

'Bigwig hatred' and the emergence of the first Scandinavian agrarian-populist party

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Abstract

In the genealogy of the Scandinavian populist-party family, agrarian populism has been largely neglected and, when discussed at all, it is traced back to Finland in the late 1950s. This paper argues: (i) that agrarian populism long predated the 1950s and that it was politically salient from the decade before Finnish independence in 1917; (ii) that it is useful to distinguish between an agrarian-class and agrarian-populist party type; (iii) that in wider comparative perspective, first-wave Finnish agrarian populism was distinctive; and iv) that during the critical party-building phase, the Finnish Agrarian Party (AP) is best characterised a populist party embodying a diffuse small-farmer antipathy towards socially superior urban elites. The AP did not create this 'bigwig hatred' (*herraviha*), but in perpetuating it and 'othering it' within a binary 'us-and-them' paradigm, it became the first populist party in both Finland and Scandinavia.

INTRODUCTION

Two waves of Scandinavian populism and populist parties are amply covered in the literature. The first in the early 1970s consisted of *tax-revolt populist parties* (Rydgren, 2006) that were essentially single-issue parties, exploiting widespread disquiet at the exponential rise in the tax burden accruing from the cost of funding expanding welfare systems. These parties were Mogens Glistrup's Progress Party in Denmark (Harmel & Svåsand, 1993) and in Norway the Anders Lange Party for a Drastic Reduction in Taxes, Duties and Public Intervention which, following Lange's death, became the Progress Party led by Carl I Hagen (Andersen & Bjørklund, 2000; Fryklund & Peterson, 1981; Jupskås, 2016). A more recent wave of populist parties has pivoted on a

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GAL-TAN axis, defending the national culture, language and Christian traditions against the threat posed by immigration and multiculturalism. Welfare chauvinist in orientation, these are *radical right populist parties* (Arter, 2010; Jungar & Jupskås, 2014; Mudde, 2007) and *nationalist populist parties* (Bergmann, 2020; Hellström, 2016). They number the Progress Party in Norway (in its more recent manifestation), Finns Party and Sweden Democrats (Widfeldt, 2014). However, the basic contention in this article is that political scientists could well benefit from using a longer lens when viewing the genealogy of the Scandinavian populist-party family. Put another way, a tradition of *agrarian populism* has been largely neglected.

Jungar (2015) makes the important point that agrarian-based populism has had an almost uninterrupted presence in Finnish politics and that its roots can be traced back to the late 1920s (Jungar, 2015, p. 219). However, she then adds that Finnish agrarian populism appeared shortly after the demise of *poujadisme* in France in the late 1950s (Jungar, 2015, p. 218), with the creation of a smallholders' party, which in 1966 became the Finnish Rural Party (SMP). A central claim in this paper, however, is that the origins of agrarian populism long antedate the SMP and indeed Eino Yliruusi's Smallholders' Party in the late 1920s (Helander & Toivanen, 1971; Vahosalmi, 2017). Rather, it emerged as a political force when mass democracy was superimposed on an overwhelmingly agrarian society in the decade before Finnish independence in 1917.

In comparative perspective, agrarian populism in Finland in the pre-independence decade was distinctive. Often cited among the first wave of agrarian populism, the short-lived *Narodniki* movement in Russia in the 1880s viewed the peasantry as a revolutionary class that would overthrow the monarchy; it was agrarian socialist and collectivist rather than populist, disseminated by idealistic, urban intellectuals and based on the village *mir*. The American People's Party, which emerged in the early 1890s in the southern and western states sought to curb the influence of monopolistic corporations and empower small businesses, farmers and labourers; it was anti-cartel and not exclusively agrarian. However, first-wave agrarian populism in Finland was based on independent small farmers (*talonpojat*) and, in contrast to the majority of inter-war Green Rising peasant parties, it operated within a liberal democratic framework. It was neither revolutionary peasantry nor anti-big-capitalist populism.

The focus of this article, then, is on agrarian populism in the Finnish Agrarian Party (*Suomen maalaisväestön liitto*—hereafter the AP) over the critical party-building phase between 1906 and 1919. Drawing on the notion of 'othering' (Falki, 2021; Harmer & Lumsden, 2019; Lister, 2004) as a process of differentiation and demarcation by which a line is drawn between 'us' and 'them', the central question runs: Who were the 'us' and who were the 'them' in the AP's formative years and how is the nascent party best characterised? Was it

best labelled an *agrarian-class party* or an *agrarian-populist party*? The argument made is whilst the AP rested on a base of small, independent farmers, many actively religious—in a minimal sense a class foundation—its dominant characteristic was a diffuse small-farmer ‘anti-ness’—anti-elitism, anti-urbanism, anti-clericalism and general antipathy towards the Establishment (Abedi, 2009; Schedler, 1996) which placed it full square as the first party actor in a tradition of agrarian populism channelled through the Smallholders’ Party in the 1930s and the Finnish Rural Party in the 1960s and 1970s (Arter, 2016; Helander, 1971; Jungar, 2015; Kääriäinen, 2002; Raunio, 2013; Sänkiäho, 1971). The AP did not create ‘bigwig hatred’ (*herraviha*) but in perpetuating it created a niche small-farmer electoral constituency.

The article draws extensively on primary historical sources, including materials in the Finnish state archive, AP archive, committee reports into farming conditions at the turn of the 20th century and contemporary press reports. Use is also made of three doctoral dissertations (Kinnunen, 2004; Nykänen, 2012; Talonen, 1988) on the party-political profile of Christian revivalism in the focused period. The detailed official histories of the party are consulted (Hakalehto, 1986; Mylly, 1989) as, too, biographies and profiles of its pioneering leaders (Hokkanen, 1986).

