# Hate online: Anti-immigration rhetoric in Darknet

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Abstract: The worsening conditions in the Middle-East and Sub-Saharan Africa have resulted in millions of asylum seekers entering the European Union. Also, Finland received over ten times more asylum seekers in 2015 than the previous years. The irregular migration has generated many public discussions and demonstrations at the local and national level against and for asylum seekers. Furthermore, online hate speech has increased and intensified. This research examines how asylum seekers are portrayed in a discussion forum inside Darknet. The results show that this forum holds three distinct hate-related themes when discussing asylum seekers. These were related to imported violence, economics and cultural identity. Hate speech is targeted towards very specific ethnic groups and religion(s), which resonate the current geopolitical situation in Finland concerning asylum seekers. In addition, hate extends beyond asylum seekers into Finnish society, where it's expressed as negative speech towards the authorities and pro-immigration movement. The results also indicate that despite the Darknet's reputation of being an unregulated online space, there are some rules, which guide the dialogues.

Keywords: Darknet, hate speech, othering, asylum seekers, right-wing, virtual community
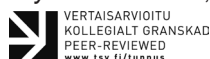
Introduction

The continuing civil wars and worsening general conditions in the Middle East and Sub-Saharan Africa have resulted in 1.26 million asylum seekers entering in European Union in 2015. The dominant citizenships among the asylum seekers were Syrians, Afghans and Iraqis (European Migration Network 2016). Even though European Union has made political and technical efforts to control the movement of asylum seekers to the EU, the phenomenon is not expected to vanish in years to come. In 2015 Finland received over 32 000 asylum seekers of which 63% were from Iraq, 16% from Afghanistan and 6% from Somalia (Finnish Immigration Service 2017). This has been an immense increase compared with the

previous year with less than 4000 asylum applications. Most of the asylum seekers arrived travelling by land through Central-Europe, Denmark and Sweden finally crossing the border to Finland in the town of Tornio, in North-West Finland. As the number of asylum seekers grew in Europe, the border controls increased in Denmark and Sweden. Because of this, a new route to Finland begun to emerge through North-West Russia. However, the arrival of asylum seekers decreased significantly in 2016 to only about 5600 applications (Finnish Immigration Service 2017) and as such, the year 2015 can be seen as the culmination of events in Finland so far.

As the arrival of asylum seekers grew, also the number of reception centres increased from mere 20 (in 2014) to 144

(2015) (European Migration Network 2016). The relatively quick development of the phenomenon, the rapid decision-making processes concerning the reception centres and wide media exposure have generated a great deal of public discussions, demonstrations and general upheaval at the local and national level *against* and *for* asylum seekers. Additionally, suspected hate crimes increased in 2015 by 52% compared with the previous year. Majority of these crimes were motivated by victims' ethnic or national origin (race-related crimes) followed by victims' religious background (Tihveräinen 2016). These events do not take place in an isolated vacuum. The disturbances have also been fuelled by the poor economic situation of Finland and its consequent budgetary cuts to social welfare and high unemployment.

In Finland, like elsewhere, social media has become an important forum for political debates simultaneously reducing the role of mainstream media as the central platform for political discussions (Horsti & Nikula 2013). One of the most effective and increasingly popular forms of anti-immigrant activism and increasing nationalism in Finland is conducted through online activities (Mäkinen 2016). The rise of nationalistic ideology is not segregated and confined to its territorial borders (Billig 1995) but is dispersed internationally through online activities. Online communication contributes to the growing dialogues on nationhood beyond the territorial borders of nation-states. Despite the growing mobility in Europe and worldwide, the online sphere manages to construct an impression of intimate community through share values and

worldviews (Kania-Lundblom & Lindgren 2015).

The perceived anonymity and the expedient nature of the internet and the discussion forums in particular - make them ideal communication channels for different marginal groups to express their sometimes extreme opinions. Consequently, the role of the discussion forums as a source for research has become increasingly important among intelligence and security agencies (Abbasi &Chen 2005) and among academic research (e.g. Bowman 2009; Kania-Lundholm & Lindgren 2015).

Growing nationalism can be manifested as hate speech towards the "outgroup" members. As the web is today one central arena for both social and political action, it is reasonable to think that especially people voicing extreme opinions would at some stage engage in discussions online to voice their views (Caiani & Parenti 2009). Hate speech can be found in many places varying from verbal communication to written materials. However, due to the internet more organised forms of hate speech are being produced without the restrictions of speed, distance or cultural boundaries (Herz & Molnar 2012).

The article contributes in a wider framework to growing nationalism found online and how it is manifested as online hate speech. The study is conducted in an extreme location, Darknet message board, by assessing what kinds of thematic contents and targets of hate speech are present. The paper continues discussing cyber-nationalism and online hate. It is then followed by a more detailed section on Darknet and materials and methods. The paper then continues to show how culture

and violence are sources of hate followed by economic reasoning and the concept of "enemies within". Lastly the paper will discuss about Darknet being connected to the world.

