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Protecting the future 'Us': a rhetoric-performative multimodal analysis of the polarising far-right YouTube campaign videos in Finland

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The far right is active on social media, including YouTube for its outreach, community-building and mainstreaming of radical content. This article compares campaign videos of two distinct Finnish far-right parties. It develops a rhetoric-performative and multimodal analysis of audiovisual material and unveils how the contemporary Finnish far right articulates and performs affectively 'us' through counterhegemonic articulation on YouTube with connection to nostalgia, national war myths and misogyny. The analysis widens from the visual to the audio-visual dimension which enables the exploration of the formation of diverse signifiers and affective interpretations. Political actors refer to nationalist ideas in a way that can create and mainstream far-right ideology building on shared myths and even spread violent thoughts. Our analysis highlights the importance of spatial and temporal signifiers in the far-right meaning-making process.

INTRODUCTION

Online mobilisation of the far right has been significant over the past decade worldwide. Research on far right and hybrid media has addressed hate speech (Zelenkauskaite et al. 2021), conspiracy theories (Pyrhönen and Bauvois 2020), terrorist attacks (Sumiala, Harju, and Palonen 2023; Tikka et al. 2020) and far-right discourses in news media (Kisic Merino and Kinvall 2023). Although the far-right mobilisation has focused on criticism of mainstream media, generating their own media outlets and using other platforms (see e.g. Horsti and Saresma 2021; Munger and Phillips 2022), their content is present on a range of online platforms for articulating, defining, crowd-sourcing and mainstreaming authoritarian, white supremacist and misogynistic messages (Horsti and Saresma 2021; Pettersson 2017).

Online video content enables the far right to articulate and perform socio-political identities and construct relation to targeted audiences (Ekman 2014). Especially young people but also other new participants may be recruited by extreme groups on YouTube (Morgades-Bamba, Raynal, and Chabrol 2020, 1441). As an interactive platform allowing comments, sharing and (dis)liking of videos for further circulation YouTube enables political organisation and analysis alike. Yet, political, audio-visual content related to far-right actors on YouTube remains under-studied (Munger and Phillips 2022, 190; however, see Martikainen and Sakki 2021; Sakki and Martikainen 2021; Ekman 2014, 2018).

To fulfil this research gap on far-right YouTube communication and the scarcity of comparative studies on the political party actors, we study contemporary Finnish far right's YouTube videos. Our multimodal analysis engages through rhetoric-performative, interpretive study of visual symbols and shared aesthetic (Zimelis 2005), addressing the following research question: *How do two distinct types of political actors in the contemporary Finnish far right affectively articulate a*

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common ground for 'us' and find rigor in antagonism on YouTube? The affective appeals in far-right videos aspire to generate a new line of antagonism that contests existing political forces and constructs collective subjects. This can be captured by developing on Laclaudian theory of hegemony and populism to analyse visual communication (Salojärvi 2020; Schober 2021; Szebeni and Salojärvi 2022).

Comparative research is relevant as the far-right actors can be engaged in various online and offline scenes. In our case country, a ministerial appointment of June 2023 revealed precisely this: a newly appointed minister from the Finns Party (FP, *Perussuomalaiset*), the second largest party in the right-wing government of Petteri Orpo (National Coalition Party, *Kokoomus*), was found to be involved in the activities of the extreme right mobilisation through online content and had to resign (Kontopoulou 2023). This leads us to wonder how different online mobilisation and party politics are on the Finnish 'far right' (Mudde 2019), and what and how is communicated by the established populist radical right Finns Party and the newly registered neo-fascist Blue–Black Movement (BBM, *Sinimusta Liike*).

Thus, we juxtapose the Finns Party's election video of 2019 with the Blue–Black Movement's campaign video of 2022. The two parties differ in their status: the FP is one of the major parties in Finnish politics, now with a clear anti-immigration focus (Palonen 2021) and it entered government in 2023. The BBM registered as a party in 2022 and run in the general elections of 2023 but it claims to contest the whole political system (Sinimusta liike 2022). The FP's election video of 2019 spread internationally with its English version and subtitles (Hakoköngäs, Halmesvaara, and Sakki 2020; Martikainen and Sakki 2021; Sakki and Martikainen 2021). FP election videos and their comments are investigated in prior research through multimodal discourse analysis. Research shows how populism's persuasiveness works, and how the election video of 2019 uses ancient myths, Bible stories and national-romantic visual imagery in their populist communication (Martikainen and Sakki 2021; Sakki and Martikainen 2021). Moreover, Pettersson et al. (2023) argue that the Finns Party 2021 election video demonstrates how online mobilisation and persuasion may be implemented by articulating 'us' and 'them' through misogynist, intertextual and humorous messages. Views of the splinter BBM's video were fewer, and the video is analysed here for the first time.

This article aims to contribute to methods in audio-visual studies and hegemony analysis as well as enhancing our knowledge of far-right audio-visual communication.

Comparing two far-right actors on YouTube demonstrates how they performatively construct an antagonistic worldview using similar themes in low-budget and professional campaign videos. Our research shows how shared signifiers, chains of equivalences and political frontiers are rearticulated by the Finnish far-right actors and entangle misogyny and nativism. We study how they use the representations of the 'urban symbolic landscape' (Palonen 2019), even on online platforms and virtual space, for communicating antagonistic memories from Finnish local and national history.

LACLAUDIAN APPROACH TO POPULISM AND HEGEMONY

Building counterhegemony has been an important aspect of the FP's communication strategy and they engage in affective speech online (Saresma and Palonen 2022), whereby the theory of hegemony provides a useful starting point for analysis. Although populism and the far right are easily misleadingly subsumed (Brown, Mondon, and Winter 2023), we use the far right as an umbrella term for the radical and extreme right (Mudde 2019) and populism as a logic of affective political community building (Laclau 2005). We argue that research on far-right communication would benefit from the lens of Laclaudian hegemony theory. In the hegemonic struggles, nationalism is entangled with anti-elitism and nativist-racist arguments, and the alt-right employs Gramscian theorising (Bar-On 2021). Drawing on the theory of hegemony, Laclau (2005, xi) argues, that '[p]opulism is, quite simply, a way of constructing the political', pointing that 'there is no true referent to populism' and 'many phenomena which were not traditionally considered populism come under that umbrella in our analysis.'

