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'Yes, but all responsible Finns want to stop living on credit'

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Introductionⁱ

The financial crisis in 2007–2008 paved the way for a hegemony of austerity in several states in the European Union as well as in the United States. In the research literature, austerity is described as a wisdom for addressing the problem of public debt (Clarke & Newman 2012, 300; Blyth 2013). What is more, it is seen as an intensification of neoliberal dynamics and a larger-scale process of restructuring economic and social relations (Hayes 2017, 23; Morris 2016, 101). Austerity is based on the idea that the current amount of public debt is unsustainable. According to the doctrine, the major means for debt reduction are financial stringency, including significant reduction of public expenditures; a “thinner” state with less social responsibility, and lower wages and prices. Measures to these ends are believed to have positive effects on production, employment and competitiveness (Fontana & Sawyer 2011, 57–58). Austerity has been defended with rhetoric emphasising that ‘we’re all in this together’ and that it is the only option in the current economic situation (O’Hara 2015, 5; Clarke & Newman 2012, 303). In this article, we illustrate the ways in which policy-makers coax citizens into accepting austerity as a ‘joint effort’ and demonstrate that these were based on governance of citizens’ feelings about austerity.

Securing citizens’ support for austerity has not been an easy task for politicians. Austerity measures have sparked protests in the countries where austerity has come to dominate fiscal policy, examples being Greece, Spain, Italy, Portugal, the UK, Slovenia, the Czech Republic, Poland, Romania and Bulgaria (see Hayes 2017, 21–22; Della Porta 2015; cf. Stanley 2014). According to the criticism levelled at austerity, the process – despite a rhetoric invoking a sense of community and solidarity – is one designed to discipline groups of citizens who are already in a vulnerable position, such as women, immigrants, the unemployed and children (e.g. Peck 2012; O’Hara 2014, 6; Hayes 2017, 23). In addition, austerity has been accused of conflicting with principles of democracy and efforts to encourage participatory decision-making (e.g. Schafer & Streeck 2013; Blyth 2013; Della Porta 2015).

Our analysis focuses on Finland, which is an exception among the austerity states for at least three reasons. Firstly, the country is a latecomer to austerity. Despite an 8.3 per cent decline in the annual GNP in 2009, the sharpest since the Civil War in 1918 (Hjerppe 1988; Statistics Finland 2017), it did not take a sharp rhetorical turn embracing austerity until the parliamentary elections in 2015 (cf. Elomäki et al. 2017, 231). The three parties receiving the most votes – the conservative Centre Party, the populist Finns Party (also known as the True Finns) and the right-wing National Coalition – shared an understanding that cuts were needed to stop the country incurring public debt and that it was time to stop reflationary policy. After the elections, the new prime minister, Juha Sipilä, announced a radical shift in national policy: the government would implement three measures

designed to improve national competitiveness, each in keeping with the transnational austerity discourse (see Farnsworth & Irving 2018; Blyth 2013). Firstly, there would be spending cuts of four billion euros, with these to include cuts in public services and in allowances for the unemployed, families with children, pensioners, the elderly and students. Secondly, the government would conclude a 'social contract' (*yhteiskuntasopimus*), later dubbed the 'competitiveness agreement' (*kilpailukyky sopimus, KIKY*). This included a freeze on salary rises, longer working hours and higher pension contributions by employees. Thirdly, the government would undertake to reduce bureaucracy and public regulation which, among other things, would make it easier for employers to hire workers and for people to accept work.

Secondly, Finland is one of the Nordic welfare states, with the extensive social rights, public services and costs this entails. The country's politicians have often taken great pride in this status (Autto 2012) and have readily adopted policies from the other Nordic countries, especially Sweden. With austerity hailing from countries with quite different policy traditions and a 'thinner' welfare infrastructure, it comes as little surprise that Finland's shift toward austerity aroused negative feelings and prompted criticism, protests and strikes (see e.g. Reuters 2015).

The proposed austerity measures prompted a wave of protests, with cuts in education and child day-care considered particularly harsh. While those hardest hit by the cuts were the unemployed, families with children and students, it was the unions that staged the most visible opposition. Ultimately, however, they bowed to the government's demands for a 'competitiveness agreement'. In autumn 2018, after the government had introduced draft bill for a law that would make it easier to dismiss employees in small enterprises, protests continued in the form of strikes and a confrontation between the trade union movement and the government. In departing from customary Nordic policy, the government evidently risked losing citizens' trust, which, as in the other Nordic countries, has traditionally been high (see e.g. Kestilä-Kekkonen 2016). Namely, in the countries that have adopted austerity earlier, the policy has led to protests against austerity measures, a loss of trust in politicians and political mobilisation against the political and economic elite (Della Porta 2015; Gerbaudo 2017).

The third factor making Finland an exceptional case is its political history, which has provided uniquely fertile ground for equating austerity with common sense. Indeed, cutting public expenditures has been a core strategy of economic adjustment more so than in many other austerity states, which have tended to rely more on a Keynesian reflationary policy (Yliaska 2015; Kettunen 2006). Especially during the economic crisis in 1990s, Finland made significant cuts in public spending. At the time of the elections in 2015, citizens' opinions seemed to accord with those of the

incoming government parties. According to a Gallup poll by the leading national newspaper, *Helsingin Sanomat* (16.4.2015), most Finns supported cuts and tax increases over a reflationary policy. The government, however, decided to rely almost exclusively on spending cuts, apparently considering tax increases an impossible policy option.

