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Introduction: Contextualizing the multiplicity of crises

- 1 The emergence of vigilante activities was one of the most heavily mediatized counter-reactions to the so-called ‘refugee crisis’ in the Nordic countries. Although the phenomenon has several historical and some contemporary precedents in Europe and beyond¹, the autumn of 2015 and the spring 2016 marked a significant resurgence of vigilante street patrolling². Perhaps the most striking example is the *Soldiers of Odin* (SOO), a vigilante group created in October 2015 in Kemi, in Northern Finland. The Soldiers of Odin were usually young men in their 20s or 30s, often with a criminal background³, and the founder, Finnish truck driver Mika Ranta, is known to have connections to the neo-Nazi *Nordic Resistance Movement*. By patrolling the streets, SOO positioned themselves as ‘protectors’ of especially local women against male refugees.
- 2 SOO’s vigilantism spread quickly from Finland to Norway and Estonia in the beginning of 2016, and also to other neighbouring Nordic and Baltic countries during the subsequent months. The Swedish chapter was created in Stockholm in February 2016 by Mikael Johansson, whose political affiliations – as a former member of an ‘ethnopluralist’ and ultranationalist faction of the *Sweden Democrats*, known as the

National Democrats – closely resemble those of Ranta's. Soon SOO had formed chapters in some 20 countries, including Canada and the USA. The spread took place over only a couple of months, but the degree of control and the frequency of activities varied greatly between the chapters, and, for the most part, they faded away before the end of the year.

- 3 This new wave of vigilantism embodied by the *Soldiers of Odin* and their strong visual symbolism attracted considerable media attention first in Finland and the Nordic and Baltic countries, and soon beyond. Attention sparked first in the aftermath of the Cologne incidents in January 2016⁴, and peaked again when Finland's national public broadcasting company YLE acquired content from a secret SOO Facebook group in March 2016 and published images of SOO members with weapons and Nazi connections⁵. Major international newspapers and magazines covered SOO – *The New York Times*, *Vice*, *The Guardian*, *Le Nouvel Observateur* and *Libération*, to name a few. Concerns were voiced by journalists, politicians, police and citizens against this new surge of vigilante activities.
- 4 In the public debate, the birth of SOO has been commonly linked to the unprecedented number of applications for refuge in the Nordic countries. In 2015, Finland received 32.000 asylum applications – ten times more than in any previous year – and ranked third in the EU for Iraqi arrivals in 2015 and first for the month of October⁶. In October 2015, Sweden received 39.196 asylum seekers, when in October the year before the number was 8.184. This unparalleled migration situation strengthened the pre-existing anti-immigration mobilizations in the Nordic countries.
- 5 In Finland, the anti-immigration responses became mediatized in a specific political context, where the right-wing populist Finns Party had become the second-largest party in parliament in April 2015, and made its way into a coalition government for the first time ever. Already before the border crisis, the Finns Party had become extremely active in politicizing migration⁷, positioning itself against 'illegal' refugees and calling for harsher measures in order to counter the wave of migrants to the country⁸. In Sweden, the corresponding right-wing populist party, the *Sweden Democrats*, were the third largest party at the time, but a pact between other parties after the 2014 election kept them out of the government.
- 6 The success of anti-immigration mobilization in the Nordic countries – particularly among the constituencies of the established political parties – is often attributed to welfare nationalist or 'welfare chauvinist' rhetoric, whereby the generous welfare redistribution at the core of 'the Nordic model'⁹ is perceived in public debate as a 'pull factor' attracting large numbers of asylum seekers¹⁰. Against this backdrop, it is striking and noteworthy that the welfare state and welfare economy did not feature at all in the media coverage of SOO.
- 7 In this paper focusing on Finland, we examine and compare the most salient themes and framings in all 128 articles published on SOO in four of the most important Finnish and Swedish newspapers, and in the largest Finnish countermedium between January and May 2016. Addressing *hybridly mediatized* responses¹¹ and narrative practices for *performing crisis*¹², we aim to challenge the common public perception of 'the refugee crisis' as a singular, external crisis that explains the emergence of anti-immigration vigilantism and street patrolling. Instead, based on the results from axial coding¹³ by three researchers and the subsequent analysis, we illustrate how the phenomenon of anti-immigrant street patrolling was conveyed to and made salient for the public

through a range of securitizing and gendering narrative frames. In this sense, the performance of crisis is also evidenced both in the increased volume of media coverage on SOO, as well as in the content of this coverage being increasingly framed with regard to SOO's focus on alleged crime and the street patrolling as a reaction to crime¹⁴.

