



Adopting Public Relations-Like Strategies to Promote Labour Feminism in Finland, 1965–1975

European History Quarterly

2023, Vol. 53(4) 664–684

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DOI: 10.1177/02656914231199947

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Abstract

When public relations as a field professionalized in Finland in the 1960s, it had knock-on effects beyond the corporate world. As an example of this, I analyse various public relations-like strategies adopted by a party political women's organization, the Finnish Women's Democratic League. I show that as a radical left organization, the Finnish Women's Democratic League began to value media visibility in the mid-1960s, but it also continued to use more traditional communication forms, such as leaflets and work-place visits, to spread its ideological message. The changes of emphasis between various forms of communication were affected by the politicization of Finnish society, which caused tensions between the bourgeois dominant public and the 'people's democratic' counterpublic. My analysis is based on a close reading of minutes of Finnish Women's Democratic League meetings, press releases and other archival material, as well as *Pippuri*, the organization's internal magazine, and *Uusi Nainen*, a commercial women's magazine published by the organization.

Keywords

1965–1975, Finland, labour feminism, public relations-like strategies, radical left, women's political organization

There is an extensive research literature on how the media frame the women's movement, and on feminist activists' media strategies in different countries and historical periods. The history of party political women's organizations, and media's role in women's

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advancement in politics, are similarly well-researched areas.¹ However, the interaction between women's party political organizations and the media has been neglected. This article fills that gap by analysing the Finnish Women's Democratic League's (Suomen Naisten Demokraattinen Liitto, SNDL) development of public relations (PR)-like strategies between 1965 and 1975, a period of intense debate in Finland regarding gender roles and equality.

The practices adopted by the SNDL from the mid-1960s onwards reveal an increasing interest in strategies to enhance the organization's visibility and ideals both in the dominant public and the party political counterpublic. Consequently, my exploration of how the SNDL promoted women's issues in public discussions widens our understanding of the role of labour feminism² in the fight for a more equal society. Additionally, it offers a historical case study of PR as an *organizational practice*³ and specifically increases our understanding of the ways in which past organizations reacted to changes in their external and internal environments.⁴ The term 'PR-like' refers to strategies that may not have been seen as PR per se, but which nevertheless were aligned with that field.⁵

During the analysed period, the SNDL was an intermediary between party politics and gender-specific organizing. I argue that changes in both environments, as well as the increasing use of PR practices in society, encouraged the organization to develop PR-like strategies to verify its relevance in Finnish society in the late 1960s. The new awareness of the need to use the media strategically challenged the SNDL to develop these practices, both internally and externally. I will demonstrate this by asking how

¹ E.g. Patricia Bradley, *Mass Media and the Shaping of American Feminism, 1963–1975* (Jackson, MS 2005); Kaitlynn Mendes, *Feminism in the News: Representations of the Women's Movement Since the 1960s* (London 2011); Karen Hunt, 'Rethinking Activism: Lessons from the History of Women's Politics', *Parliamentary Affairs*, Vol. 62, No. 2 (2009), 211–26; Sam Blaxland, 'Women in the Organisation of the Conservative Party in Wales, 1945–1979', *Women's History Review*, Vol. 28, No. 2 (2019), 236–56; Susan Pedersen, 'Press Response to Women Politicians: A Comparative Study of Suffragettes and Contemporary Scottish Parliament Leaders', *Journalism Studies*, Vol. 19, No. 5 (2018), 709–25; Julia Baird, *Media Tarts: How the Australian Press Frames Female Politicians* (Melbourne 2004); Deirdre O'Neill, Heather Savigny and Victoria Cann, 'Women Politicians in the UK Press: Not Seen and Not Heard?', *Feminist Media Studies*, Vol. 16, No. 2 (2015), 293–307; Erkkä Railo, *Henkilökohtainen on poliittista: Neuvottelu politiikan sukupuolittuneesta työnjaosta Annan julkaisemissa poliitikkojen henkilökuivissa vuosina 1975–2005* (PhD thesis, University of Turku, 2011).