The article is structured as follows. The first section proposes a distinction between two main types of AP—the agrarian class and agrarian populist type. Then, using the four conditions set out by Lipset and Rokkan (1967) for the emergence of strong APs to structure the empirical analysis, the main body of the piece considers the nature of the ‘us’ and ‘them’ in the agrarian populist paradigm. The concluding ‘so what?’ remarks revisit the question of the value of characterisation at the early phase of party institutionalisation as a yardstick for assessing the extent of party change.

TYPES OF AGRARIAN PARTIES

If the nexus of *authoritarian-populist parties* in central and eastern Europe—the likes of the Bulgarian Agrarian Union under Stamboliiski (Bell, 1977; Eellend, 2007) is excluded—it seems feasible to distinguish between two broad types of AP in the liberal democracies of the first half of the 20th century, some short-lived, others more resilient. They are (i) agrarian-class parties and (ii) agrarian-populist parties. The *agrarian-class party* may be defined as one ‘that recruits its leaders, has its bases of support and devotes its programme to the interests of a particular social class’ (Greenhill, 1965). ‘Interests’ is the key word here since agrarian-class parties are single-interest parties that promote and protect the interests of commercial farmers. They are likely to be ‘externally created parties’ (Duverger, 1954) resting on a ‘sponsor organisation’ (Bolloyer & Bytzek, 2013) or ‘allied secondary organisation’ (Gunther & Diamond, 2003) outside the legislature. On this basis, Greenhill (1965) viewed the Norwegian

Agrarian Party as a class party which, underpinned by the interest group *Norges Bondelag*, and drawing on the larger farmers in the east of the country, sought a grain tariff to protect domestic producers against a flood of cheaper imported wheat from America, Canada and Argentina. Christensen is similarly unequivocal: the Norwegian Agrarian Party was founded as ‘the political arm of the Norwegian Farmers’ Union...and was in effect a puppet of the Union’ (Christensen, 2001, p. 37).

Agrarian-class parties can be located on a left-right continuum and the conventional wisdom has treated the three APs in Norway, Finland and Sweden as class parties. Worre (1980) writes that the Scandinavian party systems were dominated by ‘three big class parties’—the Social Democrats, Agrarians and Conservatives. In the 1960s Kirchheimer (1966), emphasising the ‘classness’ factor, held that a party built on ‘a specific professional category’s claims such as the Swedish Agrarians cannot aspire to a catchall performance’. Outside Scandinavia, historical examples of agrarian-class parties would include the Czechoslovak Agrarian Party, which came into being in 1907 to protect the larger farmers of Bohemia and Moravia against competition from Hungarian agriculture and the Prussian Agrarian Party, which emerged to defend the Junkers and estate owners against an influx of Russian grain.

Agrarian-populist parties in contrast are grounded in the culture as much as the economic interests of small farmers and they pivot on a rural-urban axis. The touchstone of agrarian-populist mobilisation will vary, but ‘otherisation’ is central to it. This is defined by Lister (2004) as ‘a process of differentiation and demarcation, by which a line is drawn between “us” and “them”—between the more and the less powerful—and through which the social distance is established and maintained.’ The typical dynamics of othering are (i) the creation of a collective in-group identity by means of negative out-group stereotyping—that is, the use of ‘the other’ to define ourselves in relation to who we are not (Wilkinson & Kitzinger, 1996, p. 8). (ii) The use of perceived asymmetries of power to mobilise and empower the powerless (often the nation) against manipulation and exploitation by the power-holders (the state/Establishment). Take the cases of the Australian Country Party and Finnish Rural Party as examples of agrarian-populist parties.

For the Australian Country Party founded in 1921, the touchstone of populist mobilisation was the notion of *countrymindedness*, which was used to legitimise its political agenda, characterise the in-group and castigate the out-group (Aitkin, 1985; Botterill, 2006; Brett, 2007; Duncan & Epps, 1992; Wear, 2009). The formula was broadly: we are countryminded (a virtuous attribute); the city (the ‘other’) is competitive, nasty and parasitical (Aitkin, 1985, p. 35). Countrymindedness is morally superior (Wear, 2009) and brings the best out of people; indeed, the characteristic Australian is a countryman, who embodies the core element of the national character. Moreover, the Australian Country Party held that ‘power resides in the city

where politics is trapped in a sterile debate about classes' (Botterill, 2006, pp. 20–21). Consequently, there had to be a dedicated party to articulate the true voice of the nation. As Wear (2009) has commented, the Country Party did not invent the agrarian myth of country-mindedness, but its propagation was a primary cause of its existence.

For the Finnish Rural Party in the 1960s and 1970s, the 'them' included the 'old parties' (by inference past their 'sell by' date) and in particular the gang of 'sleaze merchants' (*rötösherrat*) who got on by working the system in dubious ways. The declamatory use of the slogan '*rötösherrat*' served to 'personalise' the agrarian populism of the SMP architect and leader Veikko Vennamo. For the SMP the asymmetries of power were reflected in Vennamo's resonant refrain 'in defence of the forgotten people' (*unohdetun kansan puolesta*) which was reminiscent of Kornhauser's (1959) assertion that [populist] movements mobilise people who are alienated from, or marginalised by the social system and who do not believe in the legitimacy of the established order. This may be because modernisation (in whatever form) has challenged traditional normative structures and pointed up the gap between the disadvantaged 'us' when compared with the favoured 'them'.

In practice, of course, there may be cases that appear *prima facie* on the borderline between the two AP types. In Sweden Carl Berglund's appeal to the rural population—'Brothers, let us unite'—in the first issue of the newspaper *Landsbygden* in December 1910 had an unmistakably populist tone. Farmers were viewed as a 'pariah class' divided and ruled by city-party elites (Jonnergård, 1984, pp. 11–12). However, the AP (*Bondeförbundet*), that emerged in 1921, was the product of a merger between two competing groups, one of which (*Jordbrukarnas riksförbund*) represented the larger commercial farmers in the south-west. The nascent Swedish Agrarian Party in short was predominantly an agrarian class party in which the promotion of the interests of market-oriented farm producers was paramount. It was not until 1929 that a family-sized farmer, Viktor Jansson, mobilised the small farmers in the relatively poor and structurally more homogenous northern Sweden into a dedicated organisation (*Riksförbundet Landsbygdens Folk*) (Bengtsson, 2022).

