Everyday security and demonstrations in the border towns of Lappeenranta and Tornio

Eeva-Kaisa Prokkola, Vilhelmiina Vainikka and Eva Kaján
Geography Research Unit, University of Oulu

Background

The much publicized European "refugee crisis" has generated local impacts on the Finnish society and put pressure on both Finnish-Swedish and Finnish-Russian borders. Yet, the relevant borders and dividing lines are not merely between these states, but increasingly between social groupings inside Finland. Rapid societal structural changes, the recent and ongoing flow of immigration, as well as the new non-institutional forms of communication and participation through the social media, have given rise to societal conflicts and mistrust among different groups of people. Some of these groups have become more radical. In this paper, we are focusing on the everyday securities and how they are perceived locally in the two border towns of Lappeenranta and Tornio. We examine whether the border closing debate and demonstrations have had an impact on the everyday security at the Finnish-Swedish and Finnish-Russian border areas. Additionally, the paper examines what kinds of conceptions of inequality, inclusion and exclusion are evoked in all of Finland.

State border areas are sites where the experiences of everyday security can become very tangibly interlinked with wider geopolitical relations and territorial security. In 2015, both the Finnish-Swedish and the northernmost Finnish-Russian border areas became sites through which thousands of asylum seekers arrived in the country. This has led to some groups demanding "border closures" even at the EU's internal Finnish-Swedish border. Furthermore, the increasing number of asylum seekers has created conflicts among those locals, who wish firmer border controls and those, who highlight the moral responsibility to help refugees. By studying the experiences and attitudes of borderland people, we can gain more understanding on how wider geopolitical insecurities and conflicts are experienced at the local level.

Research problem, materials and methods

The 2015 migration influx fittingly illustrated that border cities are the key locations and nodes of global connectedness, places where global flows and state regulation come together. The two border towns, Lappeenranta and Tornio, were chosen as the case study areas because those are seen to provide an interesting study area from the perspective of nationalism and conflicts over national identity. This is since state security and immigration are seen to be particularly visible in the border areas (Williams & Boyce 2013). The border

town Tornio provides an interesting place for examining the debate of borders and migration because it formed the key route for the asylum seekers arriving in Finland and a specific arena for state intervention and social mobilization. The situation at the Tornio border crossing point was constantly discussed in the national broadcasts and the anti-immigration "close the border" - demonstrations gained international visibility, especially in Sweden. Lappeenranta was chosen as a case study area because of its location at the Finnish-Russian border area and a relatively high number of Russian population. In Lappeenranta, there were no major migration-related demonstrations in 2016 and 2015. The border towns represent the eastern and western border areas and borderland populations, and it is therefore interesting to compare the findings of the surveys from the two regions.

The study is based on a postal survey that was conducted in the spring of 2016 to map the attitudes towards the border, inequality and demonstrations in Lappeenranta and Tornio. The survey that was posted to 1 600 inhabitants in Lappeenranta and 1 000 inhabitants in Tornio. The selection of the respondents is based on a random sample that was ordered from the Finnish Population Register Centre. In total, we received 589 responses from Lappeenranta and 401 from Tornio. The overall response rate of the surveys was 38 %. In addition to background information of the respondents, Likert scale (strongly agree, agree, neither agree or disagree, disagree, strongly disagree, can´t choose) was employed to measure the attitudes and opinions of the people. The data from Lappeenranta and Tornio are described and analyzed with the help of IBM SPSS Statistics (descriptive statistics; cross tabulation and frequencies). The examination of the respondent background information shows that in both border towns' there are more female respondents than males. In Lappeenranta, 46,7 % of the respondents are male and 53 % female whereas in Tornio 46,9 % are male and 52,9 % female. In Lappeenranta, the response rate of younger people is considerable higher than in Tornio (Table 1).

Results and analysis

Experienced security and inequality in the border towns

The study shows that Lappeenranta and Tornio are considered by the respondents as a safe place to live (Table 2). In both towns, 90 % agree with the statement that their hometown is safe and only less than 2 % consider it insecure. In Lappeenranta 41,5 % of the respondents totally agree and 49,6 % agree with the statement that their hometown is safe. In Tornio 59,9 % totally agree and 33,2 % agree that their town is safe.