In this article, we analyse how the Finnish government tried to win citizens' acceptance of austerity by appealing to their emotions. Of particular interest are the types of emotions that it sought to evoke in telling citizens how they should and should not feel about the measures to be implemented.

Previous research indicates that emotions play a central role in the politics of austerity in several ways. For example, studies have highlighted how austerity as a doctrine is based on 'faith in the power of good feelings' (Clarke & Newman 2012, 301), especially confidence among investors, creditors and consumers (Blyth 2013). According to Mark Blyth (2013; see also Clarke & Newman 2012), the political power of austerity rests partly on misrepresentation of facts. Moreover, because evidence of whether austerity functions or not is disputable, emotions play a fundamental role in justifying the policy. Contrastingly, the politics of austerity often turns political matters and decisions that arouse political passions and disputes into passionless technical questions (Elomäki et al. 2016).

The studies on political strategies for achieving austerity have brought out how a willingness to accept austerity has usually been created by appealing to emotions with both pragmatic and moral arguments (e.g. Clarke & Newman 2012; Clarke 2014; O'Hara 2015; Fairclough 2016). Pragmatic arguments typically justify austerity as a necessity; that is, they assert that there are no alternatives in the current economic situation. Moral arguments, in turn, often motivate austerity as a responsible policy and as a political virtue (Clarke & Newman 2012; Clarke 2014). Consequently, protests constitute irresponsible and condemnable behaviour as they promote state overspending and thus put the nation at risk. Moral arguments also appeal to collective solidarity by emphasising austerity as a joint effort along the lines of 'we are in this together'. Previous studies also indicate that governments typically seek to avoid generating negative feelings about their own policies by blaming previous governments for financial crises and taking credit for resolving them (Clarke & Newman 2012, 306; Giger & Nelson 2010, 19).

Previous research dealing with how governing parties have justified their politics of austerity have largely overlooked the affective dimension of arguments. The present article contributes to addressing this gap in the literature. Applying the concepts of "feeling rules" and "framing rules" (Hochschild 2003; 2016), the research analyses the kinds of emotions that the Finnish government produced in order to secure citizens' backing for austerity. The study demonstrates how the politics

of austerity were entangled with pain, fear, hope, responsibility, humility and trust. For example, the government defended austerity by billing it as a joint belt-tightening effort and by stating that 'we cannot increase public debt at future generations' expense'. To gain acceptance for austerity measures the prime minister, quite exceptionally, gave a speech on television following the main evening news in which he appealed to citizens' emotions, calling upon them to unite in their view on austerity with the words, 'all responsible Finns (-) want to stop living on credit'. The analysis shows that the politics of austerity is more than a matter of getting citizens to accept austerity; they must be invited to participate actively in the effort. Pain is the principal negative feeling allowed, but even that is represented as something citizens should accept for the joint cause.

In the next section, we present our theoretical approach, which is based on the concepts of feeling rules and framing rules. We also describe our empirical data, in which politicians from the government parties justify and defend austerity policies. The section concludes with a description of our analysis methods, which enabled us to trace how narrative structures and metaphors are deployed in emotion governance. The following next section then proceeds to present the analysis proper. This is divided into three parts. In the first, we bring out how the government parties coax citizens to accept the pain caused by austerity by appealing to practical necessity. The second focuses on how they counter citizens' feelings of bitterness over the unfairness of austerity and induce citizens to accept the social injustice that austerity entails. In the third part, we analyse how the government parties try to instil trust in the government and its policy. In the concluding section, we go on to summarise and discuss our findings. As austerity, like any transnational political project, can lead to coherence of (Alasuutari 2016) or differences between national policies (Clarke et al. 2015), we also compare and contrast the feeling rules invoked in Finland with those in other austerity states.

Analysing emotion governance

Our research resonates with the growing academic interest in and contributes to the scholarship on the political significance of emotions and affects. Governance studies have emphasised emotion governance as part of contemporary governing technologies, in particular neoliberal ones (Newman 2017). In citizenship studies, the concept of affective citizenship has been deployed to examine politics that seeks to influence the way citizens feel about their rights and entitlements (Johnson 2010, 469). It has also been used in the analysis of how values and affects relating to social issues are produced (Di Gregorio & Merolli 2016, 936; Fassin 2013). The ideas of emotion governance and affective citizenship train the focus on how emotions and values play a central role in policy-making,

even though policy-making is typically portrayed as rational and fact-based. Our analysis seeks to illustrate the ways in which emotions are deployed in the politics of austerity.