Theoretical framework: Performing crisis in transnational hybrid media space

- 8 Referring to the exceptional migratory flows of 2015 as 'the refugee crisis' became a ubiquitous practice in both academic texts and journalistic output already during the same year. While an accurate term in its own right, the large-scale consolidation of the term 'refugee crisis', particularly in the European mainstream media, also served to fix the public attention to the allegedly external factor – the influx of refugees – as a largely unchallenged, primary source of the crisis¹⁵. The shortcomings of such conceptualization become evident when comparing the politicization of 'the crisis' between and within the host countries¹⁶. The divergent contestations over solidarity and responsibility sharing between the EU member states, and the various manifestations of mediatized 'asylum panic' on the national level, illustrate why 'the refugee crisis' needs to be assessed as a situation marked by multiple crises – instrumentalized for a range of purposes by different actors¹⁷.
- 9 In this regard, the Soldiers of Odin were not only a product of 'the refugee crisis' and the crisis sentiment. Through their narrative of the autochthonous people's drastically declining safety, SOO also proactively seized the position of a key agent *performing* and mediatizing this specific type of crisis¹⁸. In the Nordic context, the groundwork for this narrative had been laid by the right-wing populist parties – including the Finns Party and Sweden Democrats – who had over a decade been vocal in denouncing the immigration *per se* and, even more importantly, the establishment's allegedly overarching failure in implementing any adequate political responses¹⁹.
- 10 Before 2015, such a narrative had served right-wing populists well, portraying them as the alternative for the established parties, allegedly capable of instigating a decisive departure from the current immigration policy. Although the Finns Party had secured a major position in the coalition government in May 2015, when facing the actual refugee situation it became evident that they would not be able to close the borders or otherwise meaningfully alter Finland's legal obligations towards asylum seekers²⁰. A major discrepancy emerged between this acerbic, anti-establishment narrative promising rapid, substantial remedy for 'the immigration question' on the one hand, and the reality of an intensifying influx of asylum seekers on the other hand.
- 11 To the extent that the right-wing populist constituency had internalized the narrative of incompetent political parties preventing necessary measures for securing Finland from the perceived immigrant threat, a moment of disillusionment was at hand in the early winter of 2015²¹. This discontent served as an ideal seedbed that generated support and legitimacy for extra-parliamentary measures, including direct action and vigilantism. Together with a range of anti-immigration oriented social movements – such as *Suomi Ensin* (Finland First) and *Rajat Kiinni!* (Close the Borders!) in Finland and the pan-Nordic neo-Nazi *Nordic Resistance Movement* – SOO were among the first ones to answer what they interpreted as a call for vigilantism.

- 12 In their application for a registered organization status, accepted by Finnish authorities, SOO presented itself quite discreetly, aiming « to maintain and support the security culture within its territory, and to enhance voluntary maintenance of a secure environment by the citizens ». Their programmatic statement, however, clearly situates SOO under the umbrella of the extreme right as « a patriotic street patrol organization, which opposes harmful immigration, Islamization, EU and globalization, and aims at tackling the byproducts caused by the aforementioned problems, such as weakening of the security »²².
- 13 The exceptional spread of public and media attention, however, differentiates SOO from other instances of Nordic extreme right mobilization hitherto seen. Indeed, SOO claimed to have founded chapters in 18 different countries near the peak of its height in April 2016²³. On the one hand, as we illustrate in the analysis, this success was significantly propelled in the mainstream media due to the transnational resonance of the white nationalist and white masculinity narratives vilifying the men positioned as the immigrant Other²⁴, as well as the prelapsarian symbolism drawing from Scandinavian mythology and opposing 'indigenous' and 'foreigners'²⁵, and the English name and the active international recruitment process. On the other hand, it is also important to underline how the public perception of this successful mobilization was consistently overstated and self-mediated by SOO and inadvertently echoed by a number of mainstream news outlets in Finland and abroad²⁶. In any event, SOO's penetration into the gatekept mainstream media transnationally was based on their ability to produce framings with mainstream appeal and digestibility²⁷ and to « offer symbolic resources for imagining oneself as part of [...] a wider collectivity » and « in doing so supported its own spread beyond figurations of the local »²⁸.
- 14 Regarding the accumulation of media exposure, although SOO had started patrolling the streets of Finland already in October 2015, the mainstream media started covering SOO only in early January 2016. The abrupt emergence of voluminous coverage took place right in the aftermath of transnationally mediatized New Year's Eve incidents in Cologne. The narrative of young white women being sexually assaulted and harassed by throngs of refugee men was not restricted to Cologne. Similar stories surfaced in several other European countries, further adding to the body of mainstream refugee crisis coverage that served to « demarcate and strengthen racial boundaries [and to control] women's sexuality »²⁹. Concerning the New Year's Eve celebrations in Helsinki, the earliest coverage was circulated by countermedia outlets relying on dubious and unverifiable sources and blaming the mainstream media for deliberately covering up the incident³⁰.
- 15 This is an important backdrop against which the mainstream media's keenness to cover SOO activities needs to be assessed. The topicality of surging anti-refugee mobilization had been established only a few days earlier in conjunction to the Cologne incidents, and there mainstream reporting was initially trailing countermedia outlets. As we illustrate in the analysis, this time around mainstream outlets initiated the coverage of SOO in January, with the Finnish countermedia only gathering the momentum from February onward. Even then, the countermedia articles were commonly relegated to criticizing the mainstream output. Finnish countermedia was, nevertheless, remarkably more active than their counterparts in Sweden. *MV-lehti* – the singular countermedia outlet analyzed in this paper – published 37 articles on SOO during the first five months of 2016, while the four main Swedish countermedia sites together

