sanomat* is a Finn, and Finns on average consider their country to be more or less Western. Framing the situation in this Occidentalist way and concentrating only on the West is saying, 'It is the West that we care about.'

Another Islam-related article (HS 21.9.2013) falls into the same category of Occidentalist discourse, describing how 'the al-Qaida of the Arabian Peninsula […] is considered dangerous in Western countries'. Although, in a strictly logical sense this wording does not imply it, it nevertheless seems to suggest that al-Qaida is considered dangerous *only* in Western countries, when it is most evidently considered dangerous by most people on the planet who are aware of its existence. Now the subtext seems to say that non-Westerners do not feel that al-Qaida is dangerous and may even support the militant organization. It is difficult to say if the choice of words here is due to ignorance or ideology—or both. It would have been less Occidentalist and more informative to omit the 'Western countries' and merely state that al-Qaida 'is considered dangerous'—everywhere, and not just in the West.

I have presented a detailed analysis of only a few examples of banal Occidentalism in *Helsingin Sanomat* although there are plenty more that I could have taken. For example, consider briefly an article (HS 7.9.2013) that describes how '[i]n many Western capitals there have been demonstrations about Syria' when, in fact, there have been demonstrations in the capitals of so-called non-Western countries as well.[7] Or a less dramatic article about Quinoa (HS 9.8.2013), the popularity of which, according to the author, 'is increasing in Western countries', when in fact it is also gaining more popularity in other, non-Western, countries such as South Korea, India, China, and Japan as well. What about a harmless headline to an editorial, stating that the '[p]opulation in Western countries is ageing fast' (HS 19.7.2013), when

we know that the population of the whole world is doing the same (see, e.g., United Nations 2015)? Or another report with similar banal Occidentalism, stating that 'crime rates have decreased across all Western countries' (HS 27.7.2013), when they have also done so globally (see, e.g., Roser 2016)? Or, to conclude, a more theoretically oriented article stating that 'visual media has become an important medium for myths in Western societies' (HS 2.7.2013), when there is no reason not to say that it has become important all over the world?

The narrative construction of the events above offers typical occurrences of banal Occidentalism, or the deliberate framing of global phenomena as Western. The focus of the narratives in the examples lies in the Western hegemonic 'We' that is the relevant 'native' population to the author and to the assumed reader. The use of the word Western in public speech is so normalized and banal that it is safe to assume that only a peculiarly meticulous reader would wonder about its accuracy and relevance. The subtext of the articles is that there are Western countries or people involved in some action or phenomenon, and it is they who make the object of the article meaningful. Does this matter?

SMALL WORDS, LARGE ISSUES

The title of Thomas Hylland Eriksen's famous book, *Small Places, Large Issues* (2015 [1995]), points to the ability of anthropology to tackle vast issues by examining small localities. In the same vein, I suggest that entire worldviews can be studied by analyzing certain concepts. The West, like the nation, is 'a mass public culture, a designated homeland, economic unity' (Smith 1995, 56-7 in Postill 2005, 4). According to the data I have analyzed it seems that the usual building blocks of a community—symbolism, ethnicity, myths and memories (e.g., Smith 1999; Githens-Mazer 2007: 6)—are not the only way to strengthen a sense of the West's unity. The actual content of Western culture does not always have to be announced or the qualities of Westerners spelled out for the community to be evoked; rather, it can be buttressed banally and almost solely by repeating the name of the community.

This kind of choice-of-word Occidentalism is similar to the phatic communion that Malinowski (1923: 315; see also Duranti 2009: 190; Hartley 2012: 199) talked about almost a century ago: it is 'a type of speech in which ties of union are created by a mere exchange of words' that are not used 'primarily to convey meaning' but to 'fulfil a social function'. Malinowski stated that its social function is the principal aim of such action. In the case of my *Helsingin Sanomat* data, framing things Western is like small talk and other less information-oriented communication, whose purpose is to activate the listeners and to maintain a sense of communion among the participants in the exchange. Malinowski studied face-to-face conversation as phatic communion, but my view is that a single word in a written text can function in a similar way. In Malinowski's view, the conversation in phatic communion is neither the result of, nor does it result in, intellectual reflection because its function is not to transmit thought. It is more about utterances as acts 'serving the direct aim of binding the hearer to the speaker by a tie of social sentiment or other' (Malinowski 1932: 315; see also Giulianotti 2205: 344). It seems as if banal—or phatic—Occidentalism in news text has the same goal. However, Malinowski implied that intellectual reflection and a social act are mutually exclusive. He claimed that phatic communion answers people's need for companionship but 'does not serve *any* purpose of communicating ideas' (Malinowski 1923:

316; emphasis mine). However, it is evident that in an interaction in which phatic communion takes place, the communication of ideas is also possible (see e.g. Giulianotti 2005: 347). In the case of the articles analyzed for this study, the communion-inducing Occidentalism is an added phatic ingredient in the otherwise informative act of a news text.