Ultimately, in pluralist polities, the agrarian-populist party will be defined not by structural factors, such as the size of farm holdings, or even the market position of farmers, but by an ideology of agrarianism predicated on, and perpetuating rural-urban cultural antagonisms. With this in mind, it is useful in structuring our discussion of the agrarian populism—the 'us' and 'them'—in the nascent Finnish Agrarian Party, to follow the four conditions set out by Lipset and Rokkan (1967, p. 45) for the emergence of strong APs. These are:

- i) that the cities and industrial centres were still numerically weak at the time of the decisive extensions of the suffrage.

- ii) that the bulk of the agricultural populations were active in family-sized farming and either owned their farms themselves or were legally-protected lease-holders largely independent of socially superior landowners.
- iii) that there were important cultural barriers between the countryside and the city and much resistance to the incorporation of farm production into the capitalist economy of the cities.
- iv) that the Catholic church was without significant influence.

The ‘us’ as family-sized farmers

Comparatively little industrialisation and urbanisation

In 1906, at the point of the introduction of mass democracy—universal voting to a unicameral 200-seat unicameral *Eduskunta*—Finland had one of the most agriculture-dominant economies in Europe (Korpisaari, 1909). 63% of the population worked on the land. Even in 1930, League of Nations data on the structure of the labour force in 28 European countries showed that the proportion of the total male labour force engaged in industry in Finland was less than half that in Sweden and only a little over half that in Norway and Denmark whereas the percentage engaged in agriculture was exceeded in only five European countries—Yugoslavia, Bulgaria, Romania, Lithuania and Poland (Moore, 1945, p. 45). In short, the conditions appeared *prima facie* conducive to the emergence of a dedicated farmers' party (Selander, 1918).

The predominance of family-sized farming?

Before independence in 1917, the AP was essentially a regional party. Its strength was confined to the geographic peripheries of northern Finland (Oulu province) and the eastern part of Viipuri province bordering Russia. So much is evident from Table 1 which charts the AP support in the rural municipalities of the 12 Finnish constituencies (*vaalipiirit*) between 1907 and 1917. It averaged over one-quarter of the rural vote in Viipuri east constituency, nearly one-third in Oulu north and almost two-fifths of the rural vote in Oulu south.

Establishing whether the bulk of the agricultural population was active in family-sized farming in these constituencies, however, is complicated by the fact that the two primary data sources offer differing definitions of family-sized farms. These are (i) data on landholding conditions in Finland at the beginning of the 20th century collected by Hannes Gebhard, who led a subgroup of the Landless Population Committee set up by the Czar in 1899 to investigate the condition of agricultural labourers and crofters in the Grand Duchy. (ii) Data from the official agricultural census of 1910, the principal purpose of which was to investigate the state of agriculture and cattle stock in Finland. The Gebhard-led committee defined family-sized farms in Finnish conditions as ‘any holding

TABLE 1 Average Agrarian Party support in the rural municipalities of the Finnish constituencies, 1907–1917.

Constituency	1907	1908	1909	1910	1911	1913	1916	1917	Average
Oulu south	33.6	35.6	40.0	42.0	41.1	42.1	40.3	44.0	39.8
Oulu north	22.7	25.2	28.4	32.8	34.8	36.3	35.3	41.7	32.2
Lapland	-	-	2.5	0.8	1.1	1.4	-	1.0	0.9
Vaasa south	-	6.7	9.1	9.4	9.8	11.0	11.5	15.3	9.1
Vaasa north	4.5	4.9	6.9	9.2	10.9	10.0	12.0	16.8	9.4
Vaasa east	1.9	7.2	8.5	9.8	10.3	11.7	12.7	20.6	10.3
Kuopio west	13.0	10.6	10.7	11.3	13.1	13.3	15.4	20.9	13.6
Kuopio east	-	3.0	3.2	6.2	4.6	9.6	13.7	21.5	7.7
Mikkeli	6.2	5.5	-	1.6	2.9	-	-	-	2.0
Häme south	-	0.2	-	-	-	-	-	-	0.0
Viipuri west	7.0	6.3	6.5	9.5	6.2	8.1	13.2	20.3	9.6
Viipuri east	23.8	25.2	22.7	27.4	27.1	27.5	31.4	42.1	28.4

TABLE 2 The number and proportion of all Finnish holdings that comprised family-sized farms in 1901.

Holding type	Area (ha)	Number	% of all holdings
Scrapholdings	Under 3.0	106,462	39.3
Family-sized farms	3–24	135,568	50.0
Larger holdings	25+	29,124	10.7
Total		271,154	100.0

Source: Compiled by the author from Hannes Gebhard (1908) *Tilattoman väestön alakomitean tutkimus*, 43, 84.

ranging in size from 3 to 25 hectares (ha) of both arable and pasture on which there are one or two horses and where the holding is either run by family labour or where in addition a single hired hand is employed' (Gebhard, 1908, pp.12–14). The 1910 agricultural census defined farm holding as 'that segment of arable land which a household, including its wage labour, works as a single unit'.