When asked about the visibility of inequality in their hometowns the responses were highly divided in both towns (Figures 1 and 2). In Lappeenranta, 33 % of the respondents strongly agree or agree that inequality is visible in their hometown while 27 % disagree. In Tornio, 30 % strongly agree or agree with the statement

that inequality is visible in their hometown and 30 % disagree. In Lappeenranta 29 % and in Tornio 25 % could not say whether it is visible or not. In both towns, majority considers inequality as a threat at the national scale, the exact number being 61,1 % in Lappeenranta and 65,6 % in Tornio (Table 3).

Table 1. The age groups of the respondents.

	Lappeenranta		Tornio	
Age	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
18-39	123	20,9	38	9,5
40-49	60	10,2	58	14,5
50-59	100	17,0	80	20,0
60-69	159	27,0	138	34,4
70-80	143	24,3	83	20,7
Missing	4	0,7	4	1,0
Total	**589**	**100,0**	**401**	**100,0**

Table 2. My hometown is secure (Question 11_7 *Asuinkaupunkini on turvallinen*).

	Lappeenranta		Tornio	
Option	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Strongly agree	242	39,1	240	59,9
Agree	286	46,2	133	33,2
Neither agree or disagree	33	5,3	13	3,2
Disagree	15	2,4	6	1,5
Strongly disagree	4	0,6	2	0,5
Can´t choose	3	0,5	2	0,5
Missing	36	5,8	5	1,2
Total	**619**	**100,0**	**401**	**100,0**

Inequality is visible in my locality

[Bar chart showing frequency distribution with categories on the x-axis and values from 0 to 180 on the y-axis:
- Strongly agree: ~45
- Agree: ~150
- Neither agree or disagree: ~170
- Disagree: ~117
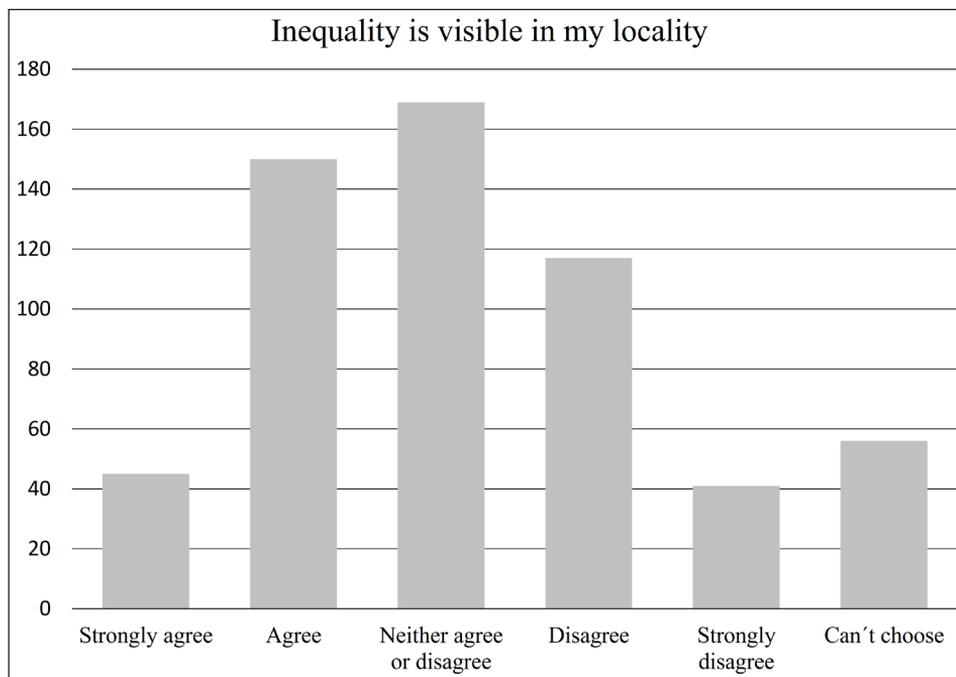- Strongly disagree: ~41
- Can't choose: ~56]

Figure 1. In Lappeenranta, the opinions about the visibility of inequality are divided (Question 11_13 *Eriarvoistuminen näkyy omalla asuinalueellani*).