Cyber-nationalism and online hate

Even though in today's technology driven societies we are moving towards borderless worlds, the discourse of de-territorialisation is also about a process of re-territorialisation (see Ó Tuathail 1999). In recent years, there has been a development of moving towards cyber-nationalism (Kaplan & Herb 2011) where discussion forums can be seen as "*stages for the display of extreme… identities*" (De Koster & Houtman 2008:1171), which make them also important platforms for studies in nationalism. National identity is not fixed entity but is continuously constructed and reconstructed through different processes which define the boundaries (Keskinen 2013) of whether you are "in" or "out". In this sense, also online hate that is targeted towards asylum seekers and practised in virtual communities, contributes to cyber-nationalism.

Virtual communities can be considered public spaces but at the same time, people may reveal more about themselves through anonymity than normally. Therefore, the distinctions between what is public and what private may become blurred (Barr 2010). Furthermore, even though consuming traditional mass media (radio, TV, newspapers) has been an integral part of building a nation (see also Billig

1995), the engagement in the nationalist discussions through social media may prove to be more intense than before: while consuming traditional media, people are a rather passive audience compared with participating and interacting in social media activities (Soffer 2013).

Virtual communities provide social spaces where people interact to express their views, share knowledge and encourage each other (Bowman-Grieve 2009). Forum websites can create an immediate identification and sense of community (Turner-Graham 2014) and facilitate a dialogue that can continue without barriers, which might be present in other (social) contexts. These communities provide structured platforms in place and time for things to happen, where human agency crosses linguistic divides and geographical borders (see also Adams 2015). Subsequently cyber communities facilitate connections between the state, society and an individual. Though sharing ideologies and solidarities across borders is not a new phenomenon, it is the speed, methods and intensity that has changed in time (see Routledge 2003) with new technological advancements.

Part of cyber- (or any) nationalism is to exclude what is considered "the other". "Othering" is a social representation related to stereotyping. This is often conducted through positive self-representation and negative presentation of the other (van Dijk 2004). It refers to the segregating consequences when trying to safeguard somebody's (a state, a group, an individual) "own" economic welfare and identity by aiming to exclude "them" from "us". In addition to actions and non-actions, othering is produced by hate speech. The

fear of others (and the subsequent practices of othering) are a significant part of racism, extremism (Davies 2014) and nationalism. As such, hate speech can be a manifestation (or an action) of nationalism and othering.

Defining and conceptualizing hate speech is a complex matter as there is often no clear distinction between the ideological (rational) and emotional (irrational) side of hate speech. What makes it even more challenging is the fact that these two forms often coexist at the same time (Keipi, Näsi, Oskanen & Väsänen 2017). A policy-related definition by the European Union (EU 2008) states that hate speech is *an action*, that includes the public dissemination pictures, leaflets or other material, that promote violence or hatred against groups (or its members).

Also, the private sector has acted on increasing online hate speech as in May 2016 the EU's decision was followed by the "Code of Conduct on Countering Illegal Hate Speech Online". The paper was signed by several IT companies such as Twitter, Facebook, YouTube and Google (European Commission 2016) condemning hate speech in their online platforms.

Though several definitions of hate speech exist, they share common traits. Hate speech can be based on referencing a certain race, colour, religion, descent or national or ethnic origin. Furthermore, hate speech refers to abusive language directed against people of certain age, gender, physical condition, disability, sexual orientation and political conviction (Erjavec & Kovacic 2012). Also, Finnish law recognises "ethnic agitation" as an action, where a person is defamed or threatened publicly based on identifications mentioned above (Ministry

of Justice 2015). Tough this paper uses similar definitions mentioned in the Finnish law, the focus here is not to examine hate speech through it's legal distinction but rather an academic and policy related understandings of the term. As such, hate speech here is considered a broad term for any speech (or tangible written material), that addresses above-mentioned groups or individuals in a derogatory way

Also, research on hate speech has increased. Some studies have a focused on developing new tools for identifying, monitoring and regulating online hate-speech, (e.g. Henry 2009; Banks 2010; Burnap & Willimas 2015) whereas others have concentrated on assessing the current methodologies in online hate research (e.g. Hughey & Daniels 2013). Perhaps the largest part of research is still done on the actual hate content of different (social) media sites with focus on radical pluralism (Cammaerts 2009), varying degrees of racist talk (Meddaugh & Kay 2009), "new" patriotism and identity creation (Kania-Lundholm & Lindgren 2015; Madisson & Ventsel 2016), thematic or content analyses of hate-groups sites (Gerstenfeld, Grant & Chiang 2003; Bowman-Grieve 2009; Caiani & Parenti 2009; Hale 2012) and the actual targets of hate speech (Holtz & Wagner 2009; Awan 2014). Others have taken a wider perspective and examined online hate movements (Perry & Olsson 2009) and on extreme-right youth online (Turner-Graham 2014). This article combines studies, which aim to assess the targets and thematic contents of online hate.

One mechanism in "online othering" is to spread negative images through news articles, which is an effective way

to reinforce previous negative thinking models. It is a way to strengthen the faith of hate groups' members and to further their cause (Caiani & Parenti 2009). For example, every time we read a news report we relate it to our previous models of thought (Van Dijk 1993b).