² Labour feminists recognize women's disadvantaged position in society, but the needs of working-class people overshadow those of women's when they strive for social change. Dorothy Sue Cobble, *The Other Women's Movement: Workplace Justice and Social Rights in Modern America* (Princeton, NJ 2005), 3.

³ W. Timothy Coombs and Sherry J. Holladay, *It's Not Just PR: Public Relations in Society*, 2nd edition (Chichester 2014), 25.

⁴ I rely on Lachenmeier's model of organizational communication in which the changes in external and internal environments encourage the organization to reform their practices. Organizational communication is an umbrella term that covers public relations alongside other forms of organizational communication. Dominik Lachenmeier, 'Organizational Communication of Intermediaries in Flux: An Analytical Framework', in Hara Kouki and Eduardo Romanos, eds, *Protest Beyond Borders: Contentious Politics in Europe since 1945* (Oxford 2011), 158–9, 164–5.

⁵ I follow Anderson's conceptualization of the term. William B. Anderson, 'Social Movements and Public Relations in the Early Twentieth Century: How One Group Used Public Relations to Curtail Venereal Disease Rates', *Journal of Public Relations Research*, Vol. 29, No. 1 (2017), 3–4.

and why did an interest in media relations appear in discussions within the SNDL. Did the SNDL use other forms of communication to spread its ideological message? How were the SNDL's PR-like strategies influenced by wider societal and political discussions in Finland?

My analysis adopts the new theory of PR history, which complements the corporate view of PR. While investigating the SNDL's use of persuasion strategies to achieve social change, this article sees PR efforts as intertwined with various everyday SNDL practices, such as community relations.⁶ The analysis also draws on an understanding of the public sphere as consisting of various forums where citizens have the opportunity to share ideas about common interests. Although mainstream media play the central part in maintaining the public sphere, other spaces where public discussion takes place – such as lecture halls and meeting rooms – also have a role.⁷ The 1960s in particular was a heyday for a variety of new communication forms, and the mass media were accompanied by 'teach-ins', seminars and demonstrations.⁸ The decade also witnessed an increasing academic interest in the public sphere. In his influential 1962 book *Strukturwandel der Öffentlichkeit* (The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere), Habermas introduced the idea of the bourgeois public sphere and the critique of his theory led to the division of bourgeois and proletarian public spheres in the early 1970s.⁹ Later scholars such as Fraser and Warner distinguished between the dominant public and its counterpublics, a distinction I apply in this article.¹⁰

The presented argument is based on minutes of SNDL meetings, General Assembly protocols, correspondence, press releases, newspaper and magazine clippings, and copies of *Pippuri* (Pepper), the SNDL's internal magazine established in 1966, and *Uusi Nainen* (The New Woman), the commercial women's magazine published by the

⁶ E.g., Coombs and Holladay, *It's Not Just PR*, 5, 60, 63–82; W. Timothy Coombs and Sherry J. Holladay, 'Privileging an Activist vs. a Corporate View of Public Relations History in the U.S.', *Public Relations Review*, Vol. 38 (2012), 347–53; W. Timothy Coombs and Sherry J. Holladay, 'Fringe Public Relations: How Activism Moves Critical PR toward the Mainstream', *Public Relations Review*, Vol. 38 (2012), 880–7; Anderson, 'Social Movements and Public Relations', 3–15; William B. Anderson, 'How to Keep Rosie the Riveter from Contracting VD: A Case Study of how U.S. Social Reformers Used Public Relations during World War II', *Public Relations Review*, Vol. 45, No. 5 (2019); Margot Opdycke Lamme and Karen Miller Russell, 'Removing the Spin: Toward a New Theory of Public Relations History', *Journalism and Communication Monographs*, Vol. 11, No. 4 (2010).