Banal Occidentalism in the form of utterances like 'in the West' does not function as a way of giving information but more as a technique for keeping up a relationship among the readers who are imagined as belonging to the West or as identifying themselves as Westerners. Calling things Western in my data means that the author / speaker believes that there *is* something called the Western community, and in referring to it as such he/she is performing a tiny ritual that in its own small way functions as a way of upholding the Western community. A news text is indeed like a ritual—'a holy word in a modern prayer', as Anderson (2006: 35) quotes Hegel. Like any collective rituals, even the product of journalism is partly a communal ceremony with a phatic function (e.g. Heikkilä et al. 2013: 195; see also Frosh 2011), providing its audience information and ontological security (Silverstone 1993; Heikkilä et al. 2013: 195), and cultural knowledge (Bird 2015: 5). The reason why examining banal Occidentalism in the media is important is that the modern public sphere is a space that is 'self-consciously seen as being outside power', a place of extra-political agency where power itself is not supposed to be exercised (Taylor 2004: 89). Most media might not be explicitly political but, with their high status and authority, they are certainly still an effective social force that can manipulate relations (e.g. Rao 2010: 200). There is civic—but also academic—value in contesting and scrutinizing the crucial role of the media. As Giulianotti (2005: 344) observes, news reports serve 'to establish interlocutors in terms of their particularized kinds of social belonging' and reaffirm social solidarity. At times, phatic signs of belonging can become more expressive and politicized, and be deployed in acts of resistance (Krase and Shortell 2011: 374) and used as 'fuel for action' (Appadurai 1996: 7; see also Bird 2010: 10).

The texts analyzed in this article were, most evidently, not used for overt political resistance or maintenance but they surely function to construct a foundation for such action. When news reports construct a beyond-the-nation community, a broader 'we', or the imagined community of the West (Chouliaraki 2006: 10), I suggest it is not mere academic pedantry to give it any attention. In banal Occidentalism we are dealing with a discursive formation that relies on a folkloristic technique of creating an Us/Them dichotomy (Vila 2003: 612) with significant geopolitical ramifications. As Billig (1995: 6) reminds us, 'banal does not imply benign'. When we are constantly reminded that we are Westerners and that we belong to a community called the West, we might feel pressure to be loyal to it while disregarding or flagging as the polar opposite whatever lies outside of the 'supranational order' of the West (Taylor 2004: 179). A social imaginary such as Occidentalism can function to cover certain important realities, and lead us to avert our gaze from the excluded or the disempowered that are not a part of the Western ethnoscape (Taylor 2004: 183; Appadurai 1996: 33).

As Billig (1995, 175; see also Taylor 2004: 175) says, in banal nationalism 'we not only see reminders of 'ourselves'; we see reminders of 'them' and foreignness' due to identities that are intertwined with a powerful social structure. Banal Occidentalism, as an extension of banal nationalism, is constructed almost unnoticed in rhetoric but there are deeper normative

expectations on which this banality is based (Taylor 2004: 23). The extended nationalist—the Occidentalist—to watch is not the outspoken proponent of 'Western values' like rationalism, Christianity, or democracy, or even the fervent hater of Russians or Muslims, but the writer, the reader, or the discussant who begins his or her sentence with 'In the Western world…' when he or she is in fact referring to the world as a whole.