published only 29 SOO articles by the end of September 2016³¹. This is in stark contrast with the trajectory of many other instances of *transnational hybrid mediation*³² where immigration and other signature themes of the radical right commonly feature first in the countermedia and only after gaining requisite momentum there get picked up in mainstream space³³.

- 16 In order to examine the impact of SOO coverage for the Finnish and Swedish public debate on the refugee crisis in general, and the perceived legitimacy of anti-immigrant vigilantism in particular, we pursue three research questions:
1. What were the key framings employed to present Soldiers of Odin as a newsworthy media event to mainstream audiences in Finland and Sweden?
 2. How did these framings change during their trajectories?
 1. between national and linguistic contexts, and
 2. from mainstream media to countermedia and vice versa?
- 17 Before presenting the results, in the following section we first discuss the data collected and methodology employed in the analysis.

Data and methods

- 18 For this paper, we collected all 128 articles published on SOO between January and May 2016 in the Finnish newspapers *Helsingin Sanomat* (HS) and *Hufvudstadsbladet* (Hbl), the Swedish newspapers *Dagen Nyheter* (DN) and *Svenska Dagbladet* (SvD), and in the Finnish countermedium *MV-lehti* (MV)³⁴. These outlets were chosen as each of them occupies the position of a major player in their respective media fields. As the newspapers represent the key dailies in Finland and Sweden, their coverage of the Soldiers of Odin can be considered as the most representative in the mainstream media field of the two national contexts and the two studied languages.
- 19 The liberal daily *Helsingin Sanomat* (HS) is the largest in Finland and in the Nordic countries, and with its circulation of 332,000, it is more than three times larger than the closest Finnish competitor, *Aamulehti*. Defining itself as an «unaffiliated liberal bourgeois newspaper», *Hufvudstadsbladet* (Hbl) is Finland's most widely circulated Swedish-language daily (29,000) and acts as the voice of the Swedish speaking minority in Finland (5,2 % of the population³⁵), especially in the Helsinki region. *Dagens Nyheter* (DN) is an «independent liberal» publication with a focus on the capital area. DN is Sweden's largest morning newspaper (265,000), while *Svenska Dagbladet* (SvD) is the third largest subscription-based morning paper and the biggest conservative paper in the country (165,000) (Conrad, 2014).
- 20 *MV-lehti* (MV) is the most established Finnish countermedia outlet. Founded in 2014, MV is known for its vocal anti-immigration positionings and for its connections with the populist, radical and extreme right, including SOO. MV is undoubtedly the most prominent and the most widely known countermedia outlet in Finland.

Table 1. The five outlets from which the datasets were generated

OUTLET FOUNDED CIRCULATION	COUNTRY/LANGUAGE	TYPE ARTICLES IN MATERIAL	DESCRIPTION
DAGENS NYHETER (DN) 1864 265,000	Sweden/Swedish	Mainstream 20 articles	Sweden's largest morning newspaper. «Independent liberal»
HUFVUDSTADSBLADET (HBL) 1864 29,000	Finland/Swedish	Mainstream 27 articles	Finland's most widely circulated Swedish-language daily. «Unaffiliated liberal bourgeois newspaper»
HELSINGIN SANOMAT (HS) 1889 332,000	Finland/Finnish	Mainstream 31 articles	Largest in Finland and in the Nordic countries. Liberal.
MV-LEHTI 2014	Finland/Finnish	Countermedia 37 articles	Most prominent countermedia outlet in Finland
SVENSKA DAGBLADET (SVD) 1884 165,000	Sweden/Swedish	Mainstream 13 articles	Third largest subscription-based morning paper and biggest conservative paper of Sweden