Though media's contribution to the public's practices of othering have been discussed in several studies (e.g. Creutz-Kämppi 2008; Saeed 2007; Fürsich 2010), the focus here is to elaborate what kinds of new links are distributed and to what kinds of comments about asylum seekers they generate (see Figure 1). Thus, the data collected are the comments following the distributed news links in the Darknet online forum. Therefore, this paper also differs from those studies that explicitly focus on hate speech appearing in articles' comments -section (e.g. Erjavec & Kovacic 2012) as there is an exact decision to disseminate

a certain kind of article and open it for a discussion.

Despite the pan-European and other national and international regulations, fighting online hate speech remains often ineffective due to the sheer volume and speed of the online hate speech. The normal internet has been discovered by some to be too risky as the participants can be monitored and found. The fear of consequences of stating extreme views has created underground platforms, where sensitive issues can be discussed anonymously (Weimann 2016a). Consequently, the discussions are moving to other forums, for example to Darknet, where it is mostly outside the reach of authorities.

Darknet has remained largely absent from social media and hate-related studies. In fact, most of the very little research that exist about Darknet has focused on drug
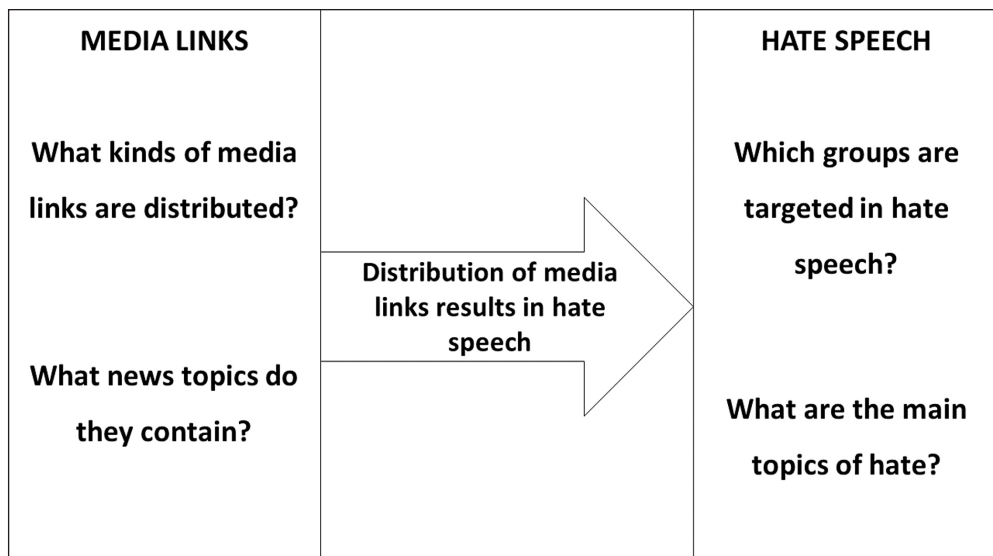

Figure 1. Conceptual model of research.

sales (see van Hout & Bingham 2013; Martin 2014) and other underground markets (Pace 2017). Others emphasise technological issues (see Spitters, Verbruggen, & van Staalduinen 2014) and terrorism (Weimann 2016b) or focus purely on understanding the content and history of Darknet in general (see Bartlett 2015).

Thus, in addition to assessing the thematic contents and targets of hate, two more specific inputs are found in the methodologies. Firstly, the dialogues are examined in a relation to distributed media articles and their topics. Secondly, the comments are examined in a location, which remains largely unknown to social science research: Darknet's message board (or discussion forum).

Darknet

Darknet (also known as TOR-network, Dark Web or Dark Net) is located outside what we consider "the normal internet" and requires downloading a specific TOR-browser (also known as The Onion Router). With the TOR-browser a person has access to both the normal internet (also known as Clear Net or Surface Web) and Darknet (see Figure 2). The pages in Darknet are *not* accessible through the normal internet browsers (e.g. Firefox, Chrome) and only exist in Darknet.