Table 3. Inequality is a threat to Finland's security (Question 11_14 *Eriarvoistuminen on uhka Suomen turvallisuudelle*).

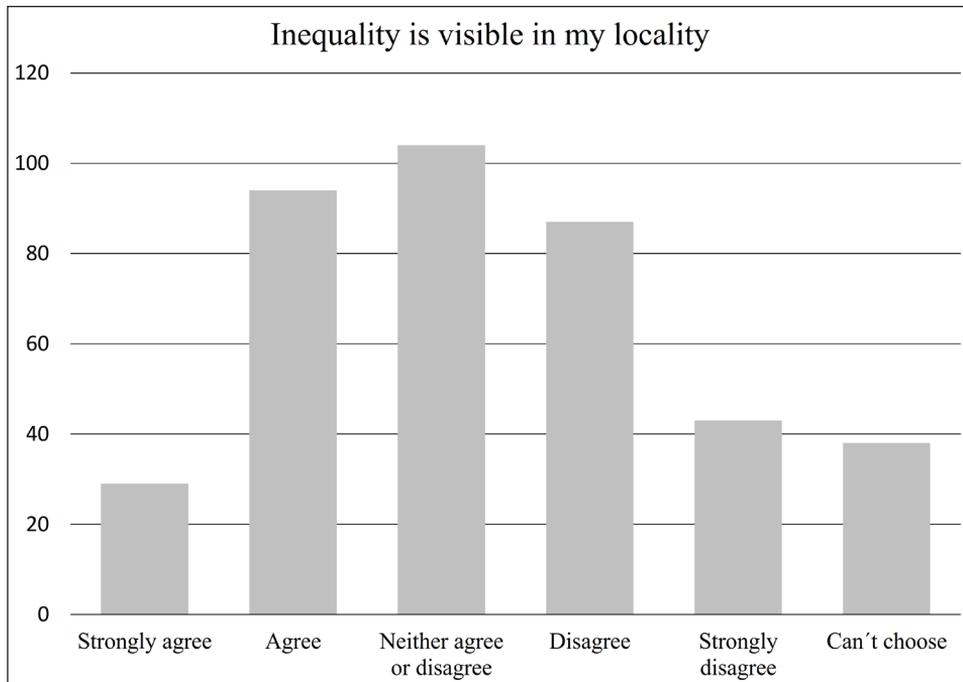|	Lappeenranta		Tornio	
Option	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Strongly agree	122	19,7	95	23,7
Agree	256	41,4	168	41,9
Neither agree or disagree	94	15,2	63	15,7
Disagree	49	7,9	16	4,0
Strongly disagree	12	1,9	12	3,0
Can't choose	48	7,8	39	9,7
Missing	38	6,1	8	2,0
Total	**619**	**100,0**	**401**	**100,0**

Figure 2. In Tornio, perceptually more people strongly agree that inequality is visible in their locality than in Lappeenranta (Question 11_13 *Eriarvoistuminen näkyy omalla asuinalueellani*).

Demonstrations and security

The questionnaire included a separate demonstrations- questions part. The first question (12/1 *Alueella on järjestetty maahanmuuttoon liittyviä mielenosoituksia*) measured the respondent knowledge of the organized demonstrations in the region. It is interesting that in Tornio where demonstrations for and against immigration received national and international media attention, a fifth of the respondents answered "No" or "I don't know" to the question whether there have been demonstrations about immigration. In Lappeenranta, only 2 % answered that there have been demonstrations in the region.

