

Haven't we learned anything - are we reliving the 1930s?

Finland's present and pre war far right movements

Current attitude

Ahmo Koulu, Siilinjärvi, Finland

2014-2017

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1. INTRODUCTION

Title

Haven't we learned anything - are we reliving the 1930s? Finland's present and pre war far right movements

Age

Secondary education, students from 13 to 18 years

Duration

4 sessions of 45 min each

Sources

Historical background

Introduction to today's far right movements and populism

Presentation of picture analysis

Rationale

Far right ideologies from 1930s and 2010s in Finland seem to stem from similar prejudices. The language used both verbally and visually seems similar too. This lesson plan enlightens political situation in Europe in 1920- and 1930-century and introduces Finland's far right movements in 2010s. It is important to recognise populist argumentation in everyday life and in the field of politics. Young people's minds are sensitive to all kind of influence, therefore the concept of populism is opened too. The third case, Case III "Carelain refugees" shows how people can act in an indifferent way even towards a group of people of same nationality. It was not self evident for the Swedish speaking areas to relocate the Finnish refugees from Carelia.

Aims

The objectives of this Nowadays Attitudes Lesson Plan are following:

1. to wake students' interest to actively look for similarities between past and today
2. to learn from history, that extremist attitudes are not only a phenomena of past times but present too

3. to wake students attention how to recognise populist attitudes in our time
4. to learn picture analysis as means to develop students' critical thinking
5. to develop creativity and activate tolerant attitudes by designing a t-shirt slogan
6. to find examples from one's own country's populist phenomena to recognise one's own prejudices

Other aspects

Classroom arrangement: normal classroom

Groups Students: work both in pairs and individually

Equipment:

1. a projector to show the picture analysis presentation.
2. Copied sheets of Historical background, introduction to far-right movements, populism and materials for picture analysis
3. Blank paper to construct mind map and to design T-shirt slogan or real t-shirts

2. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

1. Political situation in Europe in 1920- and 1930-century

The era between the first and the second World War was challenging for the European nations. World War I lasted four years and states got in debt deeply, the war killed or seriously wounded millions of young lives and most of all due to war people lost their belief to humanity and human enlightenment.

Interwar period was economically challenging. Low economic growth and depression caused problems in many European countries, such as unemployment and bankrupts and even starvation was a serious problem.

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http://www.slate.com/blogs/the_vault/2014/07/31/history_of_famine_in_europe_after_wwi_a_hunger_map_for_american_kids.html

Map of Europe was drawn totally different after WW1. Nine new states were established in Europe. These new states were created mostly from the parts of Russian and Austro-Hungarian empires. The new states faced many challenges and one of them was short experience about democratic political system. Fear of communistic revolution and Soviet Union was common in European states. People got also tired to the inefficient governments and continuous fights between parties. Together with economical challenges, unemployment and common dissatisfaction gave opportunity to populistic far right parties to gain more success and get in power. At the end of 1930's only Great Britain, France, Czechoslovakia and Scandinavian countries remained democratic ruled countries when rest of the European countries turned to right wing dictatorships.

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<http://wps.ablongman.com/wps/media/objects/419/429222/illustrations/WALL5295727.gif>

2. Democracy threatened in Finland

Finland was also influenced by the change in European political climate and far right ideas very largely represented in the country. How did Finland manage to stay democratic?

Finland was one of the countries gaining independence during World War I in 1917. Right after the independency Finland went to very cruel and bitter Civil War, which influenced the Finnish society for decades. Relationship with Finland's eastern neighbour Soviet Union turned out complicated and strengthened russofobia and fear of communism. Both countries, Finland and Soviet Union got involved also to each other's politics and territory.

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The “whites” who won the civil war became disappointed soon after the war. Finland’s first president K.J. Ståhlberg absolved red war prisoners. Left wing parties continued also in Finnish politics with secret funding from Soviet Union. All this led to increasing activity among the white veterans who felt the result of the Civil war threatened. Many of white veterans decided to act and they established anti-parliament groups ready to take over political power. Unfortunately the radicalised people were divided to various competing groups.

2.1. Lapua movement

The most well known far right group in Finland was Lapua Movement, named after Lapua city in Finnish Ostrobothnia. Lapua Social Movement had same background as all of the far right or fascist movements in Europe in that time. People inside the movement were unsatisfied about the political parties and worried about the left wing or communist parties’ existence. At the same time they felt traditional Finnish way of life threatened by the liberal values. The movement activists were mostly Civil War white veterans.



Lapua Movement -game.

Lapua Movement were established spontaneously in Lapua city in 1929 by Vihtori Kosola and Artturi Leinonen. Members of the movement were worried about Finland and Finnish culture and the movement was a typical example of a conservative far right resisting liberalism, and the movement posed as a defender of conservative christianity.