Darknet was created by the U.S. Naval Research Laboratory Project to communicate anonymously online but is currently financed by different civil groups
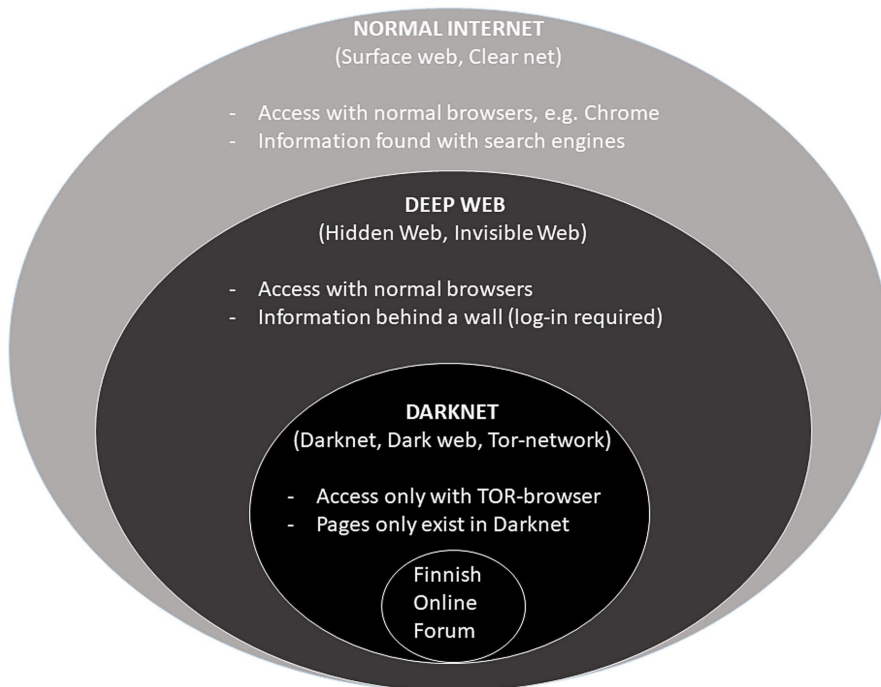

Figure 2. Conceptual model of Darknet research environment.

and the U.S. government (Bartlett 2015; Weimann 2016b). Darknet browser aims to conceal the identities of its users (Spitters, Verbruggen, & van Staalduinen 2014) by allowing the users to connect to Darknet anonymously. This makes it difficult to track any online activities in Darknet (Rudesill, Caverlee & Sui 2015). Anonymity makes it an ideal ground for activists to express their opinions freely on specific sites. Though it permits illegal activities to be conducted under the anonymity, Darknet also allows journalists and activists promoting democracy and civil rights to communicate without the threat of censorship or captivity (Weimann 2016a).

Darknet is often confused with Deep Web (or Hidden Web, Invisible Web). Deep Web is accessible with normal browsers just like the normal internet. However, the pages require passwords and login information, which means that the content is usually not found with mainstream search engines.

It is estimated that the size of the Deep Web is many times bigger than the normal surface web and in fact most of the online information is hidden. These kinds of pages are for example online banking accounts and different databases. Google is estimated to be able to index only about 4-16 per cent of the online pages and the rest remain in the hidden world (Rudesill, Caverlee & Sui 2015). Though none of these "webs" are illegal per se and all of them can be accessed by any web user, it is Darknet with its anonymity that draws mostly illegal activities. Illegal activities refer to mainly drugs (and other) sales and organised crime but there are also many forums, which engage in discussions that can be

labelled illegal (planning terrorism attacks, aggravating racial attacks or participating in hate speech).

When conducting research in virtual communities, it is important to understand the history of the social space and the virtual world, where the research takes place (see Boellstorff, Nardi, Pearce & Taylor 2012). The Finnish discussion forum used in this research was established in 2014 in Darknet, which in relation to other webpages in Darknet can be considered a reasonable time to be online and active. Typical features of the Darknet include the instability of the pages as they are often shut down by authorities or moved elsewhere by moderators due to security concerns. As a result, the pages may become extinct or simply change their web addresses quite quickly.

The discussion forum examined here is not an *organized hate group*, which deliberately, with a narrow cause, distinct themselves from the others. It is simply a discussion forum in Finnish in an *extreme location*. However, hate speech is not only expressed by organized hate groups but also by the less visible ordinary people (Keipi, Näsi, Oskanen & Väsänen 2017), for which reason also general discussion forums, or message boards, generate fruitful material for examining hate speech.

The forum hosts over one million threads and is divided into different themes varying from news and politics to drugs, news, sex and IT-security. It is used by roughly 250 people. There are about five million people who speak Finnish as a first language (Official Statistics of Finland 2015) and considering the nature and the location of the site, this number seems plausible.

We must be reminded that research inside Darknet remains largely absent and very little is known about its users as well as the content (see also Maras 2014), therefore this article can be considered a very preliminary study on Darknet.

Materials and methods

As the aim for the paper is to examine what kinds of themes emerge when talking about asylum seekers in Darknet, the paper uses the dialogues generated in the Media & News –room. This "room" was seen to provide the most present, diverse and suitable discussions compared with other discussion "rooms". The research began by collecting all the news topics that had appeared under the Media & News –section since the beginning of the forum.

The examination of forum comments uses conventional content analysis, where the aim is to categorise the discussions derived from the text. The analysis was inductive, as no prior categories (or themes) were pre-set before the analysis (see Hsieh & Shannon 2005). As the analysis is conducted in themes, its reveals the border groupings of hate speech (macro-level) rather than its small nuances (micro-level) (Erjavec & Kovacic 2012). Often in content analysis the objective is to achieve a summarised explanation of the phenomenon by using emerging categories or creating conceptual models (Elo & Kyngäs 2008) rather than focus on small fine distinctions.