The examination of the responses to the question (Figures 3 and 4), whether demonstrations are an efficient way to express opinions, points out some differences between the younger and older generations and between the south-eastern and western towns. The findings suggest that in Tornio older generations are more skeptical about the impact of demonstrations than younger people. In Lappeenranta, all age groups seem to pose a relatively positive understanding of the impact of demonstrations. The most negative attitude towards the public demonstrations in Tornio is found from the age group 60–69. The findings suggest that the numerous demonstrations for and
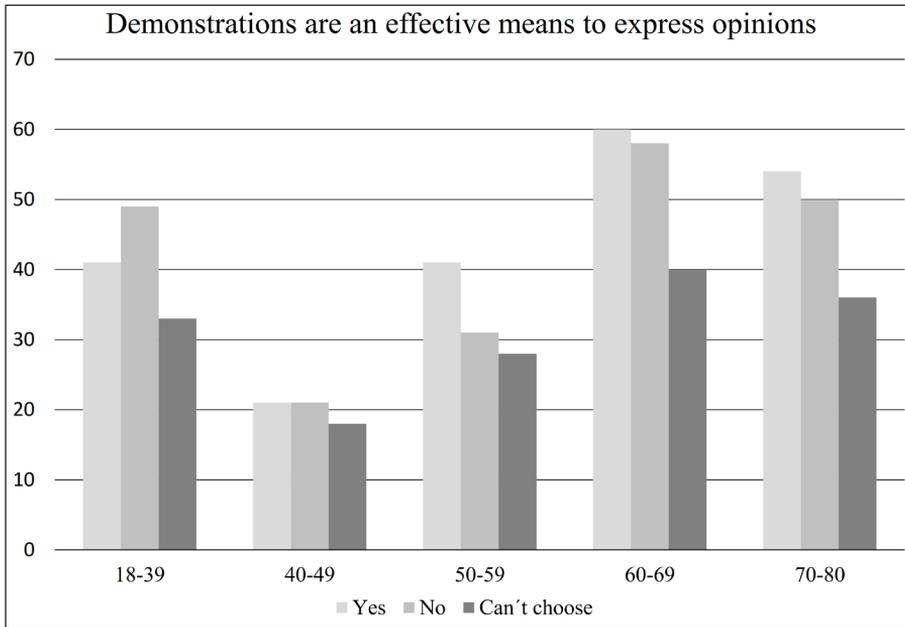
Figure 3. In Lappeenranta, the older generations have more positive attitude towards demonstrations than young people (Question 12_2 *Mielenosoitukset ovat tehokas väline mielipiteen ilmaisemiseksi*).
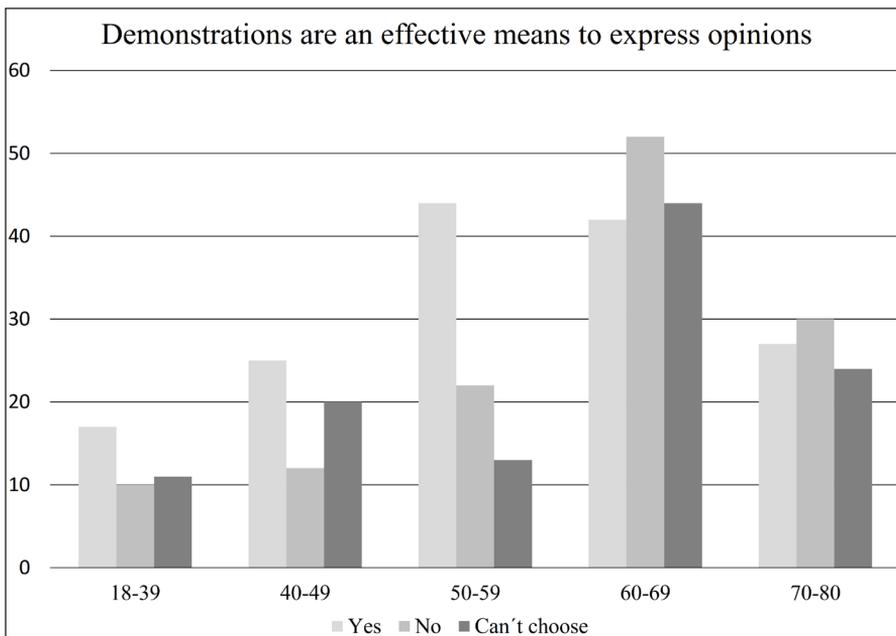

Figure 4. In Tornio, the opinions towards demonstrations vary between the age groups (Question 12_2 *Mielenosoitukset ovat tehokas väline mielipiteen ilmaisemiseksi*).

Table 4. The willingness to participate in a migration-related demonstration in Lappeenranta (Question 12_3 *Olen valmis osallistumaan maahanmuuttoa koskevaan mielenilmaukseen*).