Politics is an affective process of (dis)identification (Mouffe 2014). Populism has a performative role in affectively constituting collective subjects through spatio-temporal signifiers (Butler 2015). Signifiers and connecting demands on the one side and what is opposed on the other is an essential part of the populist logic. In this approach, affects refer to the affectively loaded or emotionally invested signifiers forming political subjects whereby affects and desires are 'the moving forces of political action' (Mouffe 2014, 157).

The almost universal logic of populism as political articulation in Laclau's theory, has been refined as a heuristic tool by Palonen (2020; Palonen and Sunnercrantz, 2021) to analyse antagonistic building of political frontiers and 'us' through chains of equivalence (Figure 1). The non-essentialist formula as a heuristic

$$Populism = Us^{Affects1} + Frontier^{Affects2}$$

FIGURE 1. Palonen (2020) encapsulates the form of populism as a tool of analysis.

tool enables pinpointing to the contents and strength of the 'us'/frontier/affects. Audio-visual communication provides affectively loaded signifiers for 'us' and the frontier as what is opposed in the hegemonic struggle.

HEGEMONIC CONTESTATION ON THE AUDIO-VISUAL SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS

The emergence of media populism and the tendency of traditional political actors to move to online environments shrink borders between traditional political parties, online movements and influencers (Munger and Phillips 2022). Thus, the audiences may identify with the performing politician 'who embodies it [politics], for whom it is an attribute, an expression of inner moral character and something to which one may aspire' (Finlayson 2022, 69).

Digital media has provided radical right-wing movements with new ways to interact and consume racist content with each other despite their physical location (Wahlström and Törnberg 2021, 775). Violent radicalisation derives from the ability to construct engaged communities with strengthening radical and hateful opinions (Munger and Phillips 2022). Online communities are used to increase and mainstream support (Schwarzenegger and Wagner 2018). Correlation is found not only between political online participation and offline collective action (Alberici and Milesi 2016) but also between online hate speech and violence and hate crimes (Wahlström and Törnberg 2021).

On YouTube, which is a platform that allows users to express 'unpopular points of view' (YouTube Help), racist content may spread since flagging hate speech is the responsibility of the users themselves (Matamoros-Fernandez 2017). Conducting audio-visual analysis of far-right communication on platforms like YouTube, Ekman (2014, 2018) has shown the logic of far-right communication. The videos dwell on collective emotions of loss and insecurity but also victimisation and can turn the far right's racial antagonism into discursive violence (Ekman 2018, 4–7, 2019, 616). On a platform like YouTube, which contains millions of content providers, users may migrate from milder to more extreme channels (Ribeiro et al. 2020).

Through visuals, movements may communicate what cannot be said explicitly and generate affective identification with the imagined 'us' through also what is excluded and what therefore is used to constitute 'us' (Couldry 2015). To capture this, political analysis must move to the popular – just as the cultural studies once did (Boidy, Patarin-Jossec, and Hansen 2020; McGuigan 1992) – where the affective investments for political identities are made.

Compared to written text only, videos effectively communicate emotions (Yadav et al. 2011). Just as still images, videos can convey ideas that are left unsaid; yet, moving images steer these ideas in one direction in a pre-defined flow. Affectivity of the video is crucial on YouTube since affective videos are more likely to be shared and circulated (Vernallis 2013) and they also motivate people to support the party (Grüning and Schubert 2022). In addition, political content on YouTube can reach people who do not usually read, since the audio-visual video form requires less effort to consume than written text (Munger and Phillips 2022, 197).

THE FAR RIGHT AND AUDIO-VISUAL SOCIAL MEDIA IN FINLAND

After the polarising civil war in 1918, Finland became a consensus-driven Nordic welfare society. Yet, the glorification of violence and dehumanisation of others still exist (Malkki et al. 2021), and Finnish war history has provided important signifiers for the Finnish far right (Hakoköngäs, Halmesvaara, and Sakki 2020), for regenerating an antagonistic political frontier. The far right is seen as the most prominent threat coming from extreme ideologies and its activity grew especially during and after the 'refugee crisis' of 2015 and shrank with the pandemic (Kotonen 2020, 2021). The main far-right grievances in Finland address the maintenance of ethnic and cultural homogeneity, propagandist mainstream media and economic prosperity (c.f. Bauvois, Pyrhönen, and Pyysiäinen 2022).

The FP was established in 1995 from the ruins of a bankrupt, anti-communist Finnish Rural Party that emerged in the 1950s. Racism was one of the undertones but never the FP's core message, because the (sub)urban-rural divide and anti-elitism were important currents,

alongside criticism of European integration (Palonen and Sunnercrantz 2021). After the anti-elitist landslide in 2011, the FP has remained one of the major parties in the Finnish parliament. It joined an austerity government in 2015 under the leadership of its long-term leader Timo Soini. The supporters criticised the party elite for a perceived inability to fully stop migration, bringing the radical-nativist wing to power in the party congress in 2017, with Jussi Halla-aho as the new party leader. Halla-aho came from the Suomen Sisu far-right organisation which established itself in the FP. Halla-aho stepped down in 2021 but his nativist line has continued (Palonen 2021).