⁷ Kaarina Nikunen, 'Yksityisyden murros – julkisuuden haaste: Feministisen kritiikin näkökulmia julkisuuden tutkimukseen', *Tiedotustutkimus*, No. 2 (2003), 79. For a historical study using a similar kind of approach, see Nikolas Glover, 'Staten, Organisationsverige och vidsynthetens förgätmigej: Det strategiska främjandet av svensk internationalism, 1945–1963', in Fredrik Norén and Emil Stjernholm, eds, *Efterkrigstidens samhällskon-takter* (Lund 2019), 283–6.

⁸ Jukka Kortti, 'Vuoden 1969 mediaperintö', *Media & viestintä*, No. 5 (2008), 120–1.

⁹ Oskar Negt and Alexander Kluge introduced the concept of the proletarian public in 1972. Their description of the bourgeois public closely resembles those expressed in the documents of the SNDL. See Juha Koivisto, 'Kahden kauppa: Porvarillisen ja proletaarisen julkisuuden dialektiikka Negtillä ja Klugella', *Tiedotustutkimus*, Vol. 8, No. 3 (1985), 49–56.

¹⁰ See, e.g., Nancy Fraser, 'Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy', *Social Text*, Nos 25/26 (1990), 56–80; Michael Warner, 'Publics and Counterpublics', *Public Culture*, Vol. 14, No. 1 (2002), 49–90.

organization from 1945 onwards. I analyse the varied source material by adopting the practice of a contextual close reading.¹¹

The SNDL as Part of the Radical Left

Established in December 1944 and active until 1990, the SNDL was the women's organization of the Finnish People's Democratic League (Suomen Kansan Demokraattinen Liitto, SKDL), a post-war coalition of left-wing political parties. In Finland, communism had been outlawed in the aftermath of the 1918 civil war, and the radical left had operated underground until the end of World War II. The ban on communism was lifted following the truce between the Soviet Union and Finland in September 1944, and a month later the SKDL was established to unite the dispersed forces of the radical left. Consequently, most SKDL members had communist sympathies or belonged to the Finnish Communist Party (Suomen Kommunistinen Puolue, SKP), and this influenced SNDL activities. As a feminist labour organization, SNDL members were working class, had close ties with party politics and their struggle for a more gender-equal society was framed by a socialist worldview.¹²

SKDL members – women of the SNDL included – understood themselves as belonging to the 'people's democrats' (*kansandemokraatit*),¹³ an opposition group in relation to bourgeois hegemony in the society. In the immediate post-war decades, the people's democrats were seen as a threat to democratic society; this view somewhat continued during 1965–1975, although there was a rapprochement between the communists and bourgeois society from the mid-1960s onwards. At this time, the Social Democratic Party (Suomen Sosialidemokraattinen Puolue) had managed to win a parliamentary majority alongside the SKDL, and New Left organizing was rising where extra-parliamentary groups with close connections to the radical left had been formed.¹⁴ Although the New Left, in particular, also influenced some journalists, including in non-aligned and right-wing newspapers such as *Helsingin Sanomat* and *Uusi Suomi*, as well as the Finnish Broadcasting Company (Oy Yleisradio Ab), the bourgeois hegemony dominated the public discussion in 1960s Finland. For example, mainstream newspapers and magazines gave the SKDL significantly less

¹¹ In historical studies, close reading is understood as a method of reading the sources in depth and connecting the interpretations with the historical context. Hannu Salmi, *What is Digital History?* (Cambridge 2020), 31.

¹² Elina Katainen, *Akkain aherrusta aatteen hyväksi: Suomen Naisten Demokraattinen Liitto 1944–1990* (Helsinki 1994); Tauno Saarela, 'Finnish Communism, Bolshevization and Stalinization', in Norman LaPorte, Kevin Morgan and Matthew Worley, eds, *Bolshevism, Stalinism and the Comintern* (Basingstoke 2008), 189, 205–7.