In order to capture attempts to govern emotions relating to austerity, we apply Arlie Hochschild's concept of *feeling rules*, by which she means a 'set of ideas about the right way to feel' about certain issues (Hochschild 2016, 227). Feeling rules are collectively produced and socially shared. Mostly this occurs through latent processes (Hochschild 2003, 97) by which people develop an understanding of how they should and should not feel, or would like to feel, about an array of situations (Tonkens 2012). The concept of feeling rules has been used in studies analysing citizens' feelings about politics as well as politicians' ways of promoting policy reforms. In *Strangers in Their Own Land* (2016), Hochschild examines feeling rules in order to shed light on what she terms a 'Great Paradox', namely, why citizens who would benefit from strong state policies seem to hate the state so much, and why they support a political movement (the Tea Party) with objectives that seem to conflict with their personal interests. Imrat Verhoeven and Evelien Tonkens (2013), for their part, have analysed feeling rules by which the governments in the Netherlands and in the UK encourage active citizenship. They have found that the government of the Netherlands appeals more to responsibility, whereas the UK government focuses on positive feelings with 'empowerment talk'.

The idea of feeling rules helps us to examine how government parties prompt citizens to feel a certain way about austerity while warning them about feeling in other ways (see Hochschild 2003, 82). Members of the government, however, rarely articulate directly what citizens should or should not feel about austerity. In their arguments, feeling rules are constituted quite latently, embedded in narratives that support specific austerity measures or indicate the kinds of emotions and feelings that citizens are expected to accept.

We also apply the concept of *framing rules* in our analysis. Framing rules provide the context for feeling rules by shaping how we should see a situation and make sense of it (Tonkens 2012, 199). They bring out the government's wider interpretations of the current situation and the meanings given to austerity in which feeling rules are embedded (Verhoeven & Tonkens 2013, 199; Hochschild 2003, 82, 99).

Our data consist of the Government Programme, submitted in 2015 when the new government came into power, and the ensuing two-day debate on it in Parliament. Because our focus is on the government's ways of justifying austerity, only the three government parties – the Centre Party, National Coalition and Finns Party – are represented in the data. In all, we analysed 191 speeches of MPs from these parties from transcripts of the two-day debate. The transcripts are freely accessible through the database of the Finnish Parliament. In addition, we analysed public speeches (N=7),

public interviews (N=2) and blog posts (N=9) of three ministers who were leaders in the focal parties: Prime Minister Juha Sipilä (Centre Party), Minister for Foreign Affairs Timo Soini (Finns Party) and Minister of Finance Alexander Stubb (National Coalition). These additional data were collected because we observed that in these forums the party leaders addressed citizens even more directly as representatives of the government, of their parties and of the key central ministries.

We started our analysis by coding the data using ATLAS.ti software. In the coding, we paid particular attention to the narrative character of feeling rules and framing rules, a feature of them that Hochschild (2016) emphasised when examining feeling rules as embedded in social deep stories. In the identification of feeling and framing rules we applied the actant model outlined in semiotic sociology (see Sulkunen & Törrönen 1997). The model provided us a tool to sort out the variation in the narrative structures and storylines in the government's ways of describing austerity. The model indicated what elements in the current economic situation hinder action (*opponents*); point out the policy objectives of the austerity measures (*objects*) that our future action should be directed towards; identify the resources (*helpers*) that give us abilities and competences to solve the problems and accomplish the task at hand; and recognise the actors, values or norms (*senders*) that justify the austerity measures (see Törrönen 2000). We proceeded to ask how the opponents, objects, helpers and senders together in the different storylines, as actantial positions occupied by specific actors as well as narratively structured configurations, worked to evoke feelings, emotions and affects among citizens towards specific austerity policies.

During the coding process we noticed that the current economic situation and austerity measures were often named or categorised using metaphors that sought to construct affective images among citizens endorsing the policies that government was planning to carry out. Accordingly, this also became a focus in our coding. When analysing metaphors, we looked at the kinds of categories from other meaning systems or conceptual domains that were used to characterise the target domain, that is, austerity measures and policies (Lakoff and Johnson 1980). Austerity is an abstract issue and metaphors make it more concrete by using categories from source domains that transform it into a more readily understandable concern. Among the useful source domains are the human body, health and illness, animals, buildings, machines and tools, sports and games, which may provide useful categories.

We ultimately identified three different framing rules that the party leaders and MPs of the government parties used to provide contexts for austerity measures. We also recognised that within the constraints of these contexts the party leaders and MPs utilised multiple storylines to justify how

citizens should feel or should not feel about austerity measures. In the sections that follow we proceed to analyse these observations in detail.

1. Inevitable, painful austerity

The government parties represent austerity in a pragmatic frame (Hochschild 2003, 116), especially in the case of spending cuts and the 'social contract', an agreement designed to reduce labour costs. According to the parties, there are no thinkable alternatives to the austerity measures (see also Clarke & Newman 2012). The three parties describe austerity as a necessary *helper* mainly because of the state's previous policy, not the financial crisis in the private sector. In this way they follow the reasoning commonly seen in politics of austerity whereby a problem of the private sector is made into a problem of the public sector (Blyth 2013) or an economic problem into a political one (Clarke & Newman 2012, 300).

The three parties differ in their interpretation of why austerity is necessary. Representatives of the Centre Party and, in particular, the populist Finns Party, both of which were previously in the opposition, underscore that there are no alternatives, given that the previous government as an *opponent* neglected necessary austerity measures. In this way, the government takes credit for fixing problems caused by other national political actors. According to John Clarke and Janet Newman (2012, 303), 'credit claiming' has been a common strategy in governments' politics of austerity. In the UK, for example, David Cameron's first government used similar framing when introducing its austerity plans (Fairclough 2016, 66).