Table 2 presents data on the number and proportion of all holdings that comprised family-sized farms in Finland in 1901. On the basis of the Gebhard committee's definition, family-sized farms of 3–24 ha constituted exactly half of

all holdings. In other words, when viewed nationally there is far from unequivocal support for the Lipset and Rokkan model. In Viipuri province, however, three-quarters of all landholdings in 1901 comprised family-sized farms whilst as Table 3 illustrates, the proportion of all households in the municipalities of Viipuri province in which over 40% worked independent farms—compared with those in which under 40% did so—reached 83.3% in 1901. At that time there were only four municipalities in Finland in which over 70% of all households worked independent farms and all four were located in Viipuri province.

The density of independent small farms in Viipuri province had relatively recent origins since they had earlier comprised tenant holdings on estates which over the course of the 18th century had been donated to the Russian aristocracy by a succession of Czars in return for services rendered. Viipuri formed the core of a slice of territory in eastern Finland known as ‘Old Finland’, which Sweden had conceded to Russia in 1721 but which was returned to the Grand Duchy by Alexander I in 1812. Thereafter the main legacy of the Russian past was the so-called ‘donated estates’ which over time passed from the Russian aristocracy to less wealthy owners and on which conditions varied but generally deteriorated. Consequently, in 1863 the Diet of Estates voted money to the Finnish state to buy the donated land as soon as the owners were willing to sell. Although this land reform programme proved a protracted process, it led to the creation of a numerous, homogenous and independent small-farming population.

TABLE 3 Proportion of municipalities in 1901 in which over 40% of all households worked independent farms.

Province	Total municipalities	Under 40% households working independent farms	Over 40% households working independent farms	% of 40%+ households
Viipuri	54	9	45	83.3
Uusimaa	38	38	0	0.0
Häme	49	49	0	0.0
Turku-Pori	119	117	2	1.7
Mikkeli	26	23	3	11.5
Kuopio	33	32	1	3.0
Vaasa	84	51	33	39.3
Oulu	68	46	22	32.4
Total	471	365	106	22.5

Source: Compiled by the author from Gebhard (1908), op. cit, p. 26.

Importantly, however, they were poor farmers on small plots, obliged to pay the land tax and lacking capital to develop.

When based on the Gebhard data, under half of all landholdings in Oulu province in 1901 comprised family-sized farms whereas almost one-quarter were larger farms of 25 ha and over, twice as many as in any other province and seven times as many larger farms as in Viipuri province. In Oulu province, moreover, the proportion of municipalities in which over 40% of all households worked independent farms—relative to those under that figure—was barely one-third compared with over four-fifths in Viipuri province. However, because the Gebhard committee's statistics set out the absolute rather than the cultivated area of farm holdings, data from the 1910 agricultural census were used to gage the extent to which the incorporation of [largely unused] pasture into the size of holdings inflated the proportion of larger farms. Table 4 compares by province the amount of arable and pasture in Gebhard's work with the amount of purely arable in the 1910 agricultural census. Across the eight Finnish provinces the amount of arable/pasture exceeded purely arable land by 962,502 ha, Oulu province accounting for 37.8% of the difference. In short, by including pasture, the Gebhard figures paint a misleading picture of the typical landholding in Oulu province.

Indeed, the amount of arable land a holding contained represents a better indicator than the absolute size of the holding, particularly when two-fifths of all landholdings in Oulu province in 1910 contained only a modest 1–3 ha of arable. They were none the less family farms at least in the sense they employed full-time family labour. Equally, faced with the difficulty of obtaining loans,

TABLE 4 The arable and pasture in Gebhard's research compared with the purely arable land in the 1910 agricultural census (ha).

Arable and pasture (1901)	Province	Arable only (1910)
264,051	Uusimaa	223,888
465,931	Turku-Pori	390,933
295,662	Häme	264,797
324,905	Viipuri	238,699
198,435	Mikkeli	111,619
308,639	Kuopio	133,741
513,789	Vaasa	408,639
473,784	Oulu	110,378
Total 2,845,196		1,882,694

Source: Compiled by the author from Gebhard (1908), 43 and Maataloustiedustelu Suomessa vuonna 1910, 61.

many of these family farmers emigrated to the United States in the hope of building up sufficient capital to be able to return to Finland and set up as commercial farmers. Between 1901 and 1910, 23,147 persons—over one-fifth of the national emigration figure for the period—left Oulu province for America. It was much the same story in Viipuri province where small farms were put up for sale and the level of emigration was exceeded in only two other provinces.

All in all, the ‘us’ in the agrarian populist model typically comprised independent small farmers, working as a family unit, whose standard of farming—and living—was low, who lacked capital for modernisation, and who operated in challenging climatic conditions. They bore the exclusive burden of a land tax; they were obliged to maintain local roads and bridges; and they were required to arrange transport for persons passing through the village.

The ‘us’ as Christian revivalists?

The absence of an influential Catholic church

Whilst à la Lipset and Rokkan the Catholic church had minimal influence in Reformation-dominant Finland, the argument made in this section is that the AP became identified as the party of small-farmer Christian revivalists who rejected the privileges of the clerical elite in the state Evangelical Lutheran Church. Several authors have alluded, albeit *en passant*, to the contribution of religious revivalism to the AP vote at the party-building phase. Hokkanen (1986, p. 61) in the party publication *Heräävä Maa IX* claims that the AP was the most Christian of the Finnish parties and that free-church and revivalist movements were strongly represented from the outset, both in the field and in the parliamentary group. Hakalehto (1986, p. 201) notes, in the first volume of the official party history, that the AP ‘gained its greatest support in those constituencies in which the independent small-farming share of the population was highest...and in which the rural population, influenced by revivalist movements, was religious’. Isohookana-Asunmaa (1986, p. 148) asserts that from the party's inception onwards a majority of [one of the revivalist groups] Conservative Laestadians belonged to the AP whilst Talonen (1988) concurs that in northern Finland the AP drew particular strength from Conservative Laestadianism (CL).