Usually, the threads begin with one news link (here understood as a news topic), and then proceeds with comments and further links circling the topic. The entire Media & News –section contained 165 separate news topics. Of these, 39 news topics with their subsequent 793 comments and 110 links were connected to asylum seekers and included in the material. By far, most of the comments that discusses asylum seekers (or related processes) included slander, defaming, threatening or derogatory speech. There were only very few comments with counter arguments. As such, this paper examines those negative comments.

Of these 39 news topics, that resulted in negative comments about asylum seekers (and related processes) most were related to immigration, immigrants or asylum seekers (28% of the news stories). Other news topics were linked with violence in the news (23%), politics and official authorities (23%), racism or extreme right (21%), jihadism (10%), technology (8%) and the media (8%). Some news was classified in multiple categories as there were several main themes in the news topic, which is why the overall percentage is over 100%.

Darknet has the reputation of being a breeding ground without rules for illegal activities varying from radical activism to terrorism and drug trafficking. However, it is evident from the discussions that the forum hosted an entire section related to immigration until it was removed by the moderator in late 2015 since the messages contained "forbidden material" such as names and addresses of people. The materials used in this research are collected after the censorship and thus present the results after the moderator's editing process and the current mode of "forum's reality".

Results

Culture and violence

The results show that the distributed news links assert a biased picture of immigration by focusing on negative story lines (see also van Dijk 2004). The analysis of comments that followed the news links produced two larger categories. Firstly, the discussions about asylum seekers were targeted either towards the "outsiders" (the asylum seekers themselves) or "the insiders", who facilitated the asylum process (pro-multiculturalists, authorities and the media).

The main arguments in the threads are rooted in fear produced by several perceived threats generated by asylum seekers. It's not only about the intangible issues of cultural identity but also to some extent about more tangible issues such as ethnicity (e.g. biological features). The dialogues show an increasing need to protect what is seen as "national treasures" such as economic welfare and cultural identity (see also Van Houtum & Van Naerssen 2002).

The Iraqis, Somalis and the Muslims are often grouped into one condescending "brutal and primitive" other making hardly any distinction between nationalities, ethnicities or religions. This overgeneralisation is very typical in othering arguments (see Creutz-Kämppi 2008). These groups are referred to in violent and crime-related contexts but never in situations where they do something correct furthering the negative image of them. When hate speech is addressed towards the in-group members (other Finns), as is the case here, it's often targeted in a way that produces or activates negative mental models about minorities (see van Dijk 1993a). The primitiveness is explicitly expressed in the texts in a derogatory way such as "women stoners" or "camel thieves". The violent tendencies are repeated in the wordings of "head choppers", "rapists" and "mass murderers".

The fear of violence also includes the rhetoric of war, which is present in two ways. Firstly, the government actions are perceived too subtle for which reason more aggressive, and at times a military-style approach is demanded. This underlines the perceived gravity of the situation and works as a stimulus for further action (Berntzen & Sandberg 2014). Secondly, there is a regular referencing to an "invasion" and "invaders" (see also Cahill 2009). These wordings portray "them" as attackers and "us" as defenders (see Billig 1995), which is a way to legitimise own potential violent actions and hate speech. This kind of military metaphor is typical in racist dialogues along with referencing to the *amount* of asylum seekers as "floods", "avalanches" or "waves" (van Dijk 2004). The concept of volume is also present in some of the comments.

In terms of intangible Finnish cultural issues such as the integrity, working moral and the introvert culture are mentioned in a way that creates a contrast where Finns are the defenders of their own culture. Muslims and Finland are portrayed as mutually exclusive, where the host sets suitable standards for the asylum seekers (see also Fozdar & Low 2015). Asylum seekers are also used as a synonym for Muslims and vice versa. In addition to being a threat to Finnish values (and hence the perceived "right values"), Islam is also presented as a concrete physical threat (cf. Kreutz-Kämppi 2008). It is feared that the Muslims

will bring their "violent ways" into to the Finnish society, mostly in the form of rape.

What is Finnishness, on the other hand, also contains the identification of "the other" (what Finland is "not") through difference and distinctiveness (see de Cillia, Resigl & Wodak 1999). As such, by defining the "other", you also simultaneously define yourself (Mäkinen 2016). According to Denzin (1999) though cyber text is not equal to spoken word as it can be edited before sending, it is still immediate, contextual and rooted in an actual situation. The dialogues that take place in the discussion forums, can be considered signs of cultural performances occurring in certain time and place.

In this forum, however, excluding the "violent other" doesn't stop encouraging violent acts *towards* asylum seekers, but rather justifies it. Though the encouragement for violent actions is noticeable in this online forum, there is very little discussion about any concrete (mass) action. It may well be that those conversations take place somewhere else (e.g. in chat or surface web) or speaking about it is enough. Conway (2017) argues that the role of social media is perhaps not as great in radicalisation process as thought, or at least not so well understood as claimed. She states that this "venting" may well be enough for some participants, who will not then engage in any further action. This is supported by Borum (2011), who states that most of the people who embrace violent justifications, do not actually engage in radical, non-institutional, actions. However, *speech* is also recognised as an *act* in language studies (see e.g. Searle 1975) and *action* is also the base for EU's policy document as well as

in Finnish law on ethnic agitation. Hence, it can be argued that the people in online forums have already taken hate-related *action* through hate speech.