By contrast, representatives of the National Coalition Party, which led the previous government, justify the need for austerity with reference to a longer historical frame (see Hochschild 2003, 116) that attributes the need to factors other than the policy-makers themselves (see Clarke & Newman 2012, 303). In this storyline, the current problems date all the way back to bad policy-making in from the 1990s. In a group speech of the National Coalition, a party MP (Arto Satonen, record 13/2015) states that 'society seems to hit a storm every couple of decades'. In the 1990s, Finland's government sailed clear of its most recent 'storm' by making even greater public spending cuts than the current government. This historical storyline has a clear lesson: 'After tough decisions, Finland took off and the economy grew robustly over the next ten years' (Arto Satonen, record 13/2015).

The National Coalition party brings out both external and national reasons (*opponents*) for embracing austerity. The external reasons include the international financial crisis and changing consumer habits in countries to which Finland exports goods. Internal reasons include the country's

ageing population and political inability to maintain national competitiveness. In addition, some representatives of National Coalition point out that the previous government as a *helper* actually carried out even greater adjustment measures. Minister of Finance Alexander Stubb notes that the forthcoming measures involving 4 billion euros will be painful but, comfortingly, not as painful as the previous ones (Minister of Finance, Alexander Stubb, National Coalition, record 13/2015; 14/2015). However, some MPs of the National Coalition disagree with this view. They argue that as the previous government was based on excessively diverse values, it did not even have a shared vision of the future or a realistic understanding of economic facts. Wille Rydman of the National Coalition describes the consequences as follows:

With the parties which took part in government negotiations ranging from the National Coalition to the Left Alliance and from the Christian Democrats to the Green Party, it was natural that there was no possibility of having a shared value-base. Equally naturally, it was not easy to achieve a consensus on Finland's future course among such different parties. Most fatefully, however, the six parties involved did not even manage to reach agreement on the prevailing facts. The result was a government platform that was doomed to fail from the beginning. Fortunately, it seems that a lesson has been learned from the mistakes made four years ago (Wille Rydman, National Coalition, record 13/2015).

Rydman goes on to say that the lesson learned was to form a government from three parties that are ideologically closer to each other.

Despite the differences noted above, all the parties are strikingly unanimous in their emphasis on the painfulness of the austerity measures they must implement. In their view, austerity measures are painful for everyone, citizens and policy-makers alike:

It is a fact that the government, in this economic situation, has to make painful decisions, which certainly will not please everyone, as we have heard today. Cuts are always hard to make (Ari Torniainen, Centre Party, record 13/2015).

How, then, should citizens feel and not feel about the government's austerity policy? The government emphasises that it is acceptable and understandable to feel pain. In this way it positions itself as an empathetic government (*helper*) that understands how painful the consequences of austerity will be for people in their everyday lives. At the same time, however, it asserts that citizens should not have negative feelings about the government itself, because its hands are tied: austerity is not an ideological choice but a practical necessity; in other words, it is the only possible *helper* at hand. This feeling rule is based on what, according to the government, is practically best or at least possible in the specific situation (see Hochschild 2003, 82, 116). Correspondingly, the Government Programme is described as a 'platform for difficult times' (Ari Torniainen, Centre Party, record 13/2015). By emphasising austerity as painful for not only ordinary citizens but politicians as well, the government parties give the impression that they would act otherwise if it were possible:

I do understand this pain. I assure you. I understand this pain, and I am also in pain when having to present and bring out painful things, but this must be done because it has been neglected. (Minister of Justice and Labour Jari Lindström, Finns Party, record 13/2015).

On the other hand, the emphasis on the painfulness of austerity measures does more than simply tell citizens that the government is empathetic and knows the cuts will hurt. It gives an encouraging signal to external creditors that the austerity measures being taken are substantial. Citizens' expressions of painfulness can be interpreted as an integral part of well-functioning austerity. As Cairns et al. (2016, 9–10; see also Hayes 2017, 23) have observed: 'a population needs to be seen, heard and felt to be suffering in order to assuage the fears of external creditors and assure any potential new investors and the markets that alleged spendthrift tendencies have now been resolutely curbed'.

The government motivates citizens to face the painful decisions with fear and hope regarding the future (on similar strategies in the UK, see e.g. Clarke & Newman 2012; Hitchen 2014). The fear evoked relates to what would follow if austerity measures were not implemented. If they were postponed, even more painful decisions would have to be taken (*opponent*). This point is made by Prime Minister Sipilä who states in his television speech (16.9.2015): 'I know that spending cuts will painfully affect many people. If we do not make the cuts, some years from now we will face even more painful decisions'.