¹³ The Finnish 'people's democrats' encompassed various radical left backgrounds, including Marxist-Leninists, communists, socialists and radical social democrats. I use this translated concept interchangeably with the English concept of the radical left. About the radical left see, e.g., Bice Maiguashca, Jonathan Dean and Dan Keith, 'Pulling Together in a Crisis? Anarchism, Feminism and the Limits of Left-wing Convergence in Austerity Britain', *Capital and Class*, Vol. 40, No. 1 (2016), 37–57.

¹⁴ E.g. Antti Eskola, *Vasen laita lavea* (Helsinki 1969); Rauno Setälä, *Uusstalinistin uskontunnustus: Lähtökohtia 70-luvun luokkataisteluun* (Tampere 1970); Risto Alapuro, 'Ulkoinen ja sisäinen: Suomen poliittisen kulttuurin pitkä linja', *Yhteiskuntapolitiikka*, Vol. 75, No. 5 (2010), 533–5; Ville Okkonen, *Peruskoulua vastaan: Yksityisoppikoulut ja yhteiskuntajärjestys 1966–1975* (PhD thesis, University of Turku, 2017), 76–81.

coverage than other political parties, and the rhetoric of the ‘left-wing threat’ preoccupied public discussions.¹⁵

At the turn of the 1960s and 1970s, Finnish people read multiple newspapers and spent more time in reading them than people in other industrialized countries on both sides of the Iron Curtain. This meant that also some SKDL members read non-aligned and bourgeois newspapers,¹⁶ but party publications formed the exclusive daily reading material of approximately half of them. Consequently, the people’s democratic press, along with party political events, formed a meaningful contact point for the radical left and constituted the people’s democratic counterpublic.¹⁷ Like the dominant public, it was a masculine space where the discussion of women’s societal status was reserved for gender-specific places. Therefore, the SNDL used study circles, seminars and leaflets, and also developed its own media relations from the mid-1960s onwards. This gender-specific counterpublic included *Uusi Nainen*, a monthly women’s magazine that combined socialist ideology with more commercial material. Launched in 1945, it had appealed to women beyond SNDL members from the outset and was seen as crucial for spreading the socialist perspective on women’s issues.¹⁸

In the late 1960s, the SNDL had 16,000 to 17,000 members across 16 districts, with approximately 600 local chapters nationwide.¹⁹ It was not Finland’s biggest party political women’s organization, but it offered an important political forum for radical-left women. It represented the Old Left, whereas the new social change movements of the 1960s were inspired by the New Left. Although these new movements influenced the SNDL’s agenda, its actions were defined first and foremost by the class struggle and the split within the SKP to minority and majority communists. Until 1968, the SNDL’s leadership remained in the hands of the generation that had established the organization in the 1940s. Politically, they belonged to minority communists, who strictly followed the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. Later, the more liberal strand of communism, i.e., majority communists, who favoured a more reformist interpretation of the party’s ideological premises, clashed with the old guard in the leadership, causing tensions within the SNDL (as also happened in the SKDL).²⁰ The SNDL’s

¹⁵ Antti Eskola, *Suomi sulo Pohjola* (Helsinki 1968); Marja Tuominen, ‘*Me kaikki ollaan sotilaitten lapsia*’ (Helsinki 1991), 90, 242–4; Railo, *Henkilökohtainen on poliittista*, 35, 71; Okkonen, *Peruskoulua vastaan*, 78–9, 152–4.

¹⁶ Jorma Miettinen, *Sanomalehtien lukeminen* (Turku 1980), 22–38.

¹⁷ E.g., Elias Krohn, *Aatteen paloa, tiedon janoa: Yleinen lehtimiesliitto 1947–2018* (Helsinki 2017), 17–25, 59–60, 94; Raili Ruusala, *Vasemmiston naisjärjestöjen aktiivijäsenistö* (Tampere 1968), 24; Aimo Ruusunen, *Todeksi uskottua: Kansandemokraattinen Neuvostoliitto-journalismi rajapinnan tulkkinä vuosina 1964–1973* (PhD thesis, University of Jyväskylä, 2008), 65–70.