Right from the beginning Lapua movement showed it's anti-parliamentar face and demanded Finnish government and parliament to change laws and deny all communist or left wing activity in Finland. It is said that Lapua Movement was strongest of all those anti-parliamentar groups and was able to threat the Finnish political system. Lapua Movement was active between 1929-1933 until it's imposition by Finnish parliament.

Deportations were Lapua movements signmark. Movement's activists chase and assaulted known communists, social democrats and everyone who was suspected about leftish sympathies. The victims were captured from their home or working places and deported close to the Russian border. Lapua Movements' members attacked against people who supported leftish ideas. They ripped off their red clothes and destroyed red flags and printing machines in printing houses.

2.2. Peasant march on July 1930

Lapua Movement was unsatisfied with the Finnish parliament and required the parliament and government to act against communists several times. When the Finnish political institutions were not willing to act, Lapua movement decided to "show people's will to them (the politicians) in capital".

Many people were worried about the Lapua Movement and this worry peaked on 7th July in 1930 when 12 000 men from all over Finland travelled to Helsinki and arranged a protest march. All the marchers gathered to the Alexander's square in the heart of Helsinki where they gave speeches and required Finnish parliament to enact so called "Republic Protection Laws". Luckily the Lapua Movement had so much inner dispute they couldn't steal the power from the government. This sign of weakness was crucial to the movement and it began to loose it's support.

2.3. Mäntsälä Rebellion and win of democracy

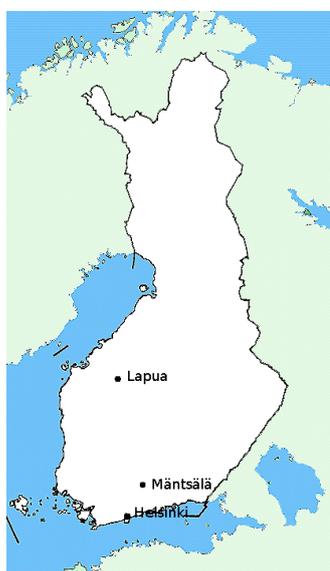
In February 1932 a group of social democrats gathered to Mäntsälä municipality for a meeting and celebration. Local Lapua Movement activists decided to prevent this event. Situation got more

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serious features when more and more armed activists from different parts of Finland travelled to Mäntsälä and activists in several regions supported the rebellion. Revolutionaries demanded Finnish government to sign out but they refused. In this situation Finnish president Per Erik Svinhufvud decided to use all his authority as a chief in command. Svinhufvud spoke to the revolutionaries and he promised that the revolutionaries would not be punished if they only left Mäntsälä peacefully. The speech was published in radio and in all newspapers. For some reason the revolutionaries obeyed the president and little by little the revolution fizzled out and the activists left Mäntsälä.



Ironically the Lapua Movement was suspended by the same laws enacted after claims by the movement. Only the movement's leaders were punished. After Mäntsälä Rebellion Finnish far right lost their momentum and continued in more parliamentary way. On the ruins of Lapua movement a political party IKL, Isänmaallinen kansanliike (Patriotic Movement) was established. IKL represented Finnish far right's main stream until 1945 when all fascistic organisations were denied in Finland by the Soviet Surveillance Committee.

2.4. Common elements for the far right ideas in the 1930's and today

- fear of communism
- antisemitism
- conservative - anti-liberal worldview
- fear of other cultures and loss of national culture

- conservative christianity or opposing other religions
- anti-parliamentarism and need for strong leader
- dream of solid nation without any foreign elements

3. What do the extreme right organizations stand for? - Introduction to far right organizations in Finland

Silja Kärjä

A 28-year old man, a passer-by was assaulted in an extreme activists' demonstration in Helsinki, September 2016 after spitting to the street as a sign of rejecting the demonstration's ideas. The man died afterwards due to head injury. This rose a wide discussion about the freedom to act for racial discrimination in Finland. The core question was if a ban of racist movements' acting would be set, it could give even more power to the radicalisation. Radicalisation means the readiness to use violence as means to resist democratic society. If the illegal activism would go underground, it would be more difficult to survey.

3.1. How are they organised?

Today Suomen vastarintaliike, "Finland's Resistance Movement" is a Finnish branch of the Nordic Resistance Movement. It aims to create "a white northern state" in co-operation with the Scandinavian Nordfront. The organisations' symbols, actions, propaganda posters and stickers and visibility in social media are similar. Their ideology is based on national socialism. The ideas seem to stem from prejudices, disappointment to democracy, lack of values and national socialist traditions from the beginning of 20th century. The organisations arrange training for their members. The movements support revolution and their readiness to use violence has grown. The organisations can be considered extremist movements because of the use of violence. The movements aim to stop "asylum seekers invasion" and oppose those who stand for liberal society.