The BBM is an ethno-nationalist initiative and a splinter from the FP. Its party programme has features of the banned Nordic Resistance Movement (Kotonen 2021, 190): strongly exclusivist, ethno-nationalist, including typical tropes of fascist ideology (Sinimusta Liike 2022). BBM symbols, starting from its name, are inspired by the interwar anti-Communist, Fascist Lapua movement in 1930s Finland (Koskelainen and Hjelm 2017; STT 2021). According to BMM (Sinimusta Liike 2021b), establishing a new party moves BMM beyond the online environment to change the system. Unlike other anti-EU splinters from the FP, the BBM was slow in collecting supporter signatures necessary for the party register (Fagerholm 2022; Mattlar 2022). In the 2023 elections, it ran an openly neo-fascist campaign. Research on the BBM has been limited but the scholarship of the Finnish far right includes references to the key personalities involved (e.g. Kotonen 2021; Pyrhönen, Bauvois and Rosensström 2021).

The Finnish far right is largely a social media phenomenon (Kotonen 2020, 64), and social media has contributed to its emergence and mainstreaming (Horsti and Saresma 2021). The Finnish far-right movements have established their own media channels and use their own platforms while also engaging on general platforms (e.g. Hatakka 2019). The 'refugee crisis' of 2015 speeded up the evolution of countermedia platforms (Ylä-Anttila 2017) even though Finland has a strong tradition of professional journalism providing 'balanced information'. Consequently, Finnish professional journalism is contested in the countermedia discourse of the far right (Toivanen, Nelimarkka, and Valaskivi 2022). Especially, anti-immigration actors have noticed

YouTube's capacity in generating movements in Finland (Laaksonen, Pantti, and Titley 2020).

DATA AND RHETORIC-PERFORMATIVE MULTIMODAL ANALYSIS

Our data consists of YouTube videos because videos are an important part of party communication alongside posters and other forms of communication, and they have become an important tool in social media to spread messages (Vesnic-Alujevic and Van Bauwel 2014). We chose to analyse two videos that are produced to explicitly recruit supporters, and thus, articulate the 'us' of the political movement, which makes them comparable. The first video, *V niin kuin Ketutus* (In English: KETUTUS – A story of being seriously pissed off, hereafter *Ketutus*) published in 2019, is an election campaign video of the FP. The video is rather long for an election video format (Table 1). The second video, *Sinimusta Liike* (Sinimusta Liikee 2021a; eng. Blue–Black Movement, hereafter *Sinimusta*), published in 2021, is a lot shorter. The video was posted to help the BBM to register as a political party. *Sinimusta* is clearly made with a smaller budget than *Ketutus*. The numbers of viewings and 'likes' reflect the prominence of these two political actors in Finland. The media attention contributed to the exceptionally many views of *Ketutus*: compared to the election-winner Social Democrats' video in 2019 it was viewed ten-fold (Sakki and Martikainen 2021, 615).

Ketutus is a mix of real footage and cartoons. The cartoon format enables expression of xenophobic views through a clearly fictive, satiric video, that defies accusations of racism through irony, argue Martikainen and Sakki (2021). We put it into a comparative context with a more realist *Sinimusta* shot in the city of Tampere. The video presents the main goals and principles of the BBM with the four leading figures of the movement as talking heads (c.f. Finlayson 2022). The video criticises also the FP arguing that only a limited range of themes can be discussed in Finnish politics.

To answer the research question, we analysed the data using multimodal discourse analysis that draws from both social semiotic theory (Halliday 1978) and rhetoric-performative discourse analysis (Palonen 2019). In social

TABLE 1.   Data on the videos (Accessed: 29 April 2022).

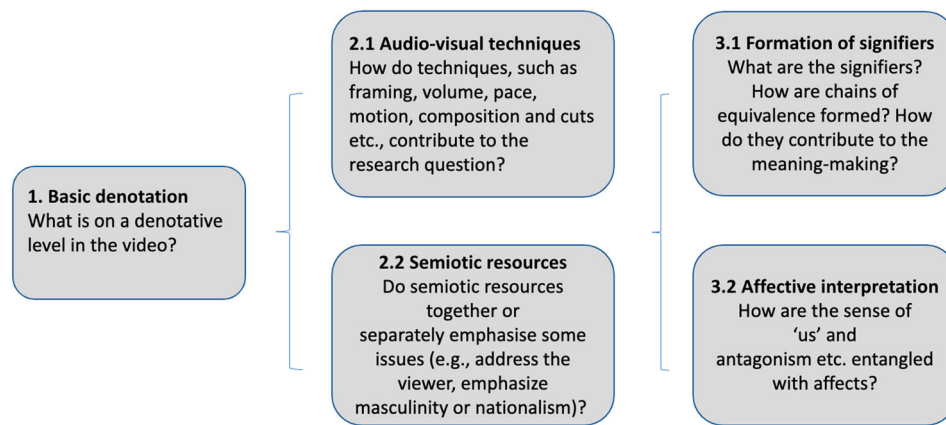| Video	Published	Length (minutes)	Viewings	Likes
Ketutus	20 March 2019	6:40	515,519	13,000
Sinimusta	31 January 2021	2:42	14,672	744

FIGURE 2.   Levels of the analysis.

semiotic theory, context and different semiotic resources (in our case e.g. spoken language, visual imagery, gestures, music and sounds) interact in the meaning-making process (Halliday 1978; Kress and van Leeuwen 2020). We analysed how semiotic resources interact to fulfil specific objectives (O'Halloran 2008, 444), to convince voters to support the party or movement. The Laclaudian post-foundational theory of hegemony uncovers the articulation of nodal points and collective subjects enabling us to analyse counterhegemonic articulation through chains of equivalences and frontiers – rather than taking far-right communities for granted (Jacobs 2018; Marttila 2015; Palonen 2019, 2020).