¹⁸ E.g., Laura Saarenmaa, *Intiimin äänet: Julkisuuskuultuurin muutos suomalaisissa ajanvietelehdissä 1961–1975* (PhD thesis, University of Tampere, 2010), 283–4; Katainen, *Akkain aherrusta*, 91, 148–9, 201, 352–4.

¹⁹ Report of Activities 1965–1968 and 1968–1971 published in *Pippuri* No. 3, 1968 and No. 2, 1971. See also Katainen, *Akkain aherrusta*, 115–20. The exact number of SNDL members in each year is unclear because the membership lists always contained some overlapping data. However, the figures presented in the report of activities correlate with those Katainen found when studying the archival material relating to SNDL members. As a result, they can be viewed as somewhat trustworthy even though the number of active members was most likely lower.

²⁰ E.g. Katainen, *Akkain aherrusta*, 355–8.

choice of strategies was also influenced by the Women's International Democratic Federation (WIDF), the largest post-war transnational women's organization, to which the SNDL belonged.²¹

During 1965–1975, the SNDL played a central role in the construction of the Finnish welfare model, which improved women's societal status. For example, the organization participated in the Committee for Women's Status (1966–1970) and actively promoted legislative changes such as the Abortion Act (1970) and Day Care Act (1973).²² To promote these reforms, the SNDL needed to reach audiences beyond the radical left. However, at the turn of the decade, the split within the SKP, and bourgeois society's critical reaction to the minority communists, led the whole SKDL (including the SKP's minority and majority wings) to return to its proletarian roots, and the SNDL was no exception.²³ These changes in its external-facing standpoints affected the strategies the SNDL used to reach women within and beyond the movement, as will be demonstrated next.

Opening Towards the Mass Media

The growth of consumerism was a key factor in the widening of the PR field in Finland, as in other countries in the Global North. The increased awareness of the need to use PR to reach wider groups in all areas of society, from the corporate world to organizational life,²⁴ also coincided with the major changes experienced by Finnish society during the 1960s: the countryside emptied as people moved to big cities or even to Sweden, and minority radical groups envisioned a new kind of society. The building of the welfare society accelerated, pursued through systematic planning and rationalization.²⁵ The

²¹ Katainen, *Akkain aherrusta*, 59–70, 85–9, 130–1. About the WIDF see, e.g., Yulia Gradszkova, *The Women's International Democratic Federation, the Global South and the Cold War: Defending the Rights of Women of the 'Whole World'?* (London 2021); Francisca de Haan, 'Continuing Cold War Paradigms in Western Historiography of Transnational Women's Organisations: The Case of the Women's International Democratic Federation (WIDF)', *Women's History Review*, Vol. 19, No. 4 (2010), 547–73.

²² E.g., Heidi Kurvinen and Arja Turunen, 'Radical Sex Role Ideology and the Finnish Gender Role Movement in the Late 1960s', *Women's History Review*, Vol. 32, No. 1 (2023), 67, 71–3; Katainen, *Akkain aherrusta*, 329–45.

²³ Katainen, *Akkain aherrusta*, 328, 355–8, 365–72; Jukka Kortti, 'Media, the Elite and Modernity: Defining the Modern among the Finnish Cultural Intelligentsia in the Twentieth Century', *International Journal for History, Culture and Modernity* Vol. 2, No. 1 (2014), 13–4.