In addition to a fear of even more painful decisions, the representatives of the Finns Party and Centre Party evoke fear of losing national independence. They frame the current economic situation as a political crisis in which the nation faces a threat of losing its sovereignty. All three government parties repeatedly mention that Finland would end up going 'the way of Greece'. This comparison is used as a warning to emphasise the seriousness of the situation. According to the parties, the planned reform aims to strengthen the country's ability to make independent national decisions. Otherwise, as a Centre Party MP states, the 'going the way of Greece' would bring on the European Commission and 'men with black briefcases' from the Troika of the Commission, the European Central Bank and the International Monetary Fund to take the reins, a scenario familiar from news on the crisis of Greece:

... it is important that we keep these things in our own hands and not go the way of Greece, which one day would lead to a situation where we cannot decide on financial matters by ourselves. If that happens, men with black briefcases will come to make our decisions for us (Hannu Hoskonen, Centre Party, record 13/2015).

Prime Minister Sipilä equates Finland with Greece in a moral frame (Hochschild 2003) as well. According to him, Finns should feel morally obligated to implement austerity measures decisively. Finland is known as one of the 'fiscal hardliners' (BBC 2015) that have been critical of the

international bailout of Greece. Sipilä uses this as a justifying *sender* when reminding us that ‘we were among the first telling the Greeks what to do. Now, let us take that advice to heart ourselves’ (television speech 16.9.2015).

The MPs of the government parties link the painful and fearful feelings about austerity to a positive future, as mentioned above. For example, they describe austerity measures with metaphors that evoke hope that better times will come. At the same time, the positive metaphors induce and strengthen the feeling that austerity measures are inevitable. Representatives of the government parties present austerity measures as ‘bridges’ – helpers – to cross ‘troubled waters’, ‘lifting Finland out of a swamp’ and onto ‘solid ground’, ‘fixing it’, and the government platform is described as being ‘built on a steady ground’. Positive consequences of austerity are emphasised with metaphors framing it as a ‘cure for illness’ (see also Fairclough 2016, 70). Finland is described as a ‘sick man’ and austerity policy as a ‘medicine’ and even as an ‘economic worm treatment’. The parties also prefer nautical metaphors that equate the nation with a ship that the government is trying to steer towards safer waters and a happier future or, even more dramatically, liken austerity to a ‘lifebuoy’ that will save the nation from drowning.

However, the government’s encouragement to feel hope where austerity is concerned does not mean that citizens should just wait for better times to come as a result of its austerity policy. Hope is represented predominantly in the form of aspiration but also as a *helper*: citizens should actively aspire for better times (Newman 2015). This aspiration includes a willingness to tolerate painful cuts in public spending and to work harder. As Prime Minister Sipilä states in the television speech (16.9.2015), ‘Welfare is earned with diligence, know-how and hard work. He continues: ‘To do this, we need know-how and determination but also humility; humility is the key to getting all Finns on board in this project’’. A Centre Party MP in fact invites everyone to take heart in the midst of many challenges, because ‘all responsible people and groups involved have a shared view on the economic situation’ (Hannu Hoskonen, Centre Party, record 13/2015).

2. Responsibility and fairness of austerity

In addition to using the pragmatic frame described above, the parties frame austerity as a moral question. It is discussed in terms of its moral appropriateness (see Hochschild 2003). They use the moral frame in two ways, firstly to point out that austerity is a responsible policy and secondly to convince people that austerity is a fair policy option or that there are good reasons to accept any unfairness it entails.

The parties appeal to citizens' feelings of responsibility for future generations as a *sender*, arguing that not reducing the public debt would endanger the welfare of our children and grandchildren. Invoking children's best interest not only arouses feelings of sympathy for innocent children but also depoliticises austerity, recasting it as a moral issue detached from politics, which is no more than a short-sighted struggle between different interest groups (Helin 2011). As an MP of the National Coalition Party states, this moral responsibility is the reason why everyone should be ready to accept the pain caused by austerity policy: 'We have to take radical, big measures, ones which will hurt each of us quite a bit (...) but must be taken for our children's sake. I for one do not have the nerve to leave the burden of debt to my children; hardly anyone has' (Kari Tolvanen, National Coalition, record 14/2015).

According to the feeling rules offered by the government parties, hopes for other policy choices are morally condemnable. For example, one of the MPs of the Centre Party expresses openly that neglecting austerity measures would be shameful in respect of future generations:

I have been thinking whether I am ashamed of these cuts. I'm not. But they irritate me. Besides, I would feel more ashamed if they were not made now and if this country were left in this condition for future generations (Anna Saarikko, Centre Party, record 13/2015).

According to the parties, if the public debt is not reduced now, the burden of paying it will fall to future generations. Living with the current amount of public debt, not to mention increasing it, is perceived as an *opponent*, which is described using metaphors like 'selling the future of our children' (Juha Eerola, Finns Party, record 13/2015), 'eating at the future generations' expense and from their table' (Markus Lohi, Centre Party, record 14/2015; Anne-Mari Virolainen, National Coalition, record 14/2015), and as 'leaving the bill for today's welfare to be paid by future generations' (Prime Minister Sipilä, television speech 16.9.2015). In addition to alternative policy choices, the current economic situation is represented as morally indefensible, as an outcome of irresponsible spending. This is underlined, for example, by drawing an analogy between the nation and a private person: 'if Finland were a private individual, it would have no credit rating and would be in debt counselling' (Arja Juvonen, the Finns Party, record 14/2015). The message of this kind of moral framing is that with austerity we take, rightly, responsibility for current problems or, in other words, 'we're reaping what we sowed' (Stanley 2014).