A poststructuralist rhetoric-performative discourse analysis (Palonen 2019) has been adopted to layers of visual performative elements (e.g. body language, use of space and props) that construct and highlight messages (Gilray 2021; Hartikainen 2021; Salojärvi 2020). Specific levels in our rhetoric-performative multimodal analysis (Figure 2) include basic denotation (Barthes 1961/1983; Barthes 1964/1977) of videos transcribed scene by scene; audio-visual techniques; and semiotic resources and features emphasising specific issues. The meaning-making may be enhanced with audio-visual intensity created by cuts and focuses, movement, volume, silences and breaks, and analysing them enables us to explore what is articulated, what is left out or suggested to the viewer without explicitly showing it. Focusing on specific audio-visual techniques is crucial since cuts affect media perception and the level of conscious processing of a viewer (Andreu-Sánchez et al. 2018).

We particularly explore the formation of diverse signifiers (Laclau 2005; Salojärvi 2020), extending from the urban, textual and visual rhetoric-performative analysis to the audio-visual including the articulated script and the symbols in sequences of images. We manage to follow the extension of chains of equivalences that construct meanings both in the script and in the narrative

directions, also when the scene would move to a logical continuation. Finally, we analyse the videos by focusing on how semiotic resources, techniques and signifiers contribute to affective meaning-making of 'us' keeping in mind specific platform affordances. In the next section, we present the results based on this analysis.

ANALYSIS OF THE YOUTUBE VIDEOS

Making a counterhegemonic epistemic claim (Saresma and Palonen 2022), *Ketutus* begins at the National Library of Finland as a fairytale-style story read from a comic book. The story opens with a narrator explaining how the small and content nation of Finland sacrificed a lot for its independence in the past (see Figure 3). According to the narrator, one day, the political elite starts acting selfishly which makes them disregard Finnish values and traditions, compromising the wellbeing of the people through increasing taxation and loosening immigration policies. Following this, the people's anger emerges in the form of a monster – a metaphor for the FP as a saviour of the nation, or a metonymy of the people making a change. The monster catches the corrupt politicians partying in a limousine and threatens them violently, which makes the politicians agree to change their habits, resulting in a happy ending for the narrated story. However, after closing the comic book, its reader is unveiled as the chairperson of the FP, Halla-aho, who addresses the viewer and states: 'As you know, there is no monster to come and save everyone. The old parties are not going to change their objectives. If you want change, you must vote for change' (Ketutus 6:18–31; Figure 3). The video can be seen as reflecting some of the personal preferences of Halla-aho: according to the unofficial biography, he is a cartoon fan (Nurmi 2020).

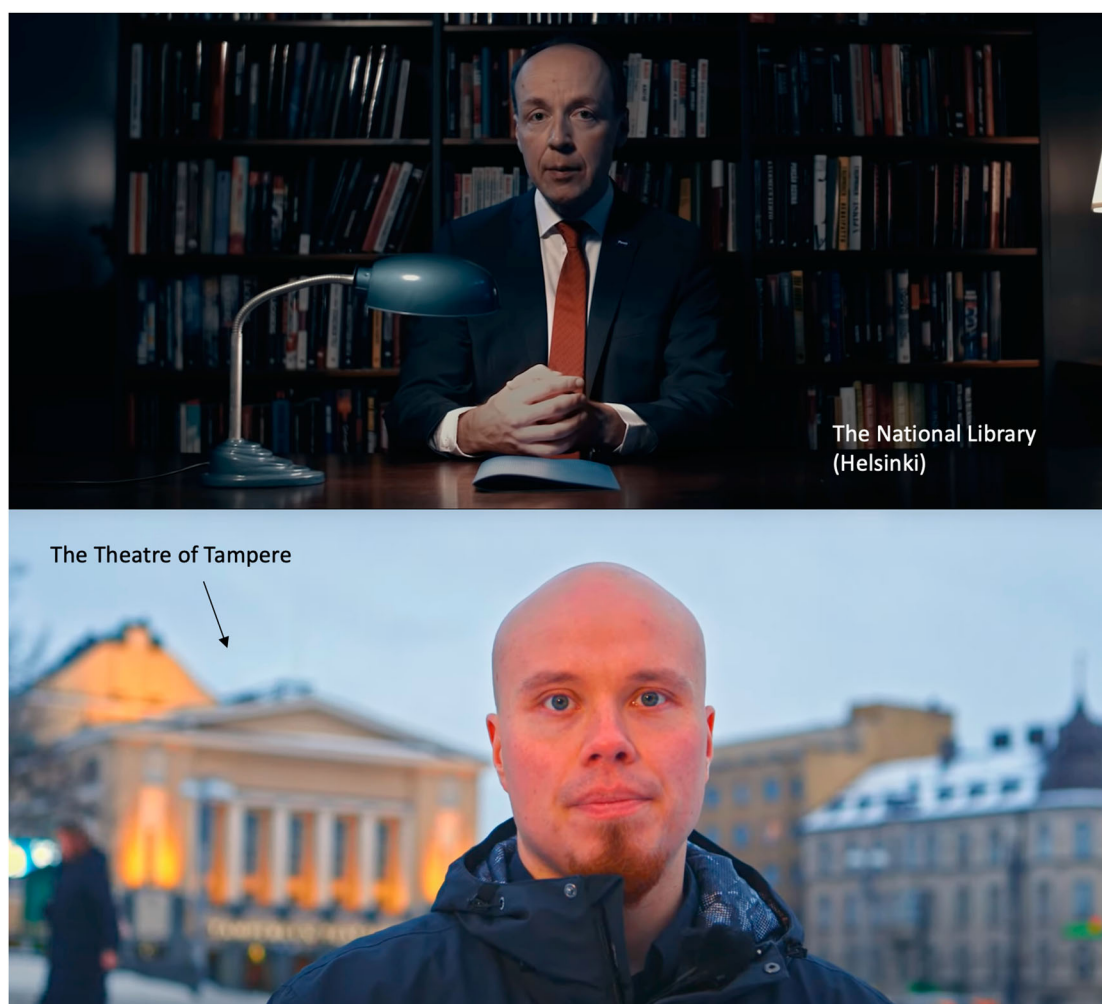*Sinimusta* articulates a serious atmosphere with a glimpse of hope that society may change for the better