Laestadianism, the most widespread of the Scandinavian revivalist movements, originated in northern Sweden as a result of the work Lars Levi Laestadius, who died in 1861. It became established in the far north of Finland in the 1860s and, following a period of expansion in the 1970s, it formed a cohesive religious strip, extending from northern Lapland to central Ostrobothnia (Keski-Pohjanmaa) and it also gained a foothold among the coastal Swedish-speaking fisher-farmers in Vaasa province (Snellman, 2014). Beginning that same decade, railway building workers, skilled artisans and disparate

landless elements, moving in search of work, ‘exported’ Laestadianism from northern Finland to the eastern border province of Viipuri. Many of those looking for jobs settled in the towns, particularly the city of Viipuri or moved on to St Petersburg; others populated the industrial villages formed around railway crossings. (Kinnunen, 2004, p. 357). Elsewhere in the countryside, however, the Laestadians were largely born and bred local farmers.

The rapid spread of Laestadianism coincided with generational turnover at the leadership level and this contributed to a fragmentation of the movement at the beginning of the 20th century. ‘New Revivalism’ (*Uusi heräys*), initially the strongest of the three arms of the movement, had its following mainly in southern Finland. ‘Firstborn Laestadianism’ (*Esikoislestadiolaisuus*), which emerged in 1902, also had congregations primarily in the southern towns. Conservative Laestadianism (*Vanhoillislestadiolaisuus*), which acquired an organisational foundation following the creation of ‘peace associations’ (*rauhanyhdistykset*) in the 1880s, was rooted in northern and eastern Finland. This was also AP heartland.

Tables 5 and 6 present data on the AP vote in nine municipalities in the Oulu north constituency (ON9) in which there were strong CL congregations and eight comparable municipalities in Viipuri east (VE8) over the 13 general elections between 1907 and 1929 (in the latter year the AP was the largest parliamentary party).

In both the ON9 and VE8 in 1907 CLs would have been first-time voters, lacking a prior partisan allegiance, whilst the AP, as a new party, emerged into a proto-party system and faced strong competition for the CL vote from the conservative-nationalist Old Finn Party and the liberal-nationalist Young Finns. The AP, moreover, was not necessarily well-known whereas in several strong CL municipalities candidates included CL politicians with a record of representation in the defunct House of Estates. All six Laestadians representing northern Finland in the Peasant Estate between 1877 and 1906 were Old Finns (Talonen, 1988, p. 350) and it seems probable that for some CLs the Old Finns’ plea to place the nation as a whole before the pursuit of narrow class interests elicited some sympathy. In the ON9 municipality of Kuusamo at the 1907 general election, for example, the Old Finns gained 73% of the vote, polling all the votes in the Sydänmaa and Siuminki voting areas and over 97% in four others (Talonen, 1988, p. 127).

However, the AP breakthrough began as early as 1909 with the election of the CL and former Old Finn K.A. Lohi and that year the AP became the largest party in Kuusamo with 43.0% of the municipal poll (Kyllönen, 2010; Ossian, 1982). By 1917 the AP was the largest party in four of the ON9 municipalities and two years later it became the largest party across the ON9, gaining an absolute majority in six of them. In the same year, 1919, the AP averaged 61.6%, gained an absolute majority in all eight municipalities of the

TABLE 5 Agrarian Party support in the ON9, 1907–1929.

	1907	1908	1909	1910	1911	1913	1916	1917	1919	1922	1924	1927	1929
Pudasjärvi	3.9	18.3	23.6	20.0	27.1	41.5	35.2	34.9	49.4	48.2	40.5	32.5	47.1
Kuusamo	3.9	38.3	43.0	43.5	45.1	53.5	50.6	55.2	75.9	72.5	87.3	86.4	76.9
Taivalkoski	15.1	22.9	26.1	31.8	36.3	44.8	49.4	53.4	74.1	68.3	70.2	67.7	62.7
Turtola	11.0	13.5	17.2	23.8	26.5	19.5	32.3	45.2	56.5	48.9	45.3	55.7	59.1
Ylikiminki	21.1	24.5	34.8	35.9	33.8	50.6	32.3	29.6	43.1	31.9	44.3	35.1	45.9
Kemijärvi	14.1	11.8	9.8	11.4	13.8	12.2	15.3	38.8	58.4	46.6	48.3	72.8	71.7
Kiiminki	25.2	26.7	29.6	29.7	27.6	31.8	23.0	20.9	44.8	31.3	39.9	35.2	34.0
Rovaniemi	8.1	8.8	13.1	21.7	21.7	18.1	26.7	48.4	69.3	69.2	67.6	64.7	68.5
Ylitornio	19.7	16.5	17.0	27.9	31.4	26.6	27.1	38.1	79.8	77.9	70.1	68.7	76.3
Average	13.6	20.1	23.8	27.3	29.3	33.2	32.4	40.5	61.3	55.0	57.1	57.6	60.2

TABLE 6 Agrarian Party Support in the VE8, 1907–1929.

	1907	1908	1909	1910	1911	1913	1916	1917	1919	1922	1924	1927	1929
Uukuniemi	77.4	67.7	66.0	74.9	74.2	76.5	76.3	85.7	83.0	85.6	83.3	85.9	87.7
Pyhäjärvi	53.8	53.4	49.7	58.8	57.6	55.9	45.9	64.8	63.6	62.4	63.8	56.2	61.1
Hiitola	54.0	55.3	52.4	56.4	56.6	53.7	56.5	68.6	68.6	68.3	70.6	69.3	71.5
Jaakkima	54.9	64.8	41.7	54.5	49.9	51.2	60.0	71.1	72.3	73.1	62.4	66.5	75.8
Sortavala	71.6	56.3	54.1	54.1	52.7	50.7	54.8	54.3	51.3	58.5	55.6	59.9	60.6
Räisälä	48.7	45.4	36.0	40.3	40.9	41.1	44.2	59.1	57.1	63.4	59.4	52.9	53.8
Käkisalmi	42.4	25.0	19.2	24.6	22.3	18.9	15.3	50.3	58.5	66.6	64.8	48.4	55.9
Valkjärvi	5.5	2.8	4.2	8.1	7.3	6.9	9.8	14.6	38.3	32.9	44.4	45.5	67.0
Average	51.0	46.3	40.4	46.5	45.2	44.4	45.4	58.6	61.6	63.9	63.0	60.6	66.7

VE8 and in Uukuniemi polled 83.0%. Indeed, the AP had been the leading party in the VE8 from 1907 onwards.