The transgenerational thinking invoked encompasses past as well as future generations. Prime Minister Sipilä in particular uses a historical frame (Hochschild 2003) when advising people to trust the wisdom of previous generations. In one comment, he says: 'whenever I have met them, people of the previous generations have emphasised that we must achieve a balance between income and expenditures' (Prime Minister Sipilä, Centre Party, record 13/2015). This way of using previous

generations as a justifying *sender* for austerity is very similar to the British idealisation of the past, described by Kirsten Forkert (2017, 48), in which actors from older generations are seen to ‘possess moral authority which younger generations do not have’.

One of the most intensively discussed questions in the case of austerity is how fair or unfair it is with respect to different groups of citizens or, in other words, how equally the pain is actually shared (see e.g. Clarke & Newman 2012; Fairclough 2016; Hitchen 2014). As we have mentioned before, the government engages in a great deal of emotional labour to convince us that we are all in this together and that austerity is painful for everyone. They are fond of invoking the bee as a metaphor to emphasise that austerity is a joint effort in which individual interests should be put aside. On the other hand, ‘being in the same boat’ is used to describe austerity as a *helper* that serves a shared interest: staying on the surface (Minister Sampo Terho, Finns Party, record 14/2014) or, more positively, changing the direction of the economy and the country. In addition, members of the parties warn about creating confrontations and ‘unfruitful quarrels’ where austerity is concerned. Possible confrontations are represented as an *opponent* to the shared mission in the joint belt-tightening effort. Minister of Finance Alexander Stubb, for example, in a blog article titled ‘Together we will get through this’ (2015), declares that the government is building trust without the kind of politics which would promote particular or individual interests. He claims that, quite the contrary, ‘the interests of Finland and Finns remain uppermost’.

However, the parties also admit that the moral criticism of austerity, which questions its fairness and moral appropriateness, is not far off the mark. For example, Prime Minister Sipilä (record 13/2015) admits, as critics claim, that the cuts most seriously affect people with the lowest incomes and says that he faces it with a humble mind. Nevertheless, the parties defend the policy with a pragmatic frame based on one of the doctrinal cornerstones of austerity: cuts in public spending as a *helper* increase confidence among consumers and investors, while increases in taxation do the opposite (Blyth 2013). The MPs defend ‘sacrificing fairness’ (Fairclough 2016, 63) by stating that it is inevitable that the worst-off (often called ‘the weakest ones’) will be hurt most, because they are most dependent on public services and allowances, which are being cut. The well-off, by contrast, are less dependent on public services. Tax increases would be the only way to give a larger share of pain to the well-off but the parties claim that this would work as an opponent to the objective, which is fixing the national economy.

The parties point out that the well-off share the pain in the form of the so-called solidarity tax. In 2013, the government created a temporary additional income tax of two per cent for people with annual taxable incomes of over 100,000 euros. In 2015, this threshold was lowered to 90,000 euros.

The parties emphasise that they also make the well-off participate in the joint belt-tightening effort by maintaining the 'solidarity tax'. The argument goes that with the well-off paying the solidarity tax, one should not position the people belonging to this category as *opponents* or feel deeply bitter about austerity measures. In addition to being criticised for furthering the uneven sharing of pain between the worst-off and well-off, the government has been reproached for compromising gender equality by its approach. The government, however, ignores the clash between austerity policy and gender equality (see also Elomäki & Kantola 2017). The Government Programme mentions gender equality but only as an already achieved objective.

Even though the parties admit the unequal sharing of the burden between the worst-off and the well-off, they maintain that austerity does not mean sacrificing the welfare state. Quite the contrary, austerity is described as a rescue operation (*helper*) for it. As an MP of the Finns Party states, 'the intention is to keep Finland a welfare state, in which, absolutely, the people with the lowest incomes and the weakest ones are looked after' (Ritva Elomaa, Finns Party, record 13/2015). The protracted recession with excessive public debt is cited as an opponent of the welfare state, with the government's aim being to rescue the welfare state by improving the national economy. An MP of the Centre Party, for example, encourages even the worst-off to have positive feelings about austerity because 'a healthy public economy is a poor person's best friend' (Antti Kurvinen, Centre Party, record 14/2017). In addition, the MPs promise investments in public services in economically better times, even though the welfare state is traditionally considered a safety net for the worst periods in particular.

3. Transparent austerity and a need for trust

The parties also justify austerity by combining the pragmatic and moral feeling frames. In the combined frame, austerity policy as a *helper* frees employers, enterprises, voluntary organisations and citizens to realise their aspirations, which decreases unemployment and improves the economy (see also Farnsworth & Irving 2018, 463, 465). This requires consistent decision-making as well as strong leadership. In using the combined frame, the parties try to persuade citizens to identify with feeling rules that give them confidence in the government for both moral and pragmatic reasons.