FIGURE 3.   The two leaders and their backgrounds (Ketutus 6:20; Sinimusta 2:30).

with the BBM. In fact, a neopagan ambient song called Hope by Kraftamt (Music Now 2021) is used as a background theme. Affectively structured, the *Sinimusta* opens with a grey and grave atmosphere, highlighted by the music. Cloudy, grey sky in other scenes, concerned faces, static bodies of the speakers and calm tones taking breaks between the phrases of the speakers contribute affectively. Potential future threats are highlighted by background scenery that includes a graveyard memorial, a factory and a politically controversial Statue of Freedom (*Vapaudenpatsas*). The statue symbolises the right-wing Whites' civil war victory against the left-leaning Reds in 1918 (see Figure 4). The location of the statue, holding a sword towards Workers' Community Hall, has been criticised in Tampere (Siltanen 2015). The iconic symbol of the city, tower of *Näsinneula*, is portrayed in the background (Figure 4). These symbols drawing from collective memory and cultural knowledge suggest urgency of 'our' action.

Despite the many shared themes, a movie-like *Ketutus* is audio-visually significantly different from *Sinimusta*. Its

affective structure follows a classic storyline as a battle between good and bad which ends when good triumphs over evil. The storyline is intensified with a soundscape which includes highs and lows in the use of music and silences between chords, and scenes. The narrator of the Finnish version of the video is a calm elderly male voice that reminds of a priest's chant appeals to morals (Martikainen and Sakki 2021, 5–6). The video develops into power and pride over the independence of Finland – nostalgia about the history highlighted with slow-motion, increasing volume and rising chords. Then begins the downfall due to corrupt, greedy politicians forcing membership of the European Union. In a dramatic turn, streets are burning and the narrator claims it is now unsafe for women and children (*Ketutus* 2:45–50). This is achieved through changes in sound and fast shots, associated with violence and disorder (Sakki and Martikainen 2021, 618). In contrast, the atmosphere turns calm at the end with a worldview-ratifying figure of the FP leader that represents the 'us', to stress the talking heads' role as the leader (Biglieri and Cadahia 2021; Finlayson 2022).
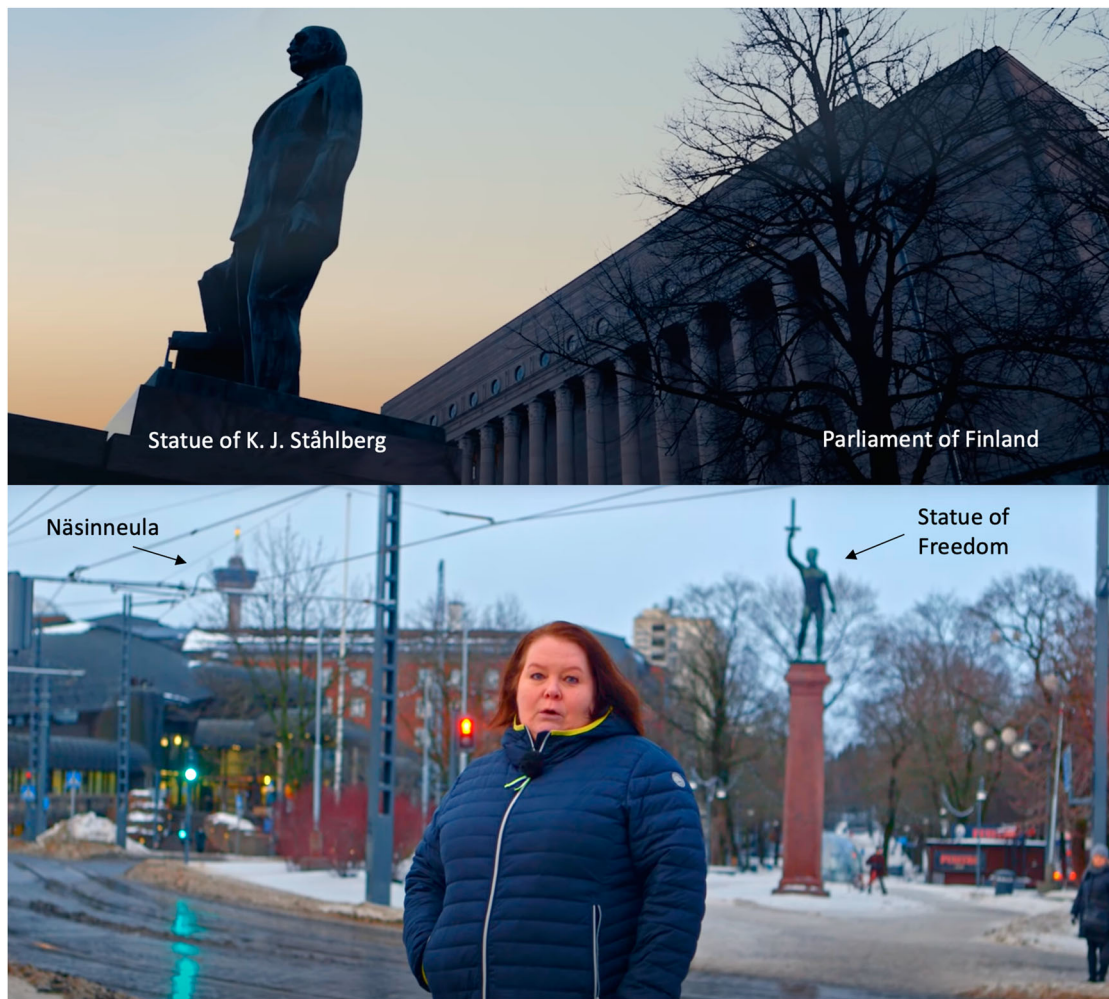
FIGURE 4.   Urban sites in Tampere and Helsinki presented in the videos (Ketutus 0:50; Sinimusta 1:34).