NOTES

1 I have explored the same topic with a different data set in a recent article (Jouhki 2015) and several conference papers (Jouhki 2013; Jouhki 2014a; Jouhki 2014b).
2 Helsingin Sanomat could be translated as Helsinki News.
3 In Finnish, '*länsimainen*'.
4 Curiously, many of the leading scholars of nationalism and social imaginaries I draw on in this article repeatedly relate to 'the West' as a rather unproblematic concept and refer it to as almost like a society that is beyond the works of social imaginary. See, e.g., Appadurai 1996: 2, 9, 17, 23, 52, 140, 143, 158–159; Anderson 1991: 14, 94, 99, 116, 194; Taylor 2004: 1–2, 29, 101, 143, 182; Billig 1995: 2, 5, 7, 15, 48, 82, 85, 96, 138, 155, 161, 170–171. At least Billig 1995: 89 is critical of the concept of 'Western ideals' when they are used for political purposes.
5 The texts from *HS* presented here have been translated from Finnish to English by me. The original Finnish headlines are listed in the bibliography with the English translations.
6 Moreover, many view some of the countries—like Argentina, Brazil, Mexico, and South Africa—that did not sign the document and as Western albeit their level of Westernness might be debated (see Huntington 1996).
7 This is easily checked by visiting any major internet news portal, and searching for news from the mentioned time period. I myself conducted a quick search at *Google News*, and according to the results there had been demonstrations against the war in Syria at least in capitals such as Amman, Ankara, Beirut, Cairo, and Doha.

REFERENCES

Ahiska, Meltem 2010. *Occidentalism in Turkey: Questions of Modernity and National Identity in Turkish Radio Broadcasting.* London: I. B. Tauris

Al-Dabbagh, Abdulla 2010. *Literary Orientalism, Postcolonialism, and Universalism.* New York: Peter Lang.

Anderson, Benedict 1991 [1983]. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. Revised version. London: Verso.

Anderson, Benedict 2006 [1983]. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. Revised version. London: Verso.

Antonsich, Marco 2005. Cardinal Markers of Finland's Identity Politics and National Identity. *Eurasian Geography and Economics* 46 (4): 289–304.

Appadurai, Arjun 1996. *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization.* Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Aydin, Cemil 2007. *The Politics of Anti-Westernism in Asia: Visions of World Order in Pan-Islamic and Pan-Asian Thought.* New York (NY): Columbia University Press.

Bavaj, Riccardo 2011. 'The West': A Conceptual Exploration. *European History Online,* 21.11.2011. www.ieg-ego.eu/bavajr-2011-en <accessed 1.6.2015>.

Billig, Michael 1995. *Banal Nationalism*. London: Sage.

Bird, S. Elizabeth 2010. The Anthropology of News and Journalism: Why Now? In S. Elizabeth Bird (ed), *The Anthropology of News & Journalism: Global Perspectives.* Bloomington (IN): Indiana University Press.

Bonnett, Alastair 2004. *The Idea of the West: Culture, Politics and History.* Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillian.

Bozatzis, Niko 2014. Banal Occidentalism. Charles Antaki and Susan Condor (eds), *Rhetoric, Ideology and Social Psychology: Essays in Honour of Michael Billig.* New York (NY): Routledge.

Buruma, Ian 2004. The Origins of Occidentalism. *The Chronicle of Higher Education* 50 (22): B10.

Buruma, Ian and Avishai Margalit 2005. *Occidentalism: The West in the Eyes of its Enemies*. New York (NY): Penguin Books.

Charmaz, Kathy and Richard G. Mitchell 2007. Grounded Theory in Ethnography. In Paul Atkinson, Sara Delamont, Amanda Coffey, John Lofland and Lyn Lofland (eds), *Handbook of Ethnography*. London: Sage.

Chouliaraki, Lilie 2006. *The Spectatorship of Suffering*. London: Sage.

Cohen, Anthony P. 1985. *The Symbolic Construction of Community*. Tavistock Publications: London.

Cornelissen, Joep, Hanna Gajewska-de Mattor, Rebecca Piekkari and Catherine Welch 2012. Writing up as a Legitimacy Seeking Process: Alternative Publishing Recipes for Qualitative Research. In Gillian Symon and Catherine Cassell (eds), *Qualitative Organizational Research: Core Methods and Current Challenges*. London: Sage.

Coronil, Fernando 1996. Beyond Occidentalism. Toward Nonimperial Geohistorical Categories. *Cultural Anthropology* 11 (1): 58–86.

Curtis, Michael 2009. *Orientalism and Islam: European Thinkers or Oriental Despotism in the Middle East and India*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Duranti, Alessandro 2009. Universal and Culture-Specific Properties of Greetings. In Alessandro Duranti (ed), *Linguistic Anthropology: A Reader*. Oxford: Blackwell.

Eriksen, Thomas Hylland 2015 [1995]. *Small Places, Large Issues. An Introduction to Social and Cultural Anthropology*. London: Pluto Press.

Foucault, Michel 2002 [1969]. *Archaeology of Knowledge*. New York: Routledge.