In the case of moral reasons, the parties encourage citizens to trust in the government by persuading them that it has no hidden objectives but rather is speaking openly and honestly about the cuts. Prime Minister Sipilä (record 13/2015), for example, states that the government 'confesses openly that these savings will hurt many groups'. In the parliamentary debates, the opposition accuses the government of blackmail in using the 'social contract' to achieve a 'competitiveness

jump' of 5 per cent. According to the opposition, the government is threatening to impose bigger public spending cuts and to increase in taxation if the labour market organisations do not join the proposed social contract by a given deadline. The government parties defend themselves against these accusations by appealing to the government's honesty:

As regards this social contract, whether one thinks it is blackmail depends pretty much on how one looks at it. I do not think it is blackmail when the government tells very openly, extremely honestly, what kinds of adjustments we need and what we could do for the nation's economy to avoid this worst-case scenario (Matti Vanhanen, Centre Party, record 14/2015).

In the combined frame for justifying austerity measures, the feeling rules evoke not only trust but also hope. Minister of Finance Stubb (National Coalition, record 13/2015) states that with the government's actions 'we build trust, belief in the future and a caring welfare society'. He, among others, warns about creating confrontations, which, as *opponents*, would obscure the nature of austerity as a joint effort. Even the Government Programme cites confrontations and resistance to change as central *opponents* of the government's policy objectives. In the parliamentary debates, MPs of the government parties emphasise that feelings of trust and hope are also important for giving positive signals to foreign audiences. In the excerpt below, an MP of the Finns Party brings out concern over the negative effect which criticism of austerity may have on Finland's reputation. Thus, as citizens, Finns need to be afraid of losing their good reputation. A bad reputation can, for example, sap the confidence of foreign investors and creditors:

There has been fear for the image of Finland in the world, for what kind of nation we are. The media, the opposition, we all affect it. All of us, in our actions as well as speech, can affect the image that the world has of us. So, let's not bring out only negative things but say something positive now and then. This bears not only on our image but on whether we have a solid basis for the social contract, that is, whether we will succeed in making it or not. (Ari Jalonen, Finns Party, record 14/2015).

In addition to evoking trust, hope and fear, the combined frame used by the government appeals to citizens to have courage. The parties put forward bold policy moves as being solutions (*helper*) to the current problems. In their view, people should be encouraged to take action and be active (e.g. Matti Vanhanen, Centre Party, record 13/2015). This means, among other things, making room for voluntary work. The parties often describe the current situation as a 'cycle of atrophy', caused by weakened competitiveness, an inability to take risks, rigid structures, bureaucracy, regulation, norms and the inflexibility of the labour market (e.g. The Government Programme 2015). Prime Minister Sipilä (record 13/2015) sums this up by stating that 'we have lost our agility with excessive regulation and administration'. Getting rid of excessive regulation is justified pragmatically in the name of the common good, not only serving the interests of enterprises and employers. The MPs of

the Finns Party in particular emphasise the positive impacts the reduction of regulation and norms will have on citizens' everyday life:

The Government Programme aims at reducing bureaucracy and excessive regulation. Eliminating needless regulations that make everyday life difficult, one of the Programme's objectives, is a significant step towards a free, smoothly functioning and economically sustainable society (Sami Savio, Finns Party, record 14/2015).

The government justifies its aim of downsizing bureaucracy and eliminating excessive regulation in terms of increasing feelings of freedom and trust among citizens. These feelings are used in the argument as a *sender*. According to Prime Minister Sipilä (record 13/2015), 'society should be built more on trust than on regulation and control'. The parties emphasise a need for strong and bold policy that makes room for economic activity and diligence by unravelling the above-mentioned constraints as well as in making the necessary spending cuts. In other words, they make strong leadership a virtue. The strong leadership required is represented as a 'modern' way of responding to current challenges:

We should not dispute figures based on facts anymore, but rather boldly take a close look at them. In addition, the response to these figures can no longer be to take on more debt or to deny them. The required reforms must be carried out with strong and modern leadership as well as with strict indicators of success. The way we run the country will change from what we have become used to. (Pertti Hakanen, Centre Party, record 14/2015).

This kind of strategic thinking, with high regard for strong leadership and indisputable facts, makes policy-making based on moral questions and values appear to be a technical procedure (Elomäki et al. 2016, 380). It encourages citizens, in a pragmatic sense, to trust in a strong and decisive government that has a realistic view on the current economic problems and on the measures to solve the problems with concrete goals. It also evokes hope for a brighter future towards which the decisive command of the ship will take the nation. In addition, the parties encourage citizens to feel democratic trust in the government in a moral sense by emphasising that the government is not only honest and transparent but also empathetic as it understands the pain the austerity measures cause.

Concluding remarks

Our analysis brings out how the politics of austerity aims to affect the way citizens feel about restrictions on their rights and entitlements (Johnson 2010). It also demonstrates how the politics produces values and affects (Di Gregorio & Merolli 2016, 936; Fassin 2015) indicating the right and wrong ways to feel about austerity (Hochschild 2016, 227). Overall, our analysis shows how politicians produce multiple emotions for citizens in order to steer how they deal with austerity. The concept of 'feeling rules' turned out to be a helpful tool to analyse how these emotions are made

normative. It clarifies how the political discourse of austerity links emotions to collective and national obligations to feel or not to feel in a certain way about the measures proposed. Feeling rules are produced such that they offer varied and contradictory feelings about how austerity should or should not be approached emotionally.