In *Sinimusta,* the leader of the movement, Tuukka Kuru, is pictured in a position of power because of the medium close-up cropping (from the waist up) and filmed from a low angle suggesting height and being above all (cf. Mandell and Shaw 1973). Even as a static figure, he (as one of the two among the many speakers in the video) confronts the viewer directly with body angle, gaze and using the second person singular form when addressing the viewer. His casual clothing connects him with ordinary people. Other speakers are also filmed from a low angle throughout the video. This changes at the end of the video. After portraying the potential threat, it is resolved through the change the BBM may offer. In the last scene, Kuru invites the viewer to take part in the BBM as a peer, which is emphasised by bringing the viewer almost to the same eye-level as Kuru (see Figure 3).

At the beginning of *Ketutus,* three white male politicians (see Figure 5), signifying the corrupt elite, are presented in a power position since they are introduced in slow-motion, shot at a low angle (Kress and van Leeuwen 2020). Later, when the people get angry at them, they are

filmed from a high angle and the monster is presented in a position of power compared to the politicians. Noticeable element are the half-masks worn by the politicians. On the one hand, they enable maintaining their position of power through a homogeneous whole (Salojärvi 2022) and represent the men as faceless abstract figures. On the other hand, the masks of the power holders draw attention to the act of concealment (c.f. Ruiz 2017) implying that the men have something to hide supporting the image of a corrupt elite (Martikainen and Sakki 2021, 6). The men can refer to the three-party government or the three ministers from the Finns Party splinter Blue Reform *(Sininen tulevaisuus)* that stayed in the government after the change of leadership in 2017. Symbolising the frontier, the 'other' is constructed similarly in a sense that there is a morally low, selfish political elite. In *Ketutus,* the mainstream media is said to be harnessed to serve the elite (2:30–36). All in all, the videos create a feeling of no one acting for you but yourself, either by voting *(Ketutus)* or joining the forces *(Sinimusta).* In the next subchapters, we analyse in detail how this persuasion to

FIGURE 5.   The politicians wearing half-masks and the monster (Ketutus 0:52, 0:55, 4:11, 5:52).

support the parties is implemented through building antagonisms and constructing shared signifiers in the two videos.

Audio-visual Construction of Antagonism in Performances of Ethnicity and Gender Hierarchy

The ethno-cultural Finnishness is the ultimate concept that needs to be determined when defining 'us' in the videos. In *Ketutus*, the narrator only refers to 'the people' in general but visually portrayed representations of Finns are white, while immigrants are all depicted as dark-skinned. In *Sinimusta*, the speakers emphasise 'harmful foreign cheap labour' (1:03–05) which represents foreigners as a non-humane mass of workers instead of recognisable people. The BBM rejects rhetoric on social classes and individuals but it promotes a vision of a 'Finnish Finland' in a 'European Europe' (Sinimusta 0:29–36).

In the videos, violence is depicted as coming from outside as a threat, evoking a sense of 'us' being victimised. The audio-visual intensity of *Ketutus* increases when the refugee 'other' is represented and connected to violence, terror, poverty and unemployment that put the nation in danger (Martikainen and Sakki 2021). Comparatively, *Ketutus* shows visually more violence (the monster using violence towards the political elite) than *Sinimusta*, in which threats are articulated by mere speech, such as in an othering and marginalising xenophobic statement:

'internationalisation […] affects through immigration the ethnic composition of our country' (1:53–57). In *Sinimusta*, the explicit vocabulary refers to 'the Finnish heritage of blood' *(verenperintö)* (Sinimusta 0:26–30). The voiced out ethnic conflict in *Sinimusta* marks it apart from *Ketutus* that has implicit references to safety.

Representations of femininity and masculinity importantly signify the 'us'/'other' division through the threat of violence. The performance of gender reflects hegemonic masculine ideals which legitimatise hierarchical and unequal relations between genders by placing a specific type of ideal masculinity above other masculinities and femininities (Connell 1995). In *Sinimusta*, four out of the five speakers are males. The representations of masculinity have a function, e.g. a man in front of a factory stands in a position of a household head, underlined with a low camera angle. His appearance may appeal to traditional workers in the paper industry, which have a specific position in Finland as a male dominated sector threatened by globalisation. In *Ketutus*, the monster is pictured as a dark and hairy masculine figure whose aggressive energy is expressed with body language, a roaring voice and fire (Figure 5). Hegemonic masculinity appears in the monster who rules unwanted people with fear and the use of physical force, which refers to the acceptance of violence.

In *Ketutus* women as signifiers reconstruct 'us' by contrast to refugees and the elite. Antagonistic relationship is created through the hegemonic

FIGURE 6.   Representations of women in Ketutus (1:54, 1:56, 2:50, 4:49).

position of white men, which is constituted in two parallel layers. First in relation to women, who are pictured as victims needing white men to save them from 'other men', and second in relation to non-white men who are presented as inferior ('rapists', 'criminals') and need to be punished (Chang 2018). In the video, an innocent, blond, sexy schoolgirl is walking alone on the street when immigrants, pictured as ski-masked, brown-skinned people in a shady van, reach an arm to her (see Figure 6) emphasising the juxtaposition with light and dark colours. The suggested kidnapping and whatever happens after that is left to the imagination of the viewer as the scene is cut. It demonstrates a break in the narrative chain of equivalence and provides an example of the efficient use of cuts and pauses used in both videos. The break assumes the extension to the scene, something is suggested to the viewer without explicitly saying so, or even showing it.

War history references victimise women and exclude 'other (men)' from 'our nation'. In *Ketutus,* the peace and safety that were achieved by respectable men in war are again in danger: In the scene, a woman, portrayed as a caring mother holding a child's hand, walks through the flames in a decaying street (Figure 6). Depicting the elite, corrupt male politicians drive around in a limousine and give money to women in skimpy outfits (Figure 6). The 'whore image' is excluded from the ideal picture of respectable women who reproduce the nation as a part of a nuclear family. The elite is shown as caring more about their own pleasure in 'valueless' sexual relations than the

wellbeing of the people. In short, in Ketutus women are instrumentalised for male dominance and white supremacy.