- 21 Several reasons support selecting January 2016 – May 2016 as the timeframe for the analysis. Firstly, January is when the media took notice of the SOO in Finland and when the movement started to spread abroad. Indeed, despite the fact that the SOO was founded in October 2015, there is not a single article about them until 2016. Secondly, after May 2016, the numbers of articles published on SOO started to decrease drastically. This can be explained by several factors : the media attention had waned, the patrols mostly stopped during the summer (Kotonen 2019, 246), and the movement had already started to crumble due to tensions between the Finnish and international chapters. For instance, during the next month, June 2016, there were no articles at all about SOO in SvD and HS, only 1 in DN and MV, and 2 in Hbl. Although a few individual newsarticles were published later in 2016, nearly all of the articles ever published on SOO originate during the selected timeframe. Figure 1 (below) indicates the distribution of the complete dataset's 128 articles in time and between the outlets.

Figure 1. All articles published about SOO in the selected outlets during the studied timeframe January – May 2016

Articles per outlet and month

- 22 The three authors prepared the datasets for qualitative analysis using axial coding (Scott and Medaugh 2017), facilitated by Atlas.TI software. After conducting a quantitative overview of the coverage, we set out to inductively identify the recurrent themes and framings in the Finnish and Swedish SOO coverage. Along the qualitative close reading of the full data set of 128 articles, we developed a coding scheme that focuses on *speech actors*, *problem frames*, *calls to action*, and *contexts*, eventually operationalized into a coding scheme of 68 codes. The codes are grounded 1813 times in 579 coded passages, with 442 passages originating in the mainstream datasets and 137 passages in the countermedia data set. Based on this coding scheme, we chose to structure the analysis around three distinct and salient types of framing that together feature in more than half of the coded passages.

Figure 2. The frequency of coded passages with any combination of the three salient framings securitization (SEC), gendering (GEN) and sanctioned response (SR) (n =382), and coded passages without any of the three framings (n =197), presented as a percentage of all coded passages (n =579)

- 23 First, the *securitization* of lived experience is a salient framing practice that is operationalized as the presence of one or more of 13 codes that mark a reference to a cause, an indicator, or a subjective experience of insecurity. Almost one third of the coded passages within the whole dataset include this framing, analyzed in section 4.1.
- 24 The section 4.2 analyzes the 65 coded passages that invoke *gendering* repertoires for presenting the (ostensibly) pertinent threats linked to SOO. Operationalized as the presence of one or more of the 7 gendering codes, this framing practice is present in ten percent of the coded passages in the dataset.
- 25 Finally, the third section of analysis 4.3 examines the media outlets' *sanctioned responses* to the SOO phenomenon, ranging from condemnation and ridicule to calls to action and avenues of resistance. This framing practice, present in one fifth of the coded passages, is operationalized as the presence of any of the 14 codes that mark a media outlet outlining how the audience should relate and react to vigilantism and street patrolling.

Results and analysis

- 26 During the inductive coding phase, two types of passages were the easiest to discover and code in the data. On the one hand, the most straightforward passages to code were the most specific ones, addressing and quoting distinctly identifiable *actors* such as the police or SOO. On the other hand, many of the least specific elements in the text were also easy to give a code, thereby highlighting the abstractions and *contexts* such as racism or general safety. What both types of codes have in common is that they also feature in articles and passages that are distinctly descriptive in nature.
- 27 From the perspective of answering the research questions, it was important to also go beyond the descriptive passages towards exploring the more interpretative, deliberative and argumentative ones, which sought to address and frame the impact and implications of the emergence of SOO, both on the streets and in the media. The passages with descriptive codes are present in practically all articles throughout the timeframe, as they are needed to describe any of the aspects to be framed as salient. Moreover, they also constitute the basis onto which the more interpretative arguments can be grafted.
- 28 In the mainstream dataset, the passages with interpretative codes were distinctly more prevalent before March 16, the midpoint of the timeframe, while the opposite was true for the countermedia dataset. As a result, the most important findings of the analysis pertain to the first half of the mainstream output, but to the second half in the case of countermedia coverage.
- 29 This observation is also an important result in itself, corroborating the hypothesis that mainstream argumentation is about vigilantism on the streets and in society, whereas the countermedia outlet argumentation pertains to the coverage of vigilantism in the mainstream media. The implications of this are further reflected upon in this section, which is structured around the three main thematic code groups: securitization, gendering, and sanctioned responses.