An advertisement of Finland's resistance movement



An advertisement of Sweden's resistance movement

Finland's extremist movements use social media to share and spread ideas and arrange local activities and demonstrations. Unfortunately it is difficult to prevent or stop racism in social media. The movements get large visibility in the internet and they aim to create a sense of bigger support than they actually have. A good example of this was a demonstration held in Siilinjärvi in October 2016. Rajat kiinni "Close the borders" - Suomi ensin "Finland first" -movements organised a demonstration against asylum seekers. The movements' activists travel to organise demonstrations in different areas and some locals join in. When the demonstrations are held in different locations, a sense of large support is created.

3.2. Who are they?

Members of Finland's resistance movement consist mainly of young men aged from 20 to 30 years. They are not specially marginalised, even though social marginalisation, frustration and the society's controversies strengthen the radicalisation. Some supporters of the movement are educated - support to racist attitudes connect the members. The supporters of Finland's extremist movements seem to share a common world view considering white race as privileged European race.

3.3. Extremism feeds extremism

Soldiers of Odin is a street patrol organisation founded in 2015. They claim to increase street safety in some Finnish cities because of "the threat caused by asylum seekers". The patrolling activity has gone down after first enthusiasm. Why "Soldiers of Odin" worries Finnish society, is their attitudes towards asylum seekers and their helpers. Their visibility in media has actually been stronger than in streets. Soldiers of Odin's leaders are claimed to agitate the members to attack not only foreign people but also so called "tolerant ones" and the political left wing. The hostility

towards political left stems from the past, similar attitudes from the 1930's can be recognised. A newer phenomena is hostile attitude towards migrants.



4. How do they do this? What is populism?

Silja Kärjä

The extremists use populist rhetorics to gain visibility to their ideas. The truth or objectivity are not important to those who are willing to support. What means more, is how convincing and adoptable the message is. An idea strenghtens automatically when a similar idea is met, no matter by what means. A supportive social network plays a big role in spreading ideas. Sharing ideas and attitudes in social network create a sense of being part of something big.

Populism is political action that aims to gain wide popularity by basing its argumentation on contradictions between ordinary people and powerful elite.

4.1. Typical for populism is the use of traditional rhetoric methods like:

- Metaphors, direct comparisons: "They are parasites."
- Alliterations, the use of same letter: "The big bad bastards did it again!"

- Repetition: “Join the winners, join the fighters, join us!”
- Generalisation: “They are all terrorists and rapists.”
- Imploring one's feelings: “We want to take care of the weak ones.” “We stand for our people!”
- The language of religious context: “We are chosen people to fight the phenomena”, “I believe...”
- The language of commercial advertising: ”Choose me, choose the truth.”
- The use of ordinary, familiar words: “He's the good guy.”
- The use of pompous words: “This is the salvation.”
- Creating an illusion of wide support: “I agree with the Finnish folk.”
- Addressing the words personally: “Well done, boys!” “Activate!”
- Showing up personal relations: “I had a chat with my friend X...”
- Imploring communality: “Brothers and sisters...”
- Telling about one's life like a fairy tale: “Life was so hard for me, but still I survived...”
- The use of humor: “I have sold a book whereas the others still learn to read...”
- Rhetoric victimizing: “They are laughing at us, but our time will come.”

Political language is getting closer to religious language. Religious opinions are often used directly as a way of argumentation.

A populist needs the media. Media plays an important role in creating positive connotations. Visibility does not have to be necessarily positive to create support. Dividing people in categories “we” and “the others” is also typical for populism.

3. ACTIVITIES

ACTIVITY 1: Get the big picture - construct a mind map

Read the historical background about Lapua Movement, far right ideas and following information about Finland's Resistance Movement, Soldiers of Odin - organisation and populism

Find connections between part and present and construct a mind map while reading.

ACTIVITY 2: Compare pictures from past and today

(You can find pictures and questions also from a Powerpoint presentation.)

Far right parties and extremist groups use similar visual language. Find connections between the pictures and texts and reflect what they remind you of. Answer questions a) – r)



<http://www.iltalehti.fi/lapuanliike/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/20160770.jpg>



Suomen vastarintaliike <http://www.vastarinta.com/>

The first picture is of the Lapua Movement's leader Vihtori Kosola from the 1930's. The second picture is Nordic Resistance movement's propaganda poster from the 2010's.

- Analyse and compare the pictures, look for possible similarities.
- How is the picture structured? Note the use of space and the direction of possible movement: how does it try to influence?
- What do you think is the wanted message of the picture?

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https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/thumb/0/0b/Lapuan_liike.svg/250px-Lapuan_liike.svg.png

https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/fi/a/a2/Soldiers_of_Odin_logo.png

The first picture is a logo of the extreme right Lapua movement from the 1930's. The second picture is a logo of the Soldiers of Odin from the 2010's.