Signifiers Drawing from Historical Events, Globalisation and Urban Sites

Spatiality features in the videos through digital place-making, which 'involves the production of place through its representations on the Internet' (Ozduzen, Korkut, and Ozduzen 2021; see also Bork-Hüffer 2016; Karduni and Sauda 2020). Visually, both videos use Finnish cityscapes as their backdrop (see Figures 3 and 4). The videos refer to the Evangelic-Lutheran Christian religion, the dominant orientation in secularised Finland (Figure 7). Typical for the Finnish far-right visuals (Hakoköngäs, Halmesvaara, and Sakki 2020), both videos use the myth of war history and generate nostalgia to construct and represent an idealised long-lost Finland (Martikainen and Sakki 2021). *Ketutus* depicts WWII veterans as sad, even in tears (1:15–20). In *Sinimusta,* a BBM member stands in a soldiers' graveyard.

Despite the FP's agrarian and suburban roots, *Ketutus* uses impressive aerial pictures from the capital's core showing the Helsinki Cathedral and portrays nostalgically the first Finnish president K. J. Ståhlberg's statue in front of the parliament – the viewer is taken to the site where the antagonist struggle between the people (in the form of the monster) and the corrupt elite takes place. The BBM video refers to the historical White

FIGURE 7.   The BBM talking head stands on the soldiers' graveyard in front of a cross (0:56), and Ketutus features the Evangelic-Lutheran Helsinki Cathedral (3:19).

(right-wing) control of traditionally Red (left-wing) Tampere, a leading industrial city in Finland. The locations are chosen to highlight patriotism and a Left-Right confrontation, important for local history and memory in Tampere. Thus, the choice of statues and locations are important part of intertextuality and redefining the places from the point of view of the party or movement.

The videos strikingly juxtapose globalism and nationalism. In *Ketutus*, the narrator states that 'they [the politicians] scorned the Finnish Independence with their actions' while the video shows the EU flag (1:08–1:14). *Sinimusta* highlights submission of the national to the global, opposing foreign labour and calling for protectionist economy by avoiding the consumption of foreign products (0:50–55). The job losses due to globalisation are presented as an injustice. *Ketutus* features a white-collar worker (depicted in the video as fired) and *Sinimusta* a factory worker (Figure 8). The BBM claims to be 'proud of their roots', while it is worried about 'national home country' turning into 'a

global shopping mall'. Portraying feelings of alienation and lack of agency, the BBM's chairperson argues that globalisation is the reason why 'nothing has value anymore, only a price' (Sinimusta 2:07–11) and it threatens Finnish culture, traditions, values, cultural products, landscape and nature.

Talking about entertainment and culture as global and mass produced (Sinimusta 1:10–23), the BBM challenges the American, not the Finnish, genre of *Ketutus*, which includes explicit references to non-Finnish imagery (school uniform, suits, homeless man sleeping on the street covering himself with newspapers). The BBM members claim to be the only force in Finnish politics who dare to challenge liberal hegemony at a systemic level and defend the rights of the Finnish people to have their own life environment (original reference to *elinpiiri* implies the German Lebensraum). At the end of the video, the chairperson states that 'Finnish Finland will need the help of every friend of the patria: It is time for action'. (Sinimusta 1:23–47, 2:02, 2:26–31.) Both videos encourage acting for the 'better future' and change for
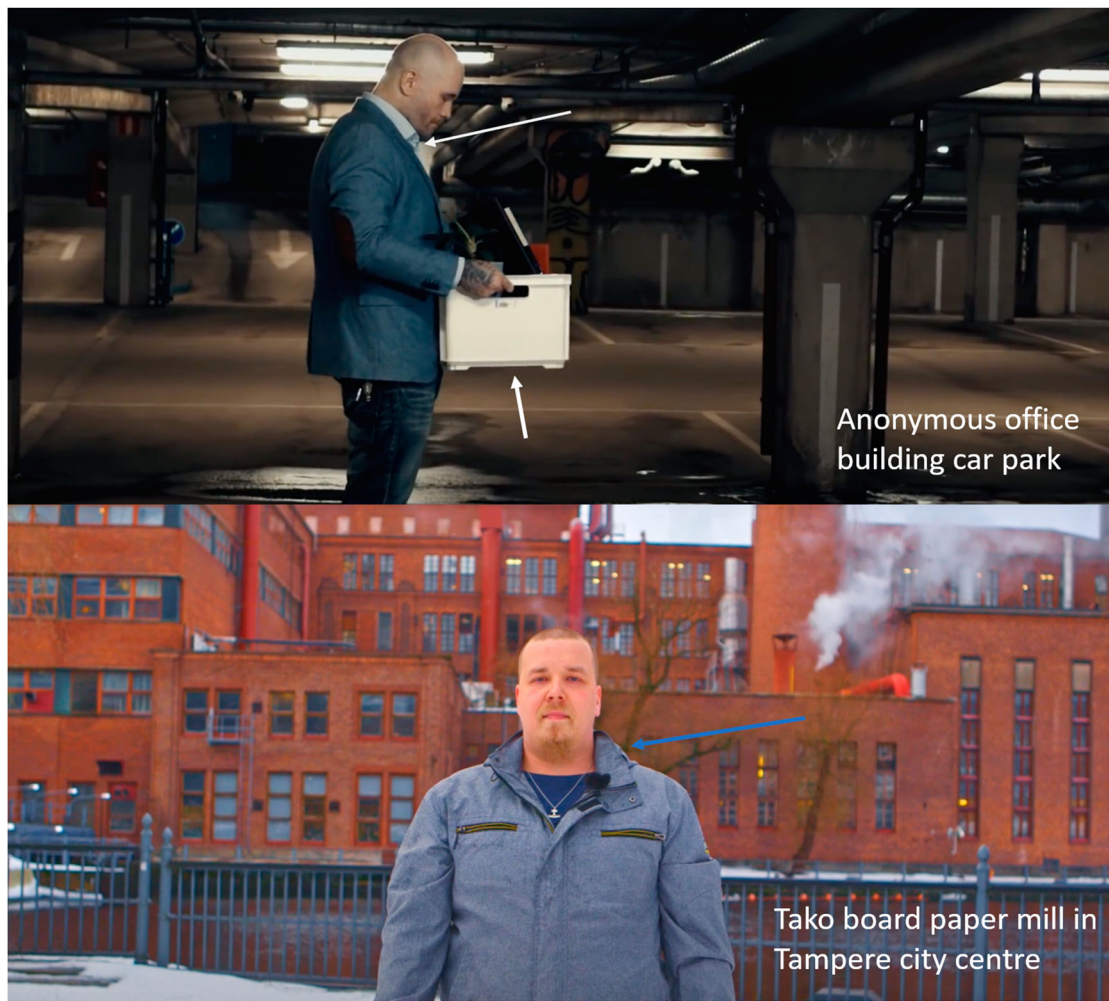
FIGURE 8. Representations of white and blue-collar job losses in Ketutus (3:19) and Sinimusta (0:56).