Figure 3. The three most frequent codes in the Finnish mainstream dataset, the Swedish mainstream dataset and in the countermedia dataset

The securitization of lived experience

- 30 Nearly one half (45,6 %) of the 579 coded passages in the five datasets were coded with one or more *securitization* codes, making *securitization* the most prevalent among the three identified major framings in the SOO coverage. Already the first articles published by the mainstream media in January indicate that although a consensus was emerging over ‘safety’ being the key frame of reference for addressing SOO’s emergence, there were contradictory accounts concerning whose safety was at stake, and which were the developments most acutely compromising safety.
- 31 For instance, although the Finns Party Minister of Justice Jari Lindström and the Finnish chief of police Seppo Kolehmainen were widely covered declaring they were not worried about SOO – with Lindström even presenting SOO’s emergence as a symptom of the main issue of « citizens feeling insecure » – their statements were summarily criticized by Hbl, which titled its piece « It’s dangerous not to condemn street patrolling » (Hbl, 12 January 2016)^{36[3]}. In Sweden, the reactions were mixed. One one hand, Uppsala Police officer Nina Dahlström declared about a fight at a SOO march: « There would have been no problems at all if there had not come leftist activists who wanted to quarrel » (DN, 3 April 2016). But, on the other hand, the sweden police claimed that SOO « has clear ties to xenophobic environments, and several members are convicted of various crimes » (SvD, 9 April 2016).

Figure 4. The distribution of the 13 individual codes among the 264 coded passages through which securitization is operationalized in mainstream and countermedia datasets. As most of these passages are coded with several securitization codes, the combined number of passages including any of the individual codes (432) is higher than the number of discrete passages (264)

Distribution of the grounded securitization codes

- 32 One of the major fault lines early on into the media coverage formed between whether the experienced decline in ‘general safety’ should be discussed as the cause or the effect of street patrolling. As the perspectives are not mutually exclusive, both featured in the coverage. The prevalence of the former framing can be linked to the media outlets’ ubiquitous practice of giving so much voice to SOO: regardless of the national context or media type (countermedia or mainstream), approximately one half of the articles either interviewed members of SOO or paraphrased their position according to which immigrants are the root cause of security problem:
- 33 The Finnish parent organisation does not conceal that SOO is a « patriotic organisation that fights for a white Finland ». They patrol the streets to stop « the immigrants’ violence » (DN, 26 March 2016).
- 34 On the other hand – notwithstanding the singular, dismissive comment that sparked much controversy in January – the police consistently emphasized vigilantism’s negative effect on safety, particularly in the mainstream media. The most frequently grounded individual code in the whole dataset is *actor: police* (89), with a third (30) of these passages co-occurring with the securitization codes.
- 35 It is notable that the securitizing discourse flourished with only very limited coverage of voices by its main subjects, women (6 coded passages) and immigrants (7 coded passages). Instead, more than half of the 79 explicit references to the parties whose safety was presented as threatened only invoked the remarkably imprecise category of ‘citizens’ (41 coded passages). Similar vagueness characterises the very narrative of ‘declining safety’ in the mainstream coverage, which rarely discusses the nature or the veracity of the dangerous encounters people are allegedly threatened by:
- Although the feeling of insecurity is a subjective experience, there is good reason for taking it seriously. A similar situation took place during the recession of the 1990s (HS, 7 February 2016).
- 36 As opposed to the mainstream coverage, the countermedium MV was rather slow to address any alleged security concerns early on, and only gradually started paraphrasing the rationale of ‘public safety’ as articulated by SOO. Although the per article frequency of passages with securitizing framings in MV’s coverage (1,5) was less than half of that in the Swedish outlets (3,2), it was still almost as common as in the Finnish mainstream (1,8). MV was keen on framing the mainstream media’s focus on

vigilante extremism as ‘a deliberate smokescreen’ for covering ‘the real, underlying security problems’ – ‘the invasion of strangers’ and the violence against anti-immigration activists and the autochthonous people:

- 37 Indeed, YLE’s [Finland’s National Broadcasting Company] tactic has been to avoid tackling the root causes of the the problem, the invasion of strangers against the will of people, and to turn all the attention towards the inevitable reactions, such as Soldiers of Odin’s pursuits to preserve the safety on the streets (MV, 16 April 2016).
- 38 Another important difference in the securitizing framings between the mainstream and countermedia coverage is the related to the criminal past of SOO members: every fourth Finnish mainstream article (14/58) and over half of the Swedish articles (19/33) mentioned the vigilantes’ criminal convictions. The MV articles discussing criminals (8/37) mostly either challenged these depictions by the mainstream media, or only referred to refugees’ allegedly criminal behaviour.
- 39 Interestingly, not a single one of the Finnish mainstream articles explicitly invoked the word « nazi », not even the Swedish-language publication Hbl, whereas every fifth (7) Swedish article used this expression, commonly in conjunction to the security concerns for the criminal past of SOO members. « The network was founded in Finland by the Finnish nazi Mika Ranta. Several of its Swedish members are convicted of serious crimes and have nazi sympathies » (SvD 3 April 2016). MV referred to nazism even more frequently, although typically for the purpose of expressing outrage over the practice of linking SOO and nazism.