- Analyse the colours and the shapes of the two pictures - what do they have in common?
- Why there is certain similarity between the pictures?
- What kind of symbolism or myths do you find in the pictures?

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<http://www.master-of-education.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/12/4-The-German-Student-Fights-for-the-Fuhrer-and-the-People.jpg>

<http://www.mustasydan.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/NordfrontNeedsYou.jpg>

The first picture is a poster of Hitler Jugend from the 1930's. It claims: A German student fights for the leader (Hitler) and the people. The second picture is Nordic Resistance Movement's propaganda poster from 2010's.

- What is the picture about? Describe the picture verbally.
- Why does Nordfront use the old nazi propaganda picture for it's own purposes?
- How have they changed the picture and the message?

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<http://www.vastarinta.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/vastarinta.jpg>



Tikka ja Roselius: Suomalaiset fasisitit, WSOY 2016 s. 278

The first picture is a Nordic Resistance movement poster. The second picture is an advertisement of a propaganda paper from the 1930's. It claims: Already during it's first year has "the Blue-Black" gained popularity as a fearless fighting paper. Now has a new attack started.

- Analyse and compare the pictures, look for possible similarities.
- What do you think is the wanted message of the picture?

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<http://hs12.snstatic.fi/webkuva/taysi/560/1455074633262?ts=>



<http://www.vastarinta.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/borl%C3%A4nge-34.jpg>

The first picture is E. J. Paavilainen's undated photo of the fascist movement IKL members' march in their black shirts in the 1930's. The second picture is from Nordic Resistance Movement's 1st of May March in Borlänge, Sweden. Also members of Finland's Resistance Movement participated.

- What kind of associations wake when watching the picture?
- Do you find similarities with history's examples?
- What interesting, fancy, suspicious or hostile elements there are in the pictures' entities?

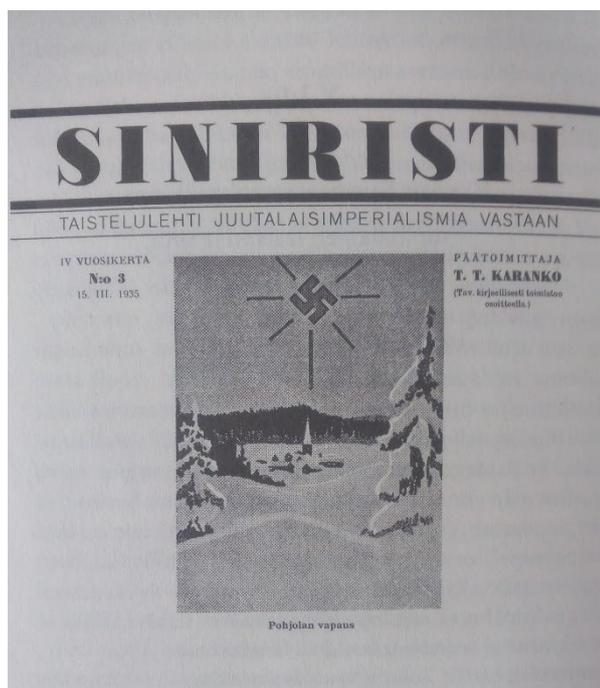
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<http://seura.fi/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/10962442-e1438591333191-1024x862.jpg>



Silvennoinen, Tikka ja Roselius: Suomalaiset fasistit, WSOY 2016 s. 324

The first picture claims: Multi-culturality is harmful for your children and your grandchildren.

The second picture is a newspaper cover from year 1935. The paper's name is Siniristi "Blue cross", which is the symbol in the Finnish flag. The subtitle tells that the paper is a "fighting paper against Jewish imperialism". The text below the picture says: "Northern freedom"

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- What kind of symbolism can be found in these pictures?
- What hostile or safe elements can you find in these pictures?



<http://www.kokoomus100.fi/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/pois-kommunis-min-saasta.jpg>



<http://www.saunalahti.fi/g333/vasen.htm>

The first picture is from the 1930's. It claims: the communist shit out of Finland!

The second picture is from year 2016. It claims: Good bye Finland.

- How do the pictures implicate what they resist?
- What colours are used? What do the colours implicate?

ACTIVITY 3: Design a T-shirt slogan for tolerance. Cut a T-shirt from copy paper and decorate it with your slogan. You can even print it on a real T-shirt.

ACTIVITY 4: Find an example of your own country's new populist phenomena's written or visualised argumentation. Analyse and compare your example to what you have learned.

4. REFERENCES

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Mitä on populismi? Etmu.fi

A teacher's guide on the prevention of violent extremism. Published in 2016 by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and cultural organization, 7, place de fontenoy, 75352 Paris 07 SP, France

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