²⁴ The origin of the modern PR field has been traced to the United States of the early twentieth century. However, the post-World War II professionalization of PR in Finland resembles its development in other Global North countries. E.g. Ralph Negrine, 'The Professionalisation of Political Communication in Europe', in Ralph Negrine et al., eds, *The Professionalisation of Political Communication* (Bristol 2007), 30–1; Ron Smith, *Public Relations: The Basics* (London 2014), 105; Jessica Borge, "'Unmentionable' Condoms vs. "Glamorous" Pills: How the London Rubber Company tackled an image problem in 1960s Britain', *Public Relations Inquiry*, Vol. 11, No. 1 (2021), 1–23; Coombs and Holladay, *It's Not Just PR*, 79–82; Leif Åberg, 'Ammattina viestintä', in Pirjo von Hertzen, Elina Melgin and Leif Åberg, eds, *Vuosisata suhdetoimintaa: Yhteisviestinnän historia Suomessa* (Helsinki 2012), 24–5; Elina Melgin and Minna-Liisa Nurmilaakso, 'Alan järjestäytyminen', in Pirjo von Hertzen, Elina Melgin and Leif Åberg, eds, *Vuosisata suhdetoimintaa: Yhteisviestinnän historia Suomessa* (Helsinki 2012), 54.

²⁵ Jukka Kortti, *Ylioppilaslehden vuosisata* (Helsinki 2013), 253–5; Laura Kolbe, *Eliitti, traditio, murros: Helsingin yliopiston ylioppilaskunta 1960–1990* (Helsinki 1996), 7–14, 92–103, 213–20; Pertti Alasuutari, *Tasavalta: Sodan jälkeisen Suomen kaudet ja trendit* (Tampere 2017), 146–50.

idea of PR chimed with this overall rationalization of society, making it a topical issue. Before 1963 Finnish companies had barely grasped the need to manage relations with the wider public, but PR quickly became a 1960s buzzword. The first Finnish book on PR was published in 1963, and the gradual professionalization of the field increased the number of PR experts, especially in the corporate world.²⁶

Archival sources do not indicate whether SNDL leaders familiarized themselves with PR by reading the 1963 textbook. Nevertheless, the zeitgeist had an impact on the organization, and 1964 was a watershed in the SNDL's view of the media's role in spreading radical left ideology. This is visible in its reports on activities between 1962 and 1965. Previously, the organization had been rather passive about its media relations, an attitude that it shared with the SKDL. However, 'attention to communication and PR and their development increased during 1964', and 'the meaning of communication and PR' was acknowledged more and more widely, according to the report on activities in 1965. Additionally, some districts had begun to organize communications training events for members.²⁷

The above-mentioned report on activities was discussed in November 1965, when the SNDL's seventh General Assembly brought together women from all over the country to discuss future goals. For instance, the organization decided to become active in the ongoing 'sex role'²⁸ debate, which had begun in Finland that autumn.²⁹ This General Assembly also played an important role in developing the organization's media relations: for the first time, a press conference was organized before the assembly to inform journalists about the topics at hand. This was part of a three-pronged strategy of communication before, during and after the assembly. Alongside the press conference, the plan included press releases, and articles on topical themes written by prominent SNDL members.³⁰

The need to develop media relations was not only acknowledged at the SNDL's highest level, but also emerged in local members' initiatives at the 1965 General Assembly. Anna-Liisa Jokinen, a Turku chapter member, was particularly aware of the need to use the media more strategically. She reminded others of the media's role in society:

²⁶ The first Finnish language textbooks included Jyrki Valtanen's (ed.) *Suhdetoiminnan käsikirja* (1963) and Erkki Kario's *Tiedottajan opas* (1969). See Jyrki Valtanen, 'Mitä on suhdetoiminta?', in Jyrki Valtanen, ed., *Suhdetoiminnan käsikirja* (Helsinki 1963), 9–11, 16, 18, 22–3; Erkki Kario, *Tiedottajan opas* (Helsinki 1969), 11–18; Melgin and Nurmilaakso, 'Alan järjestäytyminen', 51–2.

²⁷ Report of activities 1962–1965, VII General Assembly 1965, annexes, 1D Ca14, the archive of the SNDL (SNDLA), People's Archive (PA); about the VII General Assembly, minutes of meeting of SNDL commission, 12 December 1965, annex 3, 1D Cc4, SNDLA, PA.