Age	Yes	No	Can´t say	Total
18-39	17	87	19	123
40-49	7	41	12	60
50-59	6	81	13	100
60-69	13	110	35	158
70-80	6	123	12	141
Total	**49**	**442**	**91**	**582**

Table 5. The willingness to participate in a migration-related demonstration in Tornio (Question 12_3 *Olen valmis osallistumaan maahanmuuttoa koskevaan mielenilmaukseen*).

Age	Yes	No	Can´t say	Total
18-39	5	22	11	38
40-49	7	39	12	58
50-59	13	50	17	80
60-69	9	105	24	138
70-80	5	123	12	141
Total	**39**	**282**	**75**	**396**

against migration in Tornio have affected the perceptions of older generations, in particular.

The questionnaire points out that in Lappeenranta younger people are more willing to participate in a migration-related demonstration than older generations. In Tornio, there is more interest to take part in demonstrations in the age group 50–59 than in other groups (Tables 4 and 5). When asked whether they had actually participated in a demonstration, only few percent of the respondents answered "Yes" (1 % in Lappeenranta 1 % and 2 % in Tornio) (Question 12/4 *Olen osallistunut mielenosoitukseen*). The results suggest that in Lappeenranta younger generations are more interested in participating in a demonstration that older generations, while in Tornio the difference between the age groups is not that significant.

When asked about the impacts of demonstrations on the security environment (Table 6, Question 12/5 *Kuinka mielenilmaisut ovat vaikuttaneet turvallisuusympäristöönne?*), the majority did not see any impact in either of the towns. Yet, in Tornio 15 % saw that the demonstrations had a negative influence their security environment and 6 % a saw that the impact was positive. The shares of

43

positive and negative experiences are higher than in Lappeenranta where only 5 % had negative and 2 % positive experience. The activities of extremist movements were experienced as a threat by nearly 74 % of the respondents in Tornio and 67 % in Lappeenranta (Table 7, Question 11/12 *Ääriliikkeiden toiminta tuntuu minusta uhkaavalta*).

Influence, conflicts and discussion: perceptions towards demonstrations

Respondents were also asked to write openly about their thoughts and opinions about the demonstrations and their impact on the security environment. The number of respondents for open questions in Tornio was 16 % (64/401) and in Lappeenranta

Table 6. The experienced impact of demonstrations on security environment (Question 12_5 *Kuinka mielenilmaisut ovat vaikuttaneet turvallisuusympäristöönne?*).

Option	Lappeenranta		Tornio	
	Frequency	**Percent**	**Frequency**	**Percent**
Can´t say	532	90,3	308	76,8
Positively	13	2,2	23	5,7
Negatively	32	5,4	61	15,2
Missing	12	2,0	9	2,2
Total	**589**	**100,0**	**401**	**100,0**

Table 7. Many people are worried about the activities of extremist movements in the border towns (Question 11_12 *Ääriliikkeiden toiminta tuntuu minusta uhkaavalta*).

Option	Lappeenranta		Tornio	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Strongly agree	212	34,2	170	42,4
Agree	203	32,8	126	31,4
Neither agree or disagree	82	13,2	42	10,5
Disagree	44	7,1	28	7,0
Strongly disagree	18	2,9	16	4,0
Can´t choose	20	3,2	13	3,2
Missing	40	6,5	6	1,5
Total	**619**	**100,0**	**401**	**100,0**

6,5 % (38/589). Of these respondents, females were the majority in Tornio with 53 % (Tornio 30 male, 34 females) and male respondents in Lappeenranta with 66 % (25 males, 13 females). The response rate suggests that the topic of demonstrations was considered more significant and emotionally loaded in Tornio. Moreover, the rate indicates that the majority of respondents in both towns did not fill the space provided for the open answers. There were 6 respondents in Lappeenranta and 18 in Tornio, who answered that they did not see changes in their security environment after demonstrations. We analyzed the responses on security impacts and organized them into broad thematic categories. The categories are interlinked, and one response can belong to more than one thematic category (Table 8).

Each category includes a rather multi-dimensional content. In general, the Conflict category represents the down sides of the demonstrations: growing confrontation and extreme opinions as well as violence and threatening behavior by the demonstrators, which were not accepted by the respondents.