Frosh, Paul 2011. Phatic Morality: Television and Proper Distance. *International Journal of Cultural Studies* 14 (4): 383–400.

Fulton, Helen 2005. Print News as Narrative. In Helen Fulton, Rosemary Huisman, Julian Murphet and Anne Dunn (eds), *Narrative and Media*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

G20 2016. About G20. www.g20.org/English/aboutg20/AboutG20 <accessed 20.7.2016>.

Gewertz, Deborah and Frederick Errington 1991. We Think, Therefore They Are? On Occidentalizing the World. *Anthropological Quarterly* 64 (2): 80–91.

Githens-Mazer, Jonathan 2007. Ethno-Symbolism and the Everyday Resonance of Myth, Memories and Symbols of the Nation. Paper presented at *Everyday Life in World Politics and Economics* conference, London School of Economics, 11 May 2007. www.lse.ac.uk/internationalrelations/centresandunits/cis/conference/papers/githens-mazer.pdf <accessed 16.8.2016>.

Giulianotti, Richard 2005. Towards a Critical Anthropology of Voice: The Politics and Poets of Popular Culture, Scotland and Football. *Critique of Anthropology* 25 (4): 339–359.

Google News 2016. https://news.google.com <accessed 23.7.2016>.

Gress, David 1998. *From Plato to NATO: The Idea of the West and its Opponents*. New York (NY): Free Press.

Gupta, Akhil and James Ferguson 2001. Culture, Power, Place: Ethnography at the End of an Era. In Akhil Gupta and James Ferguson (eds), *Culture, Power, Place: Explorations in Critical Anthropology*. Durham (NC): Duke University Press.

Hansen, Stig Jarle 2013. *Al-Shabaab in Somalia: The History and Ideology of a Militant Islamist Group*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Harrison, Simon 1999. Cultural Boundaries. *Anthropology Today* 15 (5): 10–13.

Hartley, John 2011. *Communication, Cultural and Media Studies: The Key Concepts*. New York (NY): Routledge.

Heikkilä, Heikki, Risto Kunelius and Laura Ahva 2013. From Credibility to Relevance. Towards of Sociology of Journalism's 'Added Value'. In Bob Franklin (ed), *The Future of Journalism*. New York: Routledge.

Helsingin Sanomat (HS), www.hs.fi, accessed <31.7.2016>

3.9.2013: Foreign section. Egyptin Hurghada tyhjeni länsituristeista (Egypt's Hurghada Emptied of Western Tourists).

6.4.2013: Travel section. Skopjessa islam ja kristinusko elävät rinnakkain ('In Skopje, Islam and Christianity Co-exist).
27.6.2013: Foreign section. Teheranin senttimetrikapina (Teheran's Centimeter Mutiny).
15.7.2013: Foreign section. Keski-Aasian vanhusten askel lyhenee (The step of Central Asian Old-timers is Getting Shorter).
24.6.2013: Foreign section. Saudi-Arabia siirtää viikonlopun paikkaa ensi viikolla (Saudi Arabia to Move the Place of Weekend Next Week). Source for article: Reuters.
14.9.2013: Domestic section. Syyrian sota ui Saksan vaalitaisteluun (Syrian War Swims into Germany's Election Battle).
31.7.2013: Foreign section. Zimbabwen vaaleissa on aukkoja (Flaws in Zimbabwe's Election).
7.9.2013: Pallon liikkeet: Yksipuolista rauhanpuolustusta (Movements of the Globe: The One-sided Defense of Peace).
9.8.2013: Foreign section. Kvinoa levisi Andien perinneruoasta trendiherkuksi (Quinoa has Developed From a Traditional Andean Food to a Trendy Delicacy).
19.7.2013: Editorial. Muistisairauksien ehkäisy kannattaa (Prevention of memory disorders is worthwile).
27.7.2013: Foreign section. Rosvot harmaantuvat (The Thieves Are Getting Gray).
2.7.2013: Sunday supplement. Kauas kauneus karkaa ('Beauty Escapes Far').
24.9.2013: Foreign section. Tutkija: Isku osoittaa al-Shabaabin epätoivon (Researcher Says Attack Shows al-Shabaab's Despair).
21.9.2013: Foreign section. Al-Qaidaa epäillään tuhoisista iskuista Jemenissä (Al-Qaida Suspected of Destructive Attacks in Yemen).

Huntington, Samuel P. 2003 [1996]. *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order.* New York (NY): Simon & Schuster.

Ifversen, Jan 2008. Who are the Westerners? *International Politics* 45 (3): 236–253.