Gendering repertoires for presenting the pertinent threats

- 40 Although the nature of ‘the threat’ in the core of the crisis narratives is typically expressed through diffuse and implicit articulations, the framings exhibit a decidedly gendered character. This is particularly true with regard to the narrative of racialised sexual predators coming from ‘outside’ the nation-state³⁷, thereby necessitating « gendered vigilantism » in the form of organised street patrols « meant to protect local women from sexual harassment or other forms of public gendered-based violence by migrants »³⁸. While giving the SOO a voice for establishing their distinctly gendered rationale for patrolling the streets, the mainstream coverage was highly critical of SOO’s gender-framed motives:
- 41 In their world, we live in a society that is completely collapsing, it is total anarchy. Immigrant gangs go around and harass women and the police do nothing. They feel that there is a desire for what they do, says Daniel Poohl at Expo, to SvD (SVD, 11 February 2016).

Figure 5. The distribution of the 7 individual codes among the 65 coded passages through which gendering is operationalized in mainstream and countermedia datasets. As most of these passages are coded with several gendering codes, the combined number passages including any of the individual grounded codes (91) is higher than the number of discrete passages (65)

- 42 Notwithstanding the overwhelmingly critical evaluation of SOO's 'protecting our women' narrative, many of the mainstream outlets' positioning practices effectively reproduced the notion of autochthonous women being in need of protection from immigrant men. Particularly in interviews of ordinary Finnish citizens, the men could freely adopt various positionings and comment on the phenomenon of street patrolling from a range of societal perspectives. Women, on the other hand, were typically probed to discuss vigilantism from a distinctly intimate and personal standpoint, *as individual women and mothers* and as potential victims of gendered violence:

« As a mother of a teenage daughter, I am sometimes worried », (Susanna Nevalainen says. [...]) « If I had a daughter of the bar-going age, who was saved by the Odin folks, I would certainly be grateful », says Tarja Tikka, as the discussion on immigrants continues around the bartable (HS, 11 January 2016).

- 43 These types of gendered framings for street patrolling were distinctly more prevalent in the mainstream media early into the timeframe, with almost two thirds of all gender coded passages manifesting in the articles published before mid-February. To some extent, the prevalence of the practice of positioning women primarily as potential victims of gendered violence can be linked to the topicality of the Cologne-incident and its transnationally covered domestications which featured high in the early SOO coverage. However, the mainstream coverage also critically reflected on the political instrumentalization of gendered violence as a justification for anti-immigration measures in general, and vigilantism in particular:
- 44 However, there are recent, classical examples of such [securitizing] activities, like the street patrols and [the Finns party] MP Olli Immonen's suggestion to restrict asylum seekers' freedom of movement. Immonen appealed to the safety of children and women (HS, 7 February 2016).
- 45 Strictly opposite to the mainstream coverage, the gendered framings were all but absent in the early SOO coverage by the countermedia, with only one fifth of the passages with gendering codes originating in the articles published before the midpoint of the timeframe in March 16. Although MV's SOO article output increases during the second half, the delay in coverage does not explain the prevalence of gendered frames

in the countermedia because the density of gendering passages, proportional to the article output, also doubles in the second half of the timeframe, from 0,79 to 1,58. This observation points to MV's *reinformativ* mode of operation as countermedia – invested in reframing, re-reporting and reinterpreting mainstream news coverage³⁹ – that can explain both the delayed coverage of SOO in general as well as the delayed emergence of gendered framing practices. MV was much more keen to challenge the role of mainstream media in politicizing and mediatizing vigilantism than to discuss the rationales and implications of street patrolling *per se*.

- 46 Accordingly, almost half of the coded passages with gendered framing practices in MV target individual female journalists and grassroots-level solidarity activists for either being too emotional and naïve, or for using their mainstream platform to advance a vindictive, anti-men agenda illustrating a feminism « gone too far »⁴⁰.
- 47 The piece authored by Sara Rigatelli, the straight-A girl submissive to the mainstream's omerta, goes to show that many women are not really bothered at all by potential foreign rapists, because it is more important to increase women's sexual market value with the help of male-dominated refugee immigration. For these marxist, feminazi sows, the motive for lusting after the invaders is giving the finger to the Finnish men and sadistically watching by the cockfights (MV, 16 March 2016).