The Influence category addresses the effects of demonstrations. Bringing issues to a broader attention was especially reflected in the answers by Lappeenranta residents, but also by some Tornio residents. The experienced impacts were discussed especially in Tornio, in the form of stricter border control and management of large numbers of refugees. A couple of respondents in Lappeenranta linked demonstrations to civil rights.

The Us and them –relations category discusses different groups of people within the Finnish society or more broadly. The largest sub-category "othering demonstrators" concentrated in Tornio, on arguments that most of the demonstrators had come from other parts of Finland and brought negative image to Tornio with their behavior. In Lappeenranta, the perspective was more general and demonstrations were considered to be a problem in other regions. Some respondents did not identify themselves as demonstrators or had not yet experienced security threats in the "me and demonstrations" sub-category. In addition, some respondents positioned themselves as "us against immigration" considering the threats brought by outsiders (immigrants, refugees) to women and girls especially and pinpointing that there are unprivileged people also in Finland that should be helped before. A couple of responses stood "for immigration" and the importance of immigration or internationalization to Finnish society.

Discussion

The south-eastern and western border areas in Finland are seen to represent very different security environments. Due to European integration and cross-border cooperation many EU internal border areas like Tornio-Haaparanta region have turned their location into a resource. At the EU external, Finnish-Russian border context the question of border security has remained the key issue regardless of

Table 8. Thematic categories based on open-ended question.

Conflicts	
a. Confrontation and extreme opinions	[Demonstrations] aggravate attitudes. The extremes get their voices heard. The silent majority does not. (Male, 1957, Lappeenranta)
	Autumn 2015 [demonstrations] were provoked by extremist groups and gave false information to people (spreading lies and hate speech) (Male, 1950, Tornio)
	Demonstration against immigration caused forceful reaction among the pro immigration advocates. (Male, 1958, Tornio)
b. Violence and threathening behaviour	Demonstrations are provocative, with threathening behaviour. Issues should be handled in a peaceful way. (Female, 1952, Tornio)
	Demonstrations as such are a way of manifesting one's opinion. With a large mass you gain more publicity than in local newspaper's text message lot. One should refrain from violence. The message suffers. (Male, 1991, Lappeenranta)
Influencing	
a. Broader attention	Issues are being discussed. (Male, 1956, Lappeenranta)
	The authorities notice that people are following the situation (Female, 1950, Tornio)
b. The experienced impacts	When more immigrants started to come to Tornio, after the demonstration a enhanced boarder guarding came. (Female, 1971, Tornio)
	I would assume that the border authorities and police are more visible. (Female, 1962, Tornio)
c. Civil rights	Demonstrations are peoples' right to express their opinion, as such they do not effect the security environment. Violence instead is criminal activity, that is handled by the criminal law. (Female, 1960, Lappeenranta)
Us and them -relations	
a. Othering demonstrators	There has been no demonstrations in the region. (Female, 1948, Lappeenranta)
	Demonstrators came to Tornio around the country. Tornio residents themselves have, in my opinion, usually related peacefully to immigrants. (Female, 1961, Tornio)
	People from elsewhere have come here to demonstrate. I don't like that. Here at the western border, we are open and do not like riotous brawlers who destroy the reputation of the place. (Female, 1964,
b. Me and demonstrations	I am ashamed of the demonstrators! (Male, 1946, Lappeenranta)
	So far I haven't been in threathening situations. (Female, 1947, Tornio)
c. Against immigration	No immigrants to Tornio! (Female, 1957, Tornio)
d. Pro immigration or internationality	The border between Tornio and Haparanda is probably the most free and peaceful region. The border can be crossed easily. (Female, 1955, Tornio)

increased cross-border cooperation and interaction. The influx of migrants and asylum-seekers via the Finnish-Swedish border, however, suddenly changed the geopolitical meaning of the EU internal border and turned the control of the border into a security question. Yet, the examination points out that despite the migration and demonstrations for and against migration in Tornio, people still consider their hometown very safe.