Summing up, by 1919 CLs contributed in no small measure to the Agrarian ‘us’, although to note this is not to establish the motive(s) for a CL’s AP vote (impossible without the type of survey data available today). It may be assumed, however, following the ‘identity voting’ literature (Ansolabehere & Puy, 2016), that CLs turned to the AP because it was the party best aligned with their identity. This could be their *religious identity*—either a vote for an expressly CL candidate or then a candidate with personal vote-earning attributes (PVEAs) appealing to CLs. In 1906 Finland adopted an intraparty preference voting system—one variant in the family of ‘personalised electoral systems’ (Renwick & Pilet, 2016)—and this enabled voters to compare candidates and cast a personal vote (Zittel, 2017) on the basis of individual merit. Suitable PVEAs would doubtless have included teetotalism, temperance more generally and ‘localness’ (a municipal face). An AP vote could also have followed from the *class identity* of CLs as predominantly small farmers and a perception that it was in their economic interests as much as their religious interests to back the Agrarians. In such a case, a ‘homogeneity of reinforcement’ might have applied—that is, ‘do as the rest of the village is doing’.

In AP identity-building, and in ‘personalising’ religion and social class, the role of small-farmer, CL lay preachers was important. So, too, was the hostility of many in the clerical Establishment. In the strong CL-AP municipality of Uukuniemi in the VE8, strenuous opposition from the Evangelical Lutheran minister, Alexander Gustaf Walle, a former long-serving member of the Peasant Estate, undoubtedly contributed to ‘us-mobilisation’. For CL voters the AP was identified as the party of ‘us’ against the privileged clerics in the Lutheran state church.

OTHERING ‘THEM’

Cultural barriers between the countryside and the cities

This fourth (and final) Lipset and Rokkan condition for the emergence of strong farmers’ parties is crucial to understanding the populist characteristics of the nascent AP. As with ‘countrymindedness’ in the Australian Country Party’s agrarian populism, the Finnish AP did not invent ‘bigwig animosity’—the term *herraviha*—translates literally as ‘bigwig hatred’—but it certainly harnessed it and used it for electoral gain. Indeed, the argument in this section is that the AP’s dominant characteristic in its early years was a diffuse, small-farmer ‘anti-ness’—a wide-ranging suspicion of, and prejudice towards those in educated, high-status positions in society.

There was, of course, obvious hyperbole in much of the Agrarian rhetoric. In the publication *Maanmoukka* (‘Country Bumpkin’) Juho Ranta (1908)

asked: ‘How could the future leaders of the Finnish nation, its priests and teachers, be properly educated in towns where alcohol flows freely, brothels are permitted by law and there is a complete absence of morality?’ In the same publication the chasm between the urban bigwig and country bumpkin was likened to that between the American white and American ‘negro’. Equally, it cannot be doubted that an instinctive *herraviha* existed among the rural population and that it served as an important ‘otherising’ agent for the embryonic AP. Put another way, the AP’s strategy was to frame issues in simple, dichotomous terms, the party taking the side of the ‘us’ the people (*kansa*) against ‘them’, the other—usually the privileged ‘offcomer’. The former minister, MP and AP secretary Seppo Kääriäinen (2002, p. 57) has ‘personalised’ this populist ‘anti-ness’ as ‘Pykälä-ism’ (*pykäläläisyys*) after the AP leader in Viipuri K.K. Pykälä, although it was evident more widely across the grassroots of the party. Indeed, a leading AP figure in the Oulu region Kyösti Kallio bemoaned the work of *herraviha*-peddling activists such as K.W. Ylitalo and Iivari Lantto and the election of this type of sub-standard AP MP (Hokkanen, 1986b, p. 114). In 1909 he refused to place on the party list a ‘narrow-minded candidate seeking to exploit *herraviha* to attract support’ (Hokkanen, 1986b, p. 139).

Several factors facilitated agrarian populism. First, there was concern, especially among an older generation of farmers, that the availability of primary school education would create upward social mobility and swell the ranks of the city elites. Second, there was the small-farmer perception that the candidates of the non-socialist challenger parties were social superiors representing values and embodying a culture that was anathema to them. Lastly, there was the feeling that, as many of the Old Finn and Young Finn candidates lacked ‘localness’, they could not understand the need for rural reform. These points warrant brief elaboration.

On the first, whilst illiteracy was relatively rare in Finland—in 1900 38% of the total population could both read and write (UNESCO, 1954, p. 205) and primary school instruction reached almost half the children between 9 and 13 years living in the countryside (Ruutu, 1956, p. 82)—there was not a compulsory system of primary education and the long distances involved in attending school often acted as a deterrent. For an older generation of farmers, moreover, primary schools were not always welcome. In the VE8 municipality of Räisälä, opponents of the foundation of a local primary school in 1872 believed that the school would produce an educated class of persons that would leave their parents’ occupation (farming) behind. Juho Niukkanen, a long-serving AP MP from Kirvu, also in Viipuri east, recalled how, when he mooted the idea of going on to secondary school, his father retorted dismissively that ‘there are more than enough educated persons around already’ (Sorvali, 1975, p. 21).