There are indications of how othering is based on cultural factors through value-based claims of superiority. The cultural practises of othering segregates people based on their customs, whereas the biological equivalent prioritises differentiation based on ethnicities and biological markers (Durrheim & Dixon 2000). For example, the standards for any kind of suitable *behaviour* and *action* is set by the people inside the in-group (see also Fozdar & Low 2015). As such, this is based mostly on cultural indicators than on racial factors, which is present in the dialogues where Iraqis and Somalis grouped into one group of "violent", "lazy" and "Muslims".

The cultural argument of othering provides flexibility to argue both *against* and *for* certain cultural features without the rigidity of biological factors. For example, if "introvert Finnish culture" is seen worth preserving, it rejects any trait that is against it simultaneously extending beyond the biological discourse in othering (see also Durrheim & Dixon 2000). However, biological othering is also present, though to a lesser extent.

When it comes to the targets of hate speech, it is notable that there is a complete lack of mentioning of Afghans even though they were the second largest group of asylum seekers arriving in Finland in 2015. The reasons for this could vary. The media exposure of Iraqis has been more extensive in the Finnish media compared with the Afghans, so it is only logical that they gain more attention also

in social media. Likewise, it may well be that the Afghans are "regrouped" with Iraqis as "Muslims" because of *cultural othering* and perceived as "the same".

"Economic burdens" and "enemies within"

The arrival of asylum seekers occurred at the same time as the government announced more significant budgetary cuts. The economic situation of Finland is often present in the arguments with reflections on the current social welfare cuts. These issues have resulted in several demonstrations in the fall 2015 and have continued since till late 2017. Similar issues are found in the neighbouring Sweden, another welfare state, where the anti-immigration movement claims that the imagined homogenous community needs to remain intact from too many immigrants from remote exotic locations. This creates hate and antagonism between those who see themselves as being entitled (national and native) to the welfare privileges and those who do not (non-natives) (Hellström, Nilsson, & Stoltz 2012). What is notable is the fact that even though the economic situation was not the main topic of any news links provided, the discussions often ended up deliberating asylum seekers as "economic burdens".

In the comments, the economic situation is combined with the morality and order of the Finnish society, which is perceived to be in danger. It is seen that the "law and the regulation abiding citizens" will lose their lifestyles as asylum seekers take shortcuts. The argument, where the welfare money for foreigners is seen unjustified when the "natives" remain in need, is a common claim among right-wing supporters in the Nordic welfare states (Nordensvards & Ketola 2015).

The above-mentioned threats are mostly seen as coming from the "outside" but they are perceived to be *accommodated* from the inside. This study has similarities of those done on populist radical right discourses, which indicate the construction of common enemies in two ways: the enemies can be outsiders or insiders (see Sakki & Pettersson 2015). The "enemies from the outside" in this study are perceived to be asylum seekers and immigrants, who threaten "the Finnishness" through cultural change, being burdens to national economy and imported violence. However, the results also indicate the existence of "enemies within", who are the authorities in the form of police forces, the politicians, the liberals, pro-multiculturalists (implied left) and occasionally the media. About 23% of the news topics, which resulted in hateful comments, were related to politics and official authorities in relation to asylum processes. This kind of hate speech falls under the politically-charged and -orientated hate speech.

The juxtaposition against the "enemies within" is often based on wordings such as "deception", "lying" and "conspiracy", which results in perceived ineffectiveness to resolve the issues concerning asylum seekers quickly. It is also the actions of the police and the statements by the politicians in combination of allegedly weak legislation, that make the authorities the adversaries. These kinds of conspiracy theories are common among extremists, as they provide an easy solution, or a comprehensive

explanation, to disturbing occurrences that are otherwise difficult to make sense of (van Prooijen, Krowel & Pollet 2015).

Hate speech against the politicians and the police indicates that the participants believe that the state hasn't got the phenomenon under control. However, in addition to this, the dialogues show that there are *expectations* for the state to secure the situation. This points towards a certain level of trust and corroborates with Hope's (2001) understandings of security and risk avoidance. In modern societies, it is understood that the government has the key role in providing everyday safety. If they fail in that role, it may lead to public's frustration with the government and to other *private* ways of contributing to the safety deficit. Emphasising the safety gap is also a way to further legitimise their own (violent) actions or at least own violent speech. This has already resulted in several private right-wing groups patrolling the streets in many cities in Finland in the name of security (i.e. Soldiers of Odin)

The hate towards pro-multiculturalists is present when people are claimed to be "excessively" tolerant and consequently unpatriotic. This portrays broad-mindedness and patriotism as mutually exclusive. People promoting open-mindedness are consistently referred to as "leftist green" (or *anarchists, hipsters, hippies, leaning left*) and simultaneously implying "wrong" political convictions. In the left-wing politics aid is often seen an important part of responsibilities of a welfare state in a global environment (Thérien 2002) and this is also how the pro-multiculturalists are often portrayed. This is "excessive openness" and "money-spending" in form of aid and results in

the fear of losing the cultural identity and welfare state and increases rifts within the society.