Furthermore, our analysis shows how austerity is justified in the different storylines by multiple actantial positions. The governing parties present austerity to citizens as an inevitable *object*, as the only workable *helper* and as a fearsome but mighty *sender*. At the same time, the politicians understand that austerity is likely to appear to us as an *opponent*, but this is only an illusion since we do not have any other possibilities to go further and develop a viable future. Accordingly, in the Finnish government's politics, austerity is constructed as an autonomous, imposing and dreaded force to which we all must submit whether we like it or not. However, we can survive austerity if we embrace the right kinds of emotions.

'Our analysis identifies multiple storylines by which the government parties in Finland seek to regulate citizens' emotions regarding austerity. These storylines can be grouped under three sets of framing rules. In the first, much as in other austerity states (e.g. Clarke & Newman 2012), austerity is addressed as a pragmatic necessity, the only possible *helper* for reaching the collective objective of saving the nation from the economic crisis. This context produces feeling rules that seek to moderate citizens' negative emotions towards austerity, evoke hope for a better future if they adhere to the proposed measures and fear if they do not. According to these feeling rules, the government is doing the only thing possible under the current circumstances. Citizens, in turn, should accept the measures humbly with the inevitable pain they cause. Moreover, citizens need to beaver away for the common good (see also Newman 2015). Otherwise, economic crises cannot be 'cured'. The government parties instil faith in austerity by describing it with metaphors such as 'medicine' that heals the 'sick man' or as a 'boat' that will transport us to 'safer waters'. The parties also engage in blame avoidance and credit claiming (Clarke & Newman 2012; Giger & Nelson 2010). In particular, they direct citizens' negative feelings towards the previous government, which is described as one of the opponents because it failed to take the necessary actions. In addition, they use the feeling rules to evoke a fear in citizens that an even more painful situation is in store if austerity measures are postponed. Should this happen, we might even lose our economic sovereignty and find ourselves 'going the way of Greece'. With these frightful images and opponents, the government represents the economic crisis as a matter of national security and therefore be an absolute priority (see Buzan et al. 1998, 24). The extreme threat to national security justifies measures that can be considered extraordinary in Finland's history as a welfare state.

In the second framing rule context, austerity is characterised as a morally responsible and fair policy. Feeling rules are produced in order to mitigate citizens' anger and bitterness over unfair treatment of different groups of citizens. The government parties assure us that austerity is a shared effort by likening it to a project where everyone has to pitch in without individual gain in mind since we are all 'in the same boat'. The parties guide citizens to accept the undesirable fact that the worst-off will carry the bigger share of the pain by arguing that, in the end, the austerity measures will make their situations better. In this way, the government parties not only reduce expectations with regard to social welfare (Farnsworth & Irving 2018, 467) but also evoke hope that greater investments will be made in welfare programmes if austerity measures are put into effect. However, the government parties do not turn to blaming the users of public benefits and services or juxtaposing welfare recipients and working people. These kinds of stigmatizing strategies are familiar in political discourse of many austerity states, especially in the UK (e.g. Hoggett et al. 2013, 568) and in the US (e.g. Hochschild 2016). The feeling rules also warn about hopes for policy options other than austerity. Hopes for alternative paths as well as confrontations are represented as *opponents*, as shameful choices, since they rock the collectively steered and shared boat and endanger the welfare of future generations.

Moreover, by appealing to citizens to bear responsibility for respecting the wisdom of the previous generations and by equating the situation with national hardships of the past, the government parties idealise the past similarly to the austerity discourse in the UK (see Forkert 2017; Bramall 2013). However, in a peculiar aspect of the politics of austerity in Finland, one contrasting with that in the UK, the governing parties place a greater emphasis on the well-being of future generations and the openness and trust between the parties and citizens. Our analysis identifies this storyline as belonging to the third framing rule context.

In the third context, the feeling rules that encourage trust in the government are produced by emphasising the transparency and honesty of governmental action. The government parties also offer pragmatic reasons for citizens to trust them: the government has a realistic picture of the current situation, clear objectives and a capacity for strong leadership, all of which are helpers required to reach the object, to lead the 'boat' into safer waters. Very similarly, in the UK, for example, austerity discourse has emphasised a need for decisive 'leadership' and 'tough' measures (Forkert 2017, 61) as well as a need to accept objective 'truths' (Farnsworth & Irving 2018). In addition, the feeling rules produced in the storyline encourage citizens to break the national 'cycle of atrophy', with the government promising to reduce bureaucracy and regulation to make it easier for citizens to pursue this goal.

On the whole, citizens are invited to be active participants in austerity. If they do not actively follow the feeling rules the government creates and puts forward, austerity measures will not be as effective as they should be. All feeling rules are embedded in a narrative of aspiration in which citizens, by adhering to what are essential austerity measures with the required emotions, will enjoy a better future in the end. The requisite attitudes, emotions and journey towards a better future are concretely imagined and outlined using metaphors (see also Fairclough 2016) such as ‘being in the same boat’, ‘building bridges’, ‘economic worm treatment’ and ‘guiding citizens to safer waters with a better future’. At the end of the day, the way the feeling rules of austerity are bound to an image of a joint national fate does not offer much room for dissatisfaction with or anger over the fact that austerity involves an unfair burden.

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