The question of security is intimately linked with the question of identity and how people experience trust and fear in their everyday lived environment. Trust in other people and institutions is important not only from the perspective of geopolitical and political cooperation but it is societal bond within a territory and its populations. It is argued that in addition to trust, fear is present in lived experiences of everyday life and it is not necessarily affected by the rhetoric or the actions of the state. These lay practices of fear can, in fact, differ greatly from the official political assumptions of fear and thus lead to unforeseen responses (Alexander & Pain, 2012).

Previous research shows that the attitudes for and against migration have severely divided the Finnish society and many people are even afraid to speak openly about migration and what they think about it (Puustinen *et al.* 2017). The responses of this study suggest that anonymous survey serves as a safe forum to express opinions about borders and migration, something that is illustrated by the relatively high response rate of this survey compared to many other surveys today. The open questions suggests that in Tornio, in particular, many considered

"close the borders" -demonstration and provocation awkward. The demonstrations were described as a national shame by some, while some respondents claimed that they were helpful for directing the officials' attention to the openness of the border. An interesting finding was that older generations did have more negative experiences of the demonstrations. However, the open-ended responses point out that in all age groups the extreme groups' demonstrations were understood as a worrying issue for the Finnish society. In Tornio, the respondents felt important to distinct themselves from "the outsiders" who had come to demonstrate and argue at the border, as this was damaging the image of the region. In Lappeenranta, demonstrations were not seen as familiar issue for the town as in Tornio. All kinds of extreme opinions and behaviors were considered as a worrying issue and taking the space from more dialogical voices.

The questions of security, the us/them divisions and trust/mistrust are closely bound with the question of inequality and margination. As Kinnvall (2004: 747) writes, when "people find themselves both structurally marginalized and ontologically insecure often gives rise to a political of resistance and the growth of local identities", and more intense attempts to draw borders between "us" and "others". The question of inequality and trust can be seen as the key questions of the Finnish society and its development. The divided responses about the inequality and impact of demonstrations are interesting and they can be understood to illustrate, at least to some extent, the increasing societal polarization. This means that

the living circles of wealthy and poor are becoming more and more distinct from each other. It also means that the meaning of the term "inequality" is becoming more distinctive and well-defined in the minds of respondents. Majority of the people experience their hometown as a safe place, therefore the observations of inequality cannot be directly seen to influence the experienced security.

It has been shown that the historical memories of individuals have significant role in the perception of borders, whether the border is perceived as a barrier or as a security device, an important mental protection from insecurities that were experienced in the past (Pfoser 2015). The findings of this survey suggest that a generation is an important factor when studying the attitudes towards the borders and what kind of activities are considered appropriate at the border. Border towns can be seen to form particular places where seemingly national social polarization is to some extent "extended" towards cross-border relations. As one of the respondents described, any kind of dispute is not good at the border. Border towns are sensitive places but there exists strong inter- and intra-generational variation that needs more research.

References

Rachel, P. Panelli, R., Kindon, S. & J. Little (2010). Moments in everyday/distant geopolitics: Young people's fears and hopes. *Geoforum* 41: 6, 972–982. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.geoforum.2010.08.001

Kinnvall, K. (2004). Globalization and Religious Nationalism: Self, Identity, and the Search for Ontological Security. *Political Psychology* 25: 5, 741–767. DOI: 10.1111/j.1467-9221.2004.00396.x

Pfoser, A. (2015). Between Security and Mobility: Negotiating a Hardening Border Regime in the Russian-Estonian Borderland. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 41:10, 1684–1702. doi.org/10.1080/1369183X.2015.1015408

Puustinen, A., Raisio, H., Kokki, E. & J. Luhta (2017) Kansalaismielipide: Turvapaikanhakijat ja turvapaikkapolitiikka. *Ministry of Interior publications* 9/2017. Available at < http://julkaisut.valtioneuvosto.fi/bitstream/handle/10024/79477/09_2017_Kansalaismielipide%20 Turvapaikanhakijat%20ja%20 turvapaikkapolitiikka.pdf> (Accessed 9.12.2017)

Williams, J. & G. Boyce (2013). Fear, Loathing and the Everyday Geopolitics of Encounter in the Arizona Borderlands. *Geopolitics* 18: 4, 895-916. https://doi.org/10.1080/14650045.2013.780035