On the second point, the widespread prejudice towards those in high-status positions was reinforced by the disproportionately large number of educated

persons running for the Old Finns and Young Finns. Out of the 10 lists the Old Finns ran in the rural municipalities of Viipuri east in 1907, for example, two were headed by men with PhDs resident in Helsinki and another by a PhD from the city of Viipuri. On the 19 Young Finn lists in Viipuri east in 1907 there were almost as many PhDs as farmers and no less than 17 candidates lived in Helsinki.

The negative stereotyping of city-based candidates was reinforced by the impressions of AP MPs experiencing Helsinki for the first time—impressions that were widely reported in the party press. The farmer G.A. Kakriainen, representing the Viipuri west constituency in 1910, saw the capital as a typical enclave city in which hedonism and excess were flourishing and the desire to work diminishing,¹ whilst in Oulu south Iivari Lantto deplored the way the traditional aristocracy was being emulated by a materialistic middle class.² On a similar theme Tolari in the AP organ *Maakansa* related how the population of Lappeenranta (then a garrison town for Russian soldiers) was divided into three classes—the upper class (*hienosto*), the middle class (*puoli hienosto*) and the rest (*tavalliset ihmiset*). He notes how the middle class confused Finnish, Swedish and a little Russian, but they would need to persevere since nobody is considered cultured unless they can speak Swedish (the language of the national minority).³ Moreover, in a letter to the AP organ in Oulu, *Liitto*, a self-styled ‘former Old Finn supporter’ complained that the Old Finn candidate spoke Swedish, was a lawyer and seemed to regard the farmers of north-west Finland as an ‘inferior race’ to be manipulated and exploited.⁴

On the final point, there was a broad understanding within the AP that a lack of ‘localness’ disqualified ‘offcomer candidates’ who would lack familiarity with, and empathy for rural conditions and, by extension, the incentive to improve them. This was the thrust of the party leader Otto Karhi’s submission at the AP’s inaugural conference in Oulu in September 1906.⁵ The Karelian-wing leader Pykälä related how, when campaigning at the 1907 general election, he encountered a Young Finn candidate who, as a wealthy man, was accompanied by a young woman whose task it was to present the party programme. She would occasionally point to the candidate who, as Pykälä remarked ironically, purported to be able to solve the world’s many problems!

The Agrarian press reported incidents at campaign events that pointed to the way a combination of high status and a lack of ‘localness’ was viewed as a strongly negative attribute in candidates. Thus, in November 1906, there was much excitement at an open meeting in the primary school in Soanlahti municipality in Viipuri east when, after the Young Finn and AP programmes had been read out, a farmer stood up to declare that the rural population had been dragged along by the boot laces of the bigwigs for too long and they had had more than enough. Teppo, who signed himself ‘a long-haired troublemaker’ bemoaned the naivety of the villagers in Kivennapa, also in Viipuri east, and ‘how they would dance a mazurka every time the “nobs” (herrat) cared to play’.

All in all, the anecdotal evidence of us-and-them ‘anti-ness’ is overwhelming and whilst *herraviha* plainly antedated the AP, a strategy of populist otherisation harnessed it to denigrate a high-status out-group and cement a small-farmer in-group identity. The ‘them-group’, which was the object of negative stereotyping, comprised a motley collection of civil servants, bankers, clerics and the other ‘parasites’ making up the ‘Helsinki set’ (*Helsingin herrat*).

Importantly, on the ‘supply side’ AP policies fed grassroots anti-ness. Thus, the AP sought to redress the local grievances of farm owners who bore exclusive responsibility for making local transport arrangements, along with building and repairing roads and bridges (Hytönen, 1923; Jutikkala, 1956). The AP’s Seinäjoki programme in October 1906 held that the state should take charge of local transport and the system run on a commercial basis. It was a prominent AP election theme throughout the pre-independence decade and at the polls in 1913 and 1916 the party lists contained slogans expressly referring to the need to reform the transport system (*kyytילות*). In essence the problem was that farm owners were obliged to pay a dedicated transport tax to subsidise a system used increasingly by outsiders—especially travellers from nearby towns, who did not contribute to the upkeep of roads—and a tax, moreover, which was designed to exempt farmers from arranging transport but did not do so. It has been estimated that in the period 1901–1905 the transport tax contributed a substantial burden on farmers in almost half of all Finnish municipalities (Paasikivi, 1920, p. 738).

Herraviha also contained a religious dimension in as much as the AP programme stated that ‘serious consideration should be given to a possible separation of church and state’—a contentious electoral question in the pre-independence period and one that both mobilised and divided revivalist Christians (Leinonen, 1959, pp. 179–182). It was also the most difficult issue in the discussions leading up to the birth of the AP (Hokkanen, 1986b, p. 15), something reflected in the compromise formulation that ‘serious consideration’ be given the separation of church and state. Ultimately, liberal elements got approval for the right to civil marriage whilst traditionalists gained a commitment to the retention of religious education in schools. Crucially, however, all sides agreed that a range of clerical ‘perks’ should be removed—vicarages should be abolished, clerics paid in hard currency and individual parishes should have the right to choose their own minister. Underpinning these radical AP demands was the view, put baldly, that the state Lutheran church had long since abandoned religion and the clergy was primarily concerned to look after its ‘earthly’ needs. Plainly, then, in advocating a possible separation of church and state, a fundamental element in the AP’s anti-clericalism was an attack on the social privileges the clergy had acquired over the years. This anti-clericalism, moreover, appealed to elements in the AP’s small-farmer CL base since as Talonen (1988, p. 129) has suggested, ‘the Agrarians church policy met

the expectations of many Laestadians in their critique of the Evangelical Lutheran Church and the CLs emphasis on a living Christian faith’.