Media outlets' sanctioned responses to the SOO phenomenon

- 48 In addition to reporting events and describing and evaluating the phenomena, the five media outlets also engaged in the public debate, outlining appropriate ways for the authorities, politicians and the general public to relate to vigilantism. These passages coded as *sanctioned responses* range from calls to action (CTA), giving voice to those resisting SOO (or SOO's critics in MV), pragmatic and moral assessments of various responses to SOO and evaluations of various agenda vis-à-vis SOO (figure 6, below).

Figure 6. The distribution of the 14 individual codes among the 147 coded passages through which sanctioned response is operationalized in mainstream and countermedia datasets. As most of these passages are coded with several sanctioned response codes, the combined number of passages including any of the individual codes (229) is higher than the number of discrete passages (147)

- 49 The most common of sanctioned responses vouches for leaving any challenges related to vigilantism to be dealt by the authorities, particularly the police. Almost half of the

mainstream articles included this code, with HS being a somewhat surprising exception. HS articles commonly resorted to quoting or paraphrasing authorities' and politicians' positions on the matter in a descriptive manner, only ever implying their own stance. By contrast, Hbl repeatedly called out SOO for encroaching upon the state's competences, while also criticizing the authorities for their lax response:

- 50 The police need no complimentary Odin. Voluntary order militias are inexperienced, untrained, and easily escalate violence. It is incomprehensible that police, juridical scholars, and politicians do not speak up louder when an openly racist organisation like Soldiers of Odin begins to organise street patrols in Finland (Hbl, 8 January 2016).
- 51 The countermedia's sanctioned responses embody a conflicted position that revolves around anti-racist activists – particularly the counter-demonstrations against the radical right and SOO. Like mainstream media, MV also calls for a more resolute police involvement, but only expresses concern for the safety and the legal rights of SOO and anti-immigration activists while condemning violence and « sabotage » by « the anarchist left ». At the same time, they advocate and commend direct action taken by SOO, necessitated by the authorities' disregard for « the invasion »:
- 52 As the numbers of SOO are constantly increasing, and the amount of members in Facebook support groups break new records by the day, a fledgling idea is waking up : could we find here an even wider popular movement to rouse Europe in the turmoil of the invasion? What if this movement will become a contemporary militia, united online around Europe? (MV, 16 February 2016)
- 53 Both Finnish and Swedish articles discuss various avenues for resisting vigilantism. The most solemn articulations of resistance feature a high-ranking politician – including the ministers of Interior Anders Ygeman (Sweden) and Petteri Orpo (Finland), and the president of Estonia Toomas Hendrik Ilves – who denounce street patrols as « posing a serious threat to democracy » (DN, 3 April 2016). The mainstream outlets addressed the political implications of vigilantism on an abstract level, with the exception of Hbl, who linked the vigilante mobilisation to (non-)actions of individual politicians, particularly within the rightwing populist Finns party (Hbl, 22 January 2016).
- 54 More concrete forms of resistance were discussed in conjunction with civic action, with all outlets mentioning *Loldiers of Odin*, a group of Finnish activists rousing the interest of the international press by following the SOO patrols dressed as clowns⁴¹ (Nummela 2019). While the « raucously provocative clowns [...] allowed to jump in front of you and spit in your face » sparked outrage in the countermedia (MV, 22 January 2016), they also successfully channeled an exemplary message of 'resistance by the means of ridicule' into the mainstream media:
- « We heard rumours that it is trendy to patrol on the streets, and that it is for the good of all people and animals, so we, too, gathered a stumbling elite patrol. Between the somersaults, though, we realized that we were just being laughed at », *Loldiers of Odin* say in an ironic press release [...] (DN, 17 January 2016).

Concluding discussion

- 55 From the perspective of selling news, the emergence of SOO was very convenient for the media outlets, both in mainstream and within the countermedia. Harnessing the « logic of media populism [...] based on emotionalization, personalization and an antiestablishment attitude »⁴² (Mudde 2007, 249–51), SOO was able to secure steady

media coverage for its activities for nearly six months. On the one hand, the significance of SOO had a distinctly inflated character, reflected in the Finnish and Swedish mediatization but also in its exceptional international coverage. The transnational dimension in SOOs coverage, allegedly reflecting a similarly transnational nature of its activities, gave street patrolling a serious boost initially. With the virtue of hindsight, this considerable media coverage rendered SOO a much bigger and more serious phenomenon than the actual impact created by its street patrolling activities would have merited. Considering the extent to which SOO was able to brag about the degree and breadth of their organization, illustrated in articles reproducing the claim of 20 SOO chapters having been established around the globe by the spring 2016, the magnitude of coverage boosting SOO was probably unexpected on SOO's part. This raises important questions concerning the responsibility of the media in covering activities of a rather marginal group of vigilantes in the already tense context of the refugee crisis. When respected news outlets adopt scandalizing framings, even when this may be done inadvertently and within otherwise critical coverage, extremist actors gain an important platform that can enhance their mobilization locally, nationally and transnationally.