Darknet (dis)connected

The site does not have a very strong international presence. This contradicts with the results found in other studies. According to for example Gerstenfield, Grant and Chiang (2003) the internet forums may in fact be powerful tools in reaching international audience. The discussion forum hosts a section in English, but it is practically non-active. The news is mostly about incidents in Finland though some of the news obviously link the phenomenon into a wider international phenomenon. Only 18% of the *topics* were related to events abroad and 25% of the actual *links* were international. As such, the forum is to some extent connected to global politics and the world through foreign media links but also by referencing global politics in the discussions. Other countries are occasionally used to enforce and exemplify negative messages of immigration and there are irregular references to European-wide historical events (e.g. Hitler).

Though only about the fifth of the news were directly linked to international news, this is not to say that the commentators don't understand the linkages between the events abroad and in Finland. However, what sparks the most interest, concern and further dialogue in the forum, is when the international phenomenon is *localised*. This happens, in this instance, when the unrest in Middle-East and Africa is manifested in local and regional contexts through the increasing news about asylum seekers

in their own neighbourhoods. This is when the abstract war "invades" people's own space and becomes a source of fear and important enough to take (at least speech-related) *action*. Better and more conforming arguments are presented and several links within one topic act mostly as confirmation and further evidence rather than a counter-argument. Meddaugh and Kay (2009) call this "reasonable racism", where by importing quality publications (e.g. Wall Street Journal) to extremist sites, the participants aim to portray the white supremacist doctrine as research-based factual "truth". Though there are attempts to rationalise arguments in this forum, the quality of links remains poor as many of the links (approx. 50%) were from Finnish tabloids or other light sources (i.e. blogs). Though media is criticised as biased, "reasonable racism" is present in this study by focusing more on the substantiating the story through a multitude of links rather than through the quality (links varying between one and 17 per topic).

This study has similarities with other research conducted in Finland, which indicate how media links can convey hostile messages towards immigrants without having to express private opinions (Sakki & Pettersson 2015). In such way, media is used as an instrument to legitimize hate talk as well as to partially distance yourself away from it by "letting the link to talk for itself". This link between news stories and hate speech also raises questions about media's responsibility in portraying immigration, though that discussion extends beyond the scope of this paper.

In the wider framework, the forum dialogues follow the lines of "geopolitical othering" found in the construction of European identity. This, according to Diez (2004) means that in recent decades Europe has intensified Europe as a territory, which holds its identity by securing itself from the threats of Islam and illegal immigration (see also Wodak & Bukala 2015). Islamophobia, where the religion is labelled as violent and backward, is part of wider othering practises of Islam (Creutz-Kämppi 2008) and clearly visible in the discussion forum. The securitisation process of Europe has strengthened during the recent years due to the increase in asylum seekers as well as terrorist attacks. Growing Islamophobia in Europe is also the part of the new wave of cultural, rather than ethnic othering that has increased since 9/11 attacks (see Allen 2005). However, in addition to the thematic results of *security (imported violence)* and *identity (cultural factors)* as grounds for exclusion, the role of *economic reasoning* is growing as a background argument for othering in a European-wide context (see Wodak & Boukala 2015) as well as found in this platform.

Though cyberspace allows people to dislocate themselves from the boundaries of national state, it also enhances and amplifies nationalism. As such, the supranational environment of the web can be to some extent questioned. Discussion forums held in languages spoken by only some millions (e.g. Finnish) filters participants automatically (see Soffer 2013). Cyberspace allows people to interact about special issues with speed and anonymity, which may accelerate and further the cause that is rooted in the actual world and physical territory. It is not the end of the (physical) geography, but it rather allows borderless

activities to enhance the perceptions about the national borders, nationalism and nationhood.

In a wider framework this article has contributed to cyber-nationalism, which in this paper has been examined through online hate speech. Specifically, this research contributed to thematic contents and targets of online hate speech in a less known environment, Darknet. Studying these issues in Darknet has revealed certain site-specific issues. Darknet is often considered a location where "everything goes" but it is worth noting, that though the location of this forum is extreme, the themes related to hate follow those found on surface web (e.g. Awan 2014; Cammaerts 2009; Erjavec & Kovacic 2012; Meddaugh & Kay 2009; Sakki & Pettersson 2015).

Furthermore, there are some regulations even inside the Darknet's discussion forum bearing in mind that the regulating still leaves room for active hate speech. Moderators' editing processes are a common activity in Surface Web and have, to some extent, attracted academic attention (e.g. Hughey & Daniels 2013) but they are less known in Darknet. As such, the site acts at times as a normal discussion forum, where some comments are restricted, but in addition as a hate group, where hateful comments are fostered. This shows that even Darknet has some rules and censorship. This again conforms to the results of Benwell and Stokoe (2006), who discovered that the lack of relevant real-world contexts (such as non-verbal cues) means that monitoring and regulating virtual communities is often stricter than in a real-life situation. As such, virtual identities and discussions are not

necessarily always freer than those of the real world.