TABLE 2. Exploring the form and contents of populist articulation reveals similarities and differences between the cases.

Populism	Us	Affect	Frontier	Affect
Finns Party	People = monster + protective Finns + white-collar workers	Nostalgy + anger + protection of victims + pride + Lutheran heritage	Corrupt internationalist elite + migrants of 2015–2016	Loathing + greed + egoism + satire of recent past/future
Blue–Black Movement	'White' patriotic Finns + blue-collar workers	Nostalgy + pride + protection + Finnish blood heritage	Red + globalists + internationalists + (neo)liberals + non-Finnish migrants	Greed + egoism + rootlessness + xenophobia + historical memory

the current situation – paradoxically without offering tangible policy solutions.

CONCLUSION

By analysing the Finnish far right, this paper points out that several signifiers call for political (dis)identification and discursive polarisation (c.f. Backström, Creutz, and Pyrhönen 2022) and shows how the far-right actors

operationalise the populist logic to generate a counterhegemonic movement. In this article, we used the populism formula (Figure 1) and rhetoric-performative multimodal analysis to study how two contemporary Finnish far-right actors affectively articulate communities, the 'us', and find rigor in antagonism on YouTube. Set in differing genres, both YouTube videos feature personalities to identify with (Finlayson 2022, 65). As applying the formula (Table 2), we remarked that the videos depict an emerging

collective subject through shared and interconnected signifiers, and visions of the enemy that threatens the existence of the collective subject constituted through othering.

The videos build a shared memory with references to the past staging videos in urban symbolic landscapes, as signifiers expressing a threat of loss or destruction. Finnish war history provides antagonisms to be reactivated in *Ketutus* and *Sinimusta*. Through historical references in the urban symbolic landscape, the BBM highlights the White-Red confrontation during the civil war. The chosen locations and landmarks in the videos signify labour and hegemonic gender values, patriotism as being holy, and internationalism as a suspect. The videos contribute to polarisation, through which the heterogenous 'other' is distrusted, and affective relation constitutes a homogenously or vaguely determined 'us'. While unveiling problems, the videos construct similar frontiers between different camps: the corrupt elite and the refugees/immigrants and non-ethnic Finnish people. The current politicians are depicted as the ones making immoral choices or only looking to benefit themselves. Misogyny confirms polarising articulation. This misogyny has been found also in other studies focusing on the FP (e.g. Pettersson et al. 2023; Saresma and Palonen 2022).

Audio-visual political communication matters. In the videos, promotion of racial superiority or a polarised historical past can be articulated non-verbally, attempting to render political correctness and presentability. Audio-visual techniques such as pauses, low or loud volume, fast cuts, cropping, camera movement and different angles may be used to highlight particular words, phrases or places in addition to the techniques already found in visual analysis of photographs. The narration through a fictional comic book enables the use of exaggeration and unrealistic visual means (Martikainen and Sakki 2021) and the cartoon format works as an 'ideological weapon' to represent antagonism (Issa 2022). *Ketutus* uses political satire, which can act as a disguise for hate speech, spread extreme right's political agenda in general, and attract new audiences for the extreme right (Schwarzenegger and Wagner 2018). The non-Finnish visuals and the figure of the monster representing people's anger are set up as just trolling or storytelling. Recognising this genre, DeCook (2020) argues: '"ironic hate speech" is also hate speech.' Sakki and Martikainen (2021, 629) conclude that *Ketutus* normalises and mainstreams hostility towards the 'other', increases collective hatred and polarises the public sphere.

In social media, including the YouTube, the logic is to gain as much visibility as possible through shares and likes (van Dijck and Poell 2013). This aim is likely to be reached with an affective video (Vernallis 2013). The platformed modes of articulation effect even party politics that become transformed through the platforms' audio-visual communication (Finlayson 2022). Offering space for affective mobilisation and (dis)identification, YouTube videos affect also offline environments (Wahlström and Törnberg 2021). YouTube offers a platform for videos of different lengths and genres, as seen in the case of *Ketutus* and *Sinimusta*. The platform enables the high number of views of *Ketutus,* well-fitting within a hybrid media system (Chadwick 2013), as well as offers visibility and a way to communicate far-right discourse to a newcomer, the BMM.

This research focuses only on two videos in the national context of Finland which enabled in-depth comparative analysis. Thus, the results that show how different far-right actors use similar logic to construct their audiences give us well-needed insight which would not be possible without our research design. Yet, our analysis indicates a need for more research on comparative settings both in Finland including also other far-right movements and internationally using the Laclaudian theoretical-methodological framework to gain new insight into far-right mobilisation on YouTube.

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