- 56 It is, however, important to assess the significance of SOO's emergence against notorious historical experiences of Finnish fascism raising its head in the 1930s, and the fresher memory of violent skinhead culture emerging in the city of Joensuu more recently in the 1990s. This background is comparable to Sweden, where the Sweden Democrats' roots can be traced back to xenophobic parties and movements from the 1980s. Early on in 2016, it was genuinely difficult to estimate SOOs real capabilities and the potential for scaling up its street patrolling activities in Finland, the Nordic countries, and beyond – particularly considering the novel opportunities for online and offline mobilization, supported by the buzz it was able to generate in the hybrid media sphere.
- 57 Moreover, the recent advances in the political fortunes of right-wing populism in both Finland and Sweden, constitute an important context for the vigilante phenomenon right in the aftermath of the 'refugee crisis'. While the politicians in established parties soon denounced vigilantism, the right-wing populists were more hesitant, sometimes expressing tacit support for street patrols. The populists were in a difficult spot, particularly in Finland. While the Finns Party had finally become a part of the coalition government only months before the asylum seekers arrived, their support was rapidly dwindling as their constituencies found the party could not implement its promises of constraining immigration.
- 58 On the surface level, then, SOO was fishing in the same waters as the Finns Party and the Sweden Democrats at a perfect moment. To a significant degree, SOO was able to instrumentalize the legitimacy created for anti-immigration rhetoric by the right-wing populists, who had for a decade been reaping the benefits from the narrative that presented the influx of immigrants as the major predicament, the moment of truth and the potential breaking-point for the Nordic nation-state. After the initial dissension in the ranks, manifested in dismissive statements by some Police officers and politicians, the tide turned against the SOO. Although the Finnish media would not weaponize the neo-Nazi connections to the same degree as in Sweden, the coverage of the violent crime together with pictures of swastikas and other Nazi symbols in SOOs premises served to move vigilantism beyond the realm of the acceptable. Although the

countermedia sought to reframe SOO as the 'protectors of the people', they could only preach to the converted while the hearts of the greater public were won by the 'moderate and sensible' mainstream narrative of vigilantism as the real source of insecurity, complemented with the ridicule spearheaded by the clowns who won the media game.

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35. Swedish and Finnish are both official languages in Finland.
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ABSTRACTS

In 2015, the unprecedented scale and scope of the refugee influx to Europe stirred media debates and sparked new kinds of civic mobilizations. In this paper, we analyse the hybrid mediatization of two distinctly oppositional, securitizing crisis framings. On the one hand, anti-immigration activists pointed to the 'invasion of refugees' that allegedly compromises the safety of citizens in general and women in particular. On the other hand, security concerns were voiced over the anti-immigration responses, reconstructing a crisis in the emergence of far-right vigilantism and street patrolling by the Soldiers of Odin. We collected a 128 article dataset, consisting of all journalistic output on Soldiers of Odin in four mainstream news outlets in Finland (Helsingin Sanomat and Hufvudstadsbladet) and Sweden (Dagens Nyheter and Svenska Dagbladet) and in one Finnish countermedium (MV-lehti) between January and May 2016. Analysing this cross-

national data with a specific focus on safety and gender, we identify trajectories along which framings permeate both national and mediaspace pertinent-boundaries.

En 2015, l'afflux sans précédent de réfugiés en Europe a attisé les débats publics et donné une impulsion à de nouvelles formes de mobilisation. Dans cet article, nous analysons la médiatisation hybride de deux formes opposées de cadrages sécuritaires. D'un côté, les activistes anti-immigration ont mis l'accent sur « l'invasion de réfugiés » qui compromettrait prétendument la sécurité des citoyens en général, et des femmes en particulier. D'un autre côté, ces réponses anti-immigration ont soulevé nombre de préoccupations autour de l'émergence du vigilantisme d'extrême droite et des patrouilles de rues organisées par les Soldats d'Odin. Pour ce faire, nous avons collecté tous les articles – 128 – publiés dans quatre des plus importants journaux de Finlande (Helsingin Sanomat et Hufvudstadsbladet) et de Suède (Dagens Nyheter et Svenska Dagbladet), ainsi que sur le site de réinformation finlandais (MV-lehti) entre janvier et mai 2016. En analysant ces données transnationales, tout particulièrement autour des thèmes de la sécurité et du genre, nous identifions les trajectoires au travers desquelles les cadrages transcendent les espaces nationaux et médiatiques.

INDEX

Mots-clés: immigration, anti-immigration, réfugié, médiatisation, Suède, Finlande, Soldat d'Odin

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