So even though Darknet is nestled beyond the regulating bodies and thus allowing extreme opinions to be expressed, there are some elements of self-control. These issues provide valuable knowledge about the functions of Darknet and about the environment, which is active and outside the normal reach of authorities.

Conclusions

Due to the increasing global mobility, the borders between rightful boundaries of what is seemed as "ours" and hence "not theirs", "self" and "other", have blurred (see Van Houtum & Van Naerssen 2002). This has increased the construction of "otherness", and the division between "us" and "them". The construction of otherness is present everywhere in the society but is especially active online. Cyber space allows like-minded people to connect with each other in virtual communities, such as in the Darknet discussion forum, to express their opinions freely.

The aim for this article was to understand the emerging themes when discussing asylum seekers in Darknet. Media and news articles are used as instruments to endorse and advocate hate speech and emphasise negative storylines rather than to promote tolerance (see Figure 3). There are efforts to legitimize hate speech through the perceived "fact-findings" in the media, which is used to endorse the rationales for three underlying topics related to fear: *the violent other*, the other as *a threat to the culture*

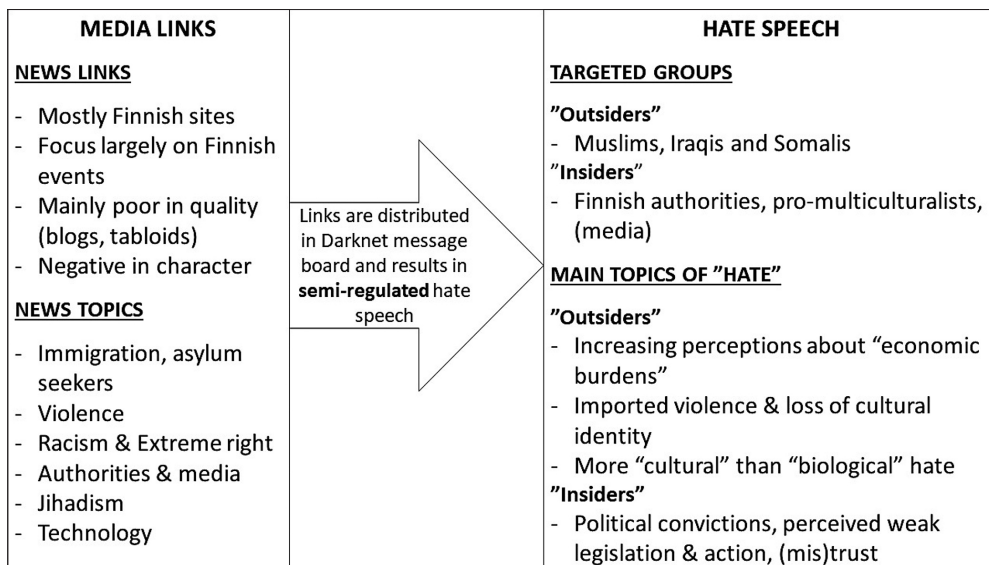| MEDIA LINKS		HATE SPEECH
NEWS LINKS - Mostly Finnish sites - Focus largely on Finnish events - Mainly poor in quality (blogs, tabloids) - Negative in character **NEWS TOPICS** - Immigration, asylum seekers - Violence - Racism & Extreme right - Authorities & media - Jihadism - Technology	Links are distributed in Darknet message board and results in **semi-regulated** hate speech	**TARGETED GROUPS** "Outsiders" - Muslims, Iraqis and Somalis "Insiders" - Finnish authorities, pro-multiculturalists, (media) **MAIN TOPICS OF "HATE"** "Outsiders" - Increasing perceptions about "economic burdens" - Imported violence & loss of cultural identity - More "cultural" than "biological" hate "Insiders" - Political convictions, perceived weak legislation & action, (mis)trust

Figure 3. Hate speech in Darknet facilitated by media articles.

and as *an economic burden*. These themes are also in place in the European-wide practises of othering, where the economic reasoning is a growing source of criticism related to immigration. These issues gain power mostly from the domestic media thus binding the international events with local, regional and national events.

The asylum seekers represent an external threat ("an invasion") to the seemingly superior, non-violent and wealthier culture. It results in in-group and out-group dynamics, where the principle is to safeguard the in-group's welfare and safety by over-simplifying the negative characteristics of the out-group. What needs protecting is presented as pure and good and the threats as barbaric and evil. These "threats to stability" at the "time of the war" are then supposedly fostered and accommodated by the weak authorities, the growing pro-multicultural movement and partially biased media. These perceived weaknesses are further seen as threats and understood as justifications for their own hate-speech and encouragement for violent acts.

This paper has also provided more information about the social media inside Darknet. Although Darknet remains a channel to hide your identity thus being a platform for illegal activities, there are some restrictions that guide the dialogues. This dismantles, to some extent, the belief that it is the place where everything is allowed. However, this has been a very preliminary study concerning Darknet and further studies concerning this extreme location is needed especially in social sciences. Further studies could focus, for example, on why and what kinds of people use Darknet and to what purpose?

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