

Social Media and Youth Research

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Sofia Laine
The Finnish Youth Research Network
Sofia.laine@youthresearch.fi
www.nuorisotutkimusseura.fi
<http://blogs.helsinki.fi/yopo-africa/>
<http://lageneracionindignada.blogspot.com.es/>



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...from the perspective of Finnish Youth Research Network

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Finnish Media Barometer for Children

- Seeks to analyse children's media relations on a national level and to produce information for profiling and developing media education. Project researcher: Annika Suoninen (PhD). Funding: Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture / Division for Cultural Policy.
- The data has been collected both by utilising a questionnaire (more than 1000 answers from children on elementary school or on grades 1, 3, and 5) and through qualitative in-depth interviews. The data was collected in 19 schools all over the country to ensure a wide geographical coverage.
- In 2012, even 10–12 year-old Finnish children use the Internet at least weekly. Although most of the sites limit users according to age, older children have their own profile and they are active in sharing writing or videos, although personal profile updates are not very common. The Internet use of this age group is growing continuously. (Suoninen 2013.)
- 2011 Barometer:
<http://www.mediakasvatus.fi/publications/ISBN978-952-67693-2-5.pdf>



Youth Street Politics in the Media Age – A comparative study of the suburbs of Helsinki and London (2012–2014)

The consortium project studies the social movement of youth in today's media society. The research focuses on both the social activity of youth in the suburbs as well as public discussion perceptions on suburban youth and youth in city peripheries. **The researchers get into the suburbs of Helsinki and London to observe and interview the youth.** The project brings light to the social meanings of the street in young people's everyday life. **In the project the street is understood as both a physical and social space, and both urban and social media spaces are under scrutiny.**

Methodologically the project combines street and media ethnography in a novel way, while strengthening the dialogue between science and art in data collection and reporting. The project leader is Leena Suurpää and the University of Helsinki subproject is led by docent Johanna Sumiala. Project researchers: Titus Hjelm (PhD, University College London / Finnish Youth Research Network) and Minttu Tikka (University of Helsinki).

Myötätulessa (Fair Wind) Evaluation Project (2010–2012 & 2013)

- Research is done in cooperation with and coordinated by the Youth Department of the City of Helsinki. The aim of the study is to **evaluate and research development processes, which are used to enhance digital media skills and bring new technology and web-mediated interaction methods into youth work.** The final report will be published in the beginning of year 2013. Researcher: Heidi Villikka (M.Soc.Sc.). The study receives funding from the European Social Fund.



Youth Against Drugs Street Team Evaluation Project (2010–2013)

- An evaluation project of a drug awareness campaign by YAD, investigating how youth drug attitudes can be influenced at the grassroots level, in youth culture environments. **Campaign is very active in Facebook, and evaluation research was also done partly in Facebook.**

Part-time project researcher: Suvi Ervamaa
(M.Soc.Sc.).



Report for the CoE: Youth Participation Good Practices in Different Forms of Regional and Local Democracy

The analysis in this paper is based on using a five-fold frame for ways of promoting participation. The good practices presented in the paper are categorized within different fields of political action, including **representative, direct, participatory, deliberative, and counter-democracy**. The general argumentation of the paper states that in creating a participatory culture, the practices in all of these fields should be taken into account. **The good practices are based on answers to a e-questionnaire which was open from 31st January to 18th of February 2013. Respondents from 22 countries answered the questionnaire.** In addition to the questionnaire, some good practices are identified using existing research literature on youth participation. **The use of social media is presented in an individual chapter,** as well as an overview of existing policy documents and the legal framework of youth participation. **The paper advocates using a broad scope of democracy in policy planning, and it documents existing practices all over Europe.** The good practices are analysed from the adult perspective and the actual impact of these practices on young people is not assessed. The recommendations offered in the beginning of the report are based on the analysis offered in all the chapters presented in the paper.

- The most mentioned social media site was Facebook. There were some descriptions of sites that have an unofficial status in the political system. These sites serve as political discussion arenas, and might be considered sites for digital political will-formation. Examples stated that the young, either individually, or through organizations and parties, should have Facebook sites where to “freely discuss policies and politics”.
- Examples of how general Internet activism (bottom-up) could be connected to (top-down) political decision making are scarce in our data. This raises the question of how social media could be used in a manner that would connect the young to decision-making.



Recommendations concerning the use of social media in youth participation:

The use of social media should be increased in promoting participation. The connection to the off-line world should be structured so that the use of social media will have practical consequences in decision-making. **In the use of social media in promoting youth participation there is a need for including a variety of tools, such as blogs, wikis, or even virtual worlds, instead of only social networks.** Using social media, it is possible to combine bottom-up Internet activism with the top-down structures of political decision making. In the general logic of social media gatekeepers are absent and different networks are not necessarily based on existing hierarchies.

Hate Communities: An International Comparison (2013-)

The project leaders are docent Atte Oksanen and professor Pekka Räsänen.