However, perhaps the clearest evidence of the deployment of populist rhetoric as a mobilisation strategy was the demarcation of the sides in the 1918–1919 struggle over the appropriate form of government for the newly independent state. Constitutional monarchy was depicted as an elitist project backed by the Establishment and the Evangelical Lutheran Church whereas republicanism, favoured by the AP, was associated with a wide range of small-farmer grievances and the argument advanced—or at least strongly implied—that only a presidential system could provide a framework within which these problems could be resolved. The AP slogan for the 1919 general election ran: ‘The monarchists placed their faith in a German [prince] and an elitist form of government; the Agrarians in the Finnish people and democracy’. The message was clear—monarchy was Swedish-speaking, urban and upper class whereas republicanism was Finnish-speaking and the ideology of the rural population. The AP in short invoked the strident ‘us and them’ paradigm and the radical anti-ness of the party’s origins (Table 7).

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Neither revolutionary peasantist in the manner of the Russian *Narodniki*, nor stridently anti-capitalist, as in the case of the American People’s Party, this article has sought to present first-wave populism in Finland as distinctive and to characterise the embryonic AP as an agrarian populist party—the first Scandinavian agrarian populist party. Agrarian populism in Finland in the decade before independence was distinctive in that, unlike most of the inter-war Green Rising peasant parties, it drew (i) almost exclusively on independent smallholders—the tenants and rural landless turned to agrarian socialism. Indeed, the Finnish Social Democratic Party was the largest party of its kind in Europe at the time and at the 1907 general election claimed 80 of the 200 seats in the new unicameral Eduskunta. (ii) It operated within a pluralist-democratic framework. Put another way, first-wave Finnish agrarian populism was in large measure a by-product of the 1906 parliamentary and electoral reforms, which superimposed mass democracy at a stroke—universal voting rights for all men and women over 24 years—on an overwhelmingly rural society. In neighbouring Sweden, in contrast, where farming conditions were generally more favourable and industrialisation more advanced, the 1909 electoral reform enfranchised only adult males and then on a 40-vote scale related to income and wealth.

Using the four Lipset and Rokkan conditions for the emergence of strong APs to structure the empirical analysis, the argument in this article advanced in three stages. 1. The agrarian populism of the nascent Finnish Agrarian Party drew on a sense of relative deprivation experienced by independent smallholders in two outlying provinces—Oulu and Viipuri. It was an agrarian populism of

TABLE 7 The Agrarian Party (AP) vote at the 1919 Finnish general election.

Constituency	AP votes	%	Electoral lists
Uusimaa	1545	1.1 ^a	4
Turku/Pori south	4528	5.3 ^b	7
Turku/Pori north	7181	10.4 ^c	9
Häme south	1213	2.2	1
Häme north	1432	2.6	4
Viipuri west	18,293	24.3	11
Viipuri east	40,392	52.1	17
Mikkeli	4,255	6.8	6
Kuopio west	15,691	27.1	22
Kuopio east	13,834	34.6	10
Vaasa east	14,973	30.7	9
Vaasa south	1,262	2.3	12
Vaasa north	12,486	27.4	9
Oulu south	26,549	46.7	19
Oulu north	15,919	56.6	15
Lapland	309	11.5	-

^aVotes cast expressly for the AP, including votes in the towns and votes cast from other constituencies.

^bThe AP ran in an electoral alliance with the Progressive Party (*Edistyspuolue*—mainly former Young Finns) and Christian Workers' Party (*Kristillinen työväenpuolue*) in Uusimaa, Turku/Pori south and Häme south; with the Christian Workers' Party in Turku/Pori north, Häme north, Kuopio west and Vaasa east; and with the Progressive Party in Vaasa south and Vaasa north.

^c89.8% of the AP vote was cast in rural municipalities.

Source: Compiled by the author from: Suomen virallinen tilasto XXIX Eduskuntavaalit vuonna 1919. Helsinki: valtioneuvoston kirjapaino.

the economic and geographical periphery. 2. The AP became identified as the dedicated party of small-farmer Christian revivalists (Conservative Laestadians) opposed to the privileges of the clerics in the state Lutheran church. Agrarian populism in its anti-clericalism embraced a measure of religious populism. 3. The AP both fed and fed off a diffuse, small-farmer anti-ness. It did not create 'bigwig hatred' but it perpetuated it, 'othering it' within a binary 'us-and-them' paradigm.

Parties are of course internal coalitions and the nascent AP was no exception. Within it, there were in Rose's seminal terminology, 'factions, tendencies and nonaligned partisans' (Rose, 1964). By 1914, of the two leading

AP radicals, the Oulu-wing leader Otto Karhi had left to join the Social Democrats whilst the Karelian (Viipuri)-wing leader Kalle Pykälä was murdered in sauna—reputedly by a social democrat. There were other senior figures such as Alkio and Kallio who eschewed *herraviha*—bumpkin hatred—in favour of a countryside built on the solid foundation of the temperance and youth movements. None the less, the immutable fact is that Agrarian radicalism rested on a bedrock of family-farmers—many actively religious—whose standard of farming—and living—was low, who lacked development capital and who operated in difficult climatic conditions. These were not the commercial farmers of the Norwegian or Czechoslovak APs.

Parties change and party leaders change and, in so doing, they may well challenge the utility of a once-and-for-all characterisation of political parties. By 1929 the AP had become the largest parliamentary party and a regular party of government. Indeed, a perception of its ‘bigwigification’—that it had become an Establishment party—led in the 1930s to defections to a Smallholders’ Party embracing the very radical, populist anti-ness that was integral to the AP in its formative years. In the 1960s a perception that the Agrarian-Centre was not only an Establishment party but *the* Establishment party created still more conducive conditions for Vennamo’s Finnish Rural Party. The 1960s are routinely viewed as the point of departure when studying agrarian populism in Finland. However, as this piece has shown, agrarian populism long antedated that. Political scientists could well benefit from using a longer lens when viewing the genealogy of the populist-party family.

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ENDNOTES

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