Jackson, Michael 2011. *Life Within Limits: Well-being in a World of Want.* Durham (NC): Duke University Press.

Jouhki, Jukka 2006. *Imagining the Other: Orientalism and Occidentalism in Tamil–European Relations in South India.* Jyväskylä Studies in Humanities 47. Jyväskylä: University of Jyväskylä.

Jouhki, Jukka 2013. The 'We' in 'Western Society': An Analysis of Occidentalist Discourse in a Finnish Newspaper. Paper presented at *The 5th International Conference on Language and Communication*, Bangkok, 12 December 2013.

Jouhki, Jukka 2014a. Extending Banal Nationalism: Finnish Press and the Techniques, Connotations and Consequences of Banal Occidentalism. Paper presented at *Everyday Nationhood Symposium*, London, 8 September 2014.

Jouhki, Jukka 2014b. Ignoring the Other. Banal Occidentalism in *Helsingin Sanomat*. Paper presented at *Ethnology Days Conference,* Helsinki, 13 March 2014.

Jouhki, Jukka 2015. Venäjä, Ukraina ja sumea länsi: Banaali oksidentalismi Helsingin Sanomissa. *Media & viestintä* 38 (4): 165–186.

Kelly, Casey Ryan 2014. Bizarre Foods: White Privilege and the Neocolonial Palate. In Michael G. Lacy and Mary E. Triece (eds), *Race and Hegemonic Struggle in the United States: Pop Culture, Politics, and Protest.* London: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press.

Khanna, Parag 2009, *The Second World: Empires and Influence in the New Global Order*. London: Penguin Books.

Kopytoff, Igor 1986. The Cultural Biography of Things: Commoditization as Process. In Arjun Appadurai (ed), *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Korhonen, Pekka 2013. *Länsi Aasiasta nähtynä.* Keynote presentation at Länsimaisuus Workshop 21.11.2013, University of Jyväskylä. http://moniviestin.jyu.fi/ohjelmat/hum/hela/lansimaisuus-workshop/lansi-aasiasta-nahtyna, <accessed 1.6.2015>.

Krase, Jerome and Timothy Shortell 2011. On the Spatial Semiotics of Vernacular Landscapes in Global Cities. *Visual Communication* 10 (3): 367–400.

Lakomäki, Sami; Paulina Latvala and Kirsi Laurén 2011. Menetelmien jäljillä. In Sami Lakomäki, Pauliina Latvala and Kirsi Laurén (eds), *Tekstien rajoilla: Monitieteisiä näkökulmia kirjoitettuihin aineistoihin.* Helsinki: SKS.

Lehti, Marko 2016. Rappion viehätys ja sivilisaatioajattelun paluu 2000-luvulla. In Jukka Jouhki and Henna-Riikka Pennanen (eds), *Länsi: käsite, kertomus ja maailmankuva.* Helsinki: SKS.

Levikintarkastus Oy 2013. *LT-levikkitilasto* 2013. Helsinki: Levikintarkastus Oy. http://media-auditfinland.fi/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/Levikkitilasto2013.pdf <accessed 1.6.2015>.

Makdisi, Ussama 2002. Ottoman Orientalism. *American Historical Review* 107 (3): 768–796.

Malinowski, Brownislaw 1923. Supplement I. The problem of meaning in primitive languages. In Charles K. Ogden and Ivor A. Richards (eds), *The Meaning of Meaning. A Study of the Influence of Language Upon Thought and of the Science of Symbolism.* New York: Harcourt, Brace & World.

Mapping Militant Organizations 2016. Al Shabaab. *Mapping Militant Organizations.* Stanford: Stanford University. http://web.stanford.edu/group/mappingmilitants/cgi-bin/groups/view/61 <accessed 23.7.2016>.

Nyamnjoh, Francis B. and Ben Page 2002. Whiteman Kontri and the Enduring Allure of Modernity Among Cameroonian Youth. *African Affairs* 101 (405): 607–634.

Observatory of Economic Complexity 2016. Saudi Arabia. *Observatory of Economic Complexity.* MIT MediaLab. http://atlas.media.mit.edu/en/profile/country/sau <accessed 31.7.2016>.

O'Hagan, Jacinta 2002. *Conceptualizing the West in International Relations Thought: From Spengler to Said*. New York: Palgrave.