Researchers: docent Vili Lehdonvirta (Dr.Soc.Sci.) and Emma Holkeri (LI. M.).


Young People as Victims of Crime on the Internet: A Population-based Study in Finland by Atte Oksanen (2013, Vulnerable Children & Youth Studies):

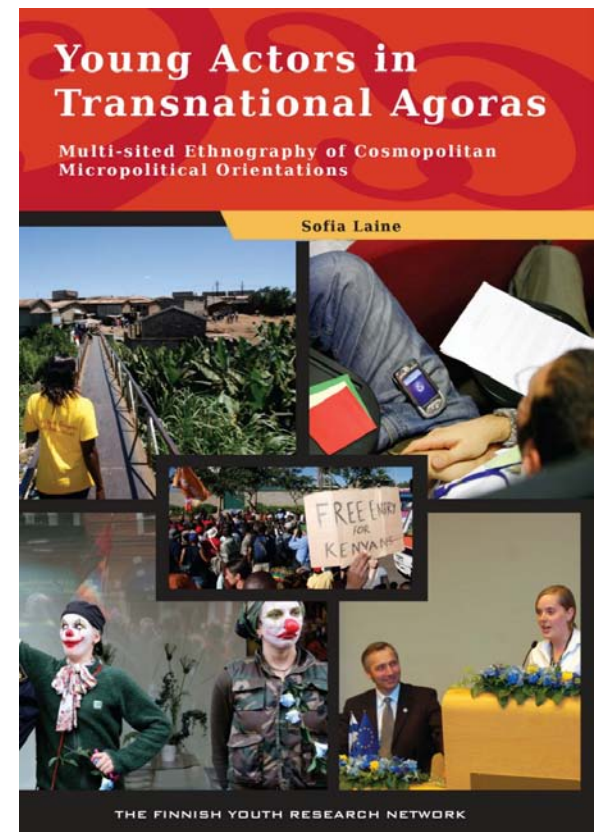
This study investigates cybercrime, which has become a significant phenomenon within the last two decades. Being a victim of fraud, defamation or harassment online concerns, younger age groups who are active Internet users. A population-based cross-sectional survey collected from 15 to 74 year olds in Finland (n = 46,139) is used as data. **The results show that young people are more likely to be victims of cybercrime even when other factors were adjusted for. Besides age, other factors including gender, education, economic status, and violent victimization are associated with cybercrime victimization. The analysis conducted on 15–24 year olds shows that participation in online communities and violent victimization were associated with cybercrime victimization. Good offline social networks were a protective factor against cybercrime victimization among females.** Young cybercrime victims were more likely to be worried about future victimization. Our findings highlight the importance of understanding both psychosocial risk factors offline and patterns of risky online behavior. The risk of cybercrime victimization is related to the problems that young people may face in the offline everyday life.

Diversity of youth engagement was already topic in my PhD:

Laine, Sofia (2012) *Young Actors in Transnational Agoras. Multi-Sited Ethnography of Cosmopolitan Micropolitical Orientations*. Helsinki: The Finnish Youth Research Network/ The Finnish Youth Research Society, publications 121.

-> Local and global activism w/ different logics

	'Way of subjectivity'	'Way of reason'
Lack of cosmopolitan resources		
Cosmopolitan resources		



Studying Global Social Movement

- In my scientific article *Grounded globalizations of transnational social movements: Ethnographic analysis on Free Hugs Campaign at Eorld Social Forum Belém 2009* I studied and used YouTube (also my own account), free access journal:
<http://www.ephemerajournal.org/sites/default/files/11-3laine.pdf>
- As the Free Hugs Campaign is a global social movement, its strategy aims to support both the local and global presence: **a local collective self-presentation** was the single act I faced in the WSF Belém and it is visible from my recording and **a global collective self-presentation** that can be viewed by watching the Free Hugs videos from the **YouTube**. Both collective self-presentations are part of the process of collective identity formation (Eyerman, *ibid.*: 50).
- How the use of one's **own body**, combined with the visual **and digital methodologies** when conducting global ethnographic research, may be a useful combination for the global social movement research.

- Using the same social media format that the global social movement uses, the researcher will deepen his/her understanding of how the global social movement uses the global public sphere to build a global movement.
- In this kind of an approach the researcher's own grounded knowledge from the field is combined with digital information on the transnational social movement: its actors and its actions.

Youth activism in 2011 social movements

- Common infrastructure of networks and meetings, especially through social media.

“Egyptian air is healthy for your lungs/Turn Red Square into Tahrir” (from Pussy Riot’s first song, ‘Release the Cobblestones’, November 2011)



Social functions of the press

- 1. Generating values and goals**
- 2. Shaping the reality**
- 3. Political safety valve**
- 4. Monitoring the exercise of power**
- 5. Maintenance, reconstruction or revocation of the societal structures**
- 6. Increases influencing possibilities of the single citizens**

**... are more and more social functions
of the social media tools in activist's
and social movement's work**