Pennanen, Henna-Riikka 2016. 'Keltainen vaara' uhkana Lännelle, 1894–1900. In Jukka Jouhki and Henna-Riikka Pennanen (eds), *Länsi: käsite, kertomus ja maailmankuva.* Helsinki: SKS.

Pennanen, Henna-Riikka and Jukka Jouhki 2016. Näkökulmia länteen. In Jukka Jouhki and Henna-Riikka Pennanen (eds), *Länsi: käsite, kertomus ja maailmankuva.* Helsinki: SKS.

Peterson, Mark Allen 2003. *Anthropology & Mass Communication: Media and Myth in the New Millennium.* New York: Berghahn Books.

Postill, John 2003. What is the Point of Media Anthropology? *Social Anthropology* 17 (3): 334–344.

Postill, John 2005. Media Anthropology in a World of States. Paper presented at the *EASA Media Anthropology e-Seminar*, 19–26 April 2005. www.media-anthropology.net/postill_mediaanthropology.pdf <accessed 1.6.2015>.

Puschmann-Nalenz, Barbara 2010. West Faces East: Images of Eastern Europe in Recent Short Fiction. In Barbara Korte, Eva Ulrike Pirker and Sissy Helff (eds), *Facing the East in the West: Images of Eastern Europe in British Literature, Film and Culture.* Amsterdam: Brill.

Rane, Halim; Jacqui Ewart and John Martinkus 2014. *Media Framing of the Muslim World: Conflicts, Crises and Contexts.* New York (NY): Palgrave Macmillan.

Rao, Ursula 2010. *News as Culture: Journalistic Practices and the Remaking of Indian Leadership Traditions.* New York: Berghahn Books.

Roser, Max 2016. Homicides. *Our World in Data*. https://ourworldindata.org/homicides, <accessed 24.7.2016>.

Saaler, Sven and Christopher W. A. Szpilman 2011. *Pan-Asianism: 1920–Present.* Lanham (MD): Rowman & Littlefield.

Said, Edward W. 1978. *Orientalism.* New York: Pantheon Books.

Saumure, Kristie and Lisa M. Given 2008. Data Saturation. In Lisa M. Given (ed), *The Sage Encyclopedia of Qualitative Research Methods.* Thousand Oaks (CA): Sage.

Schäfer, Fabian 2012. *Public Opinion–Propaganda–Ideology: Theories on the Press and its Social Function in Interwar Japan, 1918–1937.*

Silverstone, Roger 1993. Television, Ontological Security and the Transitional Object. *Media, Culture and Society* 15 (4): 573–598.

Smith, Anthony D. 1999. *Myths and Memories of the Nation.* New York: Oxford University Press.

Spitulnik, Deborah 1993. Anthropology and Mass Media. *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 22: 293–315.

Taylor, Charles 2004. *Modern Social Imaginaries.* London: Duke University Press.

Thompson, Eric C., Pattana Kitiarsa and Surya Smukupt 2006. Emergent Masculinities and Transient Subjectivities of *Farang* Men in Thailand. *Current Anthropology* 57 (1): 53–71.

Tilli, Jouni 2016. Luterilaisten pappien vihollisretoriikka jatkosodassa 1941–1944. In Jukka Jouhki and Henna-Riikka Pennanen (eds), *Länsi: käsite, kertomus ja maailmankuva.* Helsinki: SKS.

Vihavainen, Timo 2013. *Ryssäviha: Venäjän-pelon historia.* Helsinki: Minerva.

Vila, Pablo 2003. Processes of Identification on the U.S.-Mexico Border. *The Social Science Journal* 40 (4): 607–625.

Vuorinen, Marja 2016. Anders Behring Breivikin manifesti 'perinteisten länsimaisten arvojen' puolustuksena. In Jukka Jouhki and Henna-Riikka Pennanen (eds), *Länsi: käsite, kertomus ja maailmankuva.* Helsinki: SKS.

The White House 2013. Joint Statement on Syria, 6.9.2013. Washington (DC): The White House, Office of the Press Secretary. http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2013/09/06/joint-statement-syria <accessed 20.7.2016>.

United Nations 2015. *World Population Ageing* 2015. New York: United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division. www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/…/pdf/ageing/WPA2015_Report.pdf <accessed 31.10.2016>,

Zarycki, Tomasz 2014. *Ideologies of Eastness in Central and Eastern Europe.* London: Routledge.

JUKKA JOUHKI
SENIOR LECTURER
DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY AND ETHNOLOGY
UNIVERSITY OF JYVÄSKYLÄ
jukka.jouhki@jyu.fi