²⁸ I use the term sex-role as a contemporary concept instead of gender role that began to be used increasingly from the 1970s onwards.

²⁹ E.g., Hellä Meltti's letter to the members of SNDL commission on 27 November 1965, minutes of meeting of SNDL commission 1963–1966, 1D Cc4, SNDLA, PA; Minutes of meeting of SNDL commission, 12 December 1965, annex 3, 1D Cc4, SNDLA, PA; Resolution of the VII General Assembly, minutes of the VII General Assembly, annex 70, 1D Ca13, SNDLA, PA.

³⁰ Summary concerning activities relating to communication during the VII General Assembly, minutes of meeting of SNDL commission, 12 December 1965, annex 3, 1D Cc4, SNDLA, PA; Communication activities of the VII General Assembly, 1D Ca14, SNDLA, PA.

We have not yet used the current practices of communication and PR. We have been too timid in contacting other organizations and women. We need to put over more information about women's organizing on the radio, on television and in the press.³¹

Jokinen's motion shows an awareness of the wider discussion of PR's societal role, and it hints at the motives behind the SNDL's new interest in the wider public: concern over its role in society, and the need for new members. Additionally, there was a need to widen horizons beyond the people's democratic press. Partly, this was a result of the rapidly accelerating mediatization of society.³² In the mid-1960s, 50 per cent of Finns had access to the new medium of television, and it was increasingly difficult for the SNDL to bring members together to participate in events rather than stay at home in front of their television sets.³³ The problem was not unique to the SNDL: Finnish people in general began to distance themselves from organizational activities during the 1960s, as television and magazines competed with social movements and political organizations for people's free time.³⁴ This made the SKDL more active in its quest to become visible to the dominant public,³⁵ and interest in the savvy use of media likewise continued to grow in the SNDL.

At first, the organization relied heavily on its own papers, which eagerly reported SNDL events in different parts of the country.³⁶ As an example, the press conference of the 1965 General Assembly was considered successful even though only eight of the 15 invited newsrooms sent a journalist. The evaluation of the assembly's media relations expressed satisfaction with the media visibility it garnered and concluded: 'It is worth applauding our people's democratic press, *Kansan Uutiset* in particular. They have published very widely on the women's question in their pages, considering their size and consequent lack of space'.³⁷ However, not all of the SNDL's plans for media relations were carried out, suggesting that it was difficult to take a more active role in relation to the media. The only newspapers outside the radical left that showed an interest in the General Assembly or related activities were the leading national daily *Helsingin Sanomat* and the social democratic *Suomen Sosialidemokraatti*. The outcome of the press conference thus suggests that in the dominant public the news barrier continued to be difficult for the SNDL to cross. The notable exception was the Finnish Broadcasting Company, which reported on the General Assembly multiple times on both television and radio,³⁸ thanks to the company's left-wing sympathies: Eino

³¹ Minutes of the VII General Assembly, annex 35, 1D Ca13, SNDLA, PA.

³² Helvi Laine's speech at the commission, minutes of meeting of SNDL commission, 9 January 1966, 1D Cc4, SNDLA, PA. See also Krohn, *Aatteen paloa, tiedon janoa*, 72, 75.

³³ E.g., Aili Backlund's introduction at the local meeting, minutes of meeting of the Swedish-language section of the SNDL, 10 February 1964, 1D 314, SNDLA, PA.

³⁴ Saarenmaa, *Intiimin äännet*, 142–3, 145; Jukka Kortti, *Modernisaatiomurroksen kaupalliset merkit* (Helsinki 2003), 74–80.

³⁵ Krohn, *Aatteen paloa, tiedon janoa*, 72, 75, 77–8.

³⁶ Report of activities 1962–1965, VII General Assembly, annexes, 1D Cc14, SNDLA, PA.

³⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸ *Ibid.*

S. Repo had become its Director-General earlier that year, and he gave airtime to leftist social criticism between 1965 and 1970.³⁹

The problems the SNDL faced in being viewed as newsworthy in non-aligned and bourgeois newspapers does not mean the organization had not actively tried to attract media coverage beyond the people's democratic press. During the General Assembly, press relations were conducted by a dedicated communication section including Sisko Kiuru, Elsa Aaltonen and Eeva Ahonen. Kiuru and Aaltonen were professional journalists on a people's democratic newspaper; Ahonen was the SNDL's newly nominated press secretary, indicating that the organization had realized the importance of media visibility.⁴⁰ Nevertheless, the level of professionalism in the organization's PR-like efforts remained low compared with the US's National Organization for Women (NOW). According to Bradley, NOW waged a successful PR campaign when it launched itself in 1966, and it continued to draw on the experience of professional journalists within its ranks thereafter.⁴¹ Kiuru, Aaltonen and Ahonen were communication specialists, but their work in the SNDL was framed by the ethos of the radical left and Finland's general inexperience of PR methods. Whereas NOW could build its campaigns on decades of PR experience in the US, the field was only just emerging in Finland.

An illustrative example of the SNDL's inexperience in the strategic use of media beyond the radical left is the material sent to newsrooms in November 1965, which consisted mainly of abridged versions of presentations given to the General Assembly. The speeches were presented through ideological frames that would appeal to journalists on radical left newspapers but had no value beyond the people's democratic movement. As media scholar Nieminen has argued, the dominant public and its counterpublics appeal to their respective audiences by framing their themes differently.⁴² The SNDL's reliance on its own counterpublic seems also to have affected the ways in which it released information to the media. An understanding of news value was lacking, for example in the copy of the speech by General Secretary Tyyne Tuominen that was sent to the press in late October 1965. Instead of a brief text outlining newsworthy information about her speech, it gave a four-page description of the themes and protocols of the upcoming assembly.⁴³ Thus, the press release did not follow the conventions of the genre – knowledge about which was available in 1960s Finland. The notion of newsworthiness, as well as concrete instructions on how to construct a press release, could have been gleaned from PR textbooks, for example.⁴⁴ The members of the SNDL's communication

³⁹ Kortti, 'Media, the Elite and Modernity', 14–5.

⁴⁰ About the communication practices, VII General Assembly, 1D Ca14, SNDLA, PA.

⁴¹ Bradley, *Mass Media*, 33–40. See also Bernadette Barker-Plummer, 'News as a Political Resource: Media Strategies and Political Identity in the U.S. Women's Movement, 1966–1975', *Critical Studies in Mass Communication* Vol. 12, No. 3 (1995), 312–6.

⁴² Hannu Nieminen, 'Julkisuuden kohtalo myöhäismodernissa: Globalisaatio vai pirstoutuminen', in Anu Koivunen, Susanna Paasonen and Mari Pajala, eds, *Populaarin Lumo: Mediat ja arki* (Turku 2001), 192–5.

⁴³ Tyyne Tuominen, to the press, 21 of October 1965, Press conference and communication in the VII General Assembly, 1D Ca14, SNDLA, PA.

⁴⁴ E.g., Esko-Voitto Valkama, 'Teollisuuden lehdistösuhteet', in Jyrki Valtanen, ed., *Suhdetöiminnan käsikirja* (Helsinki 1963), 252–8, 264–5, 270; Kario, *Tiedottajan opas*, 61–5.

section could probably also have acquired this knowledge through their work in professional journalism.

However, a more active – and to some extent strategic – way of contacting the media beyond the radical left gradually evolved. In 1966, district secretaries received communications training, and the SNDL commission held an educational event to discuss how the media affected attitudes towards gender roles.⁴⁵ Additionally, a more conscious way of reaching people can be detected in sources that reveal the change in the organization's framing of PR-like work from enlightenment (*valistustyö*) to communication.⁴⁶ What is more, the archive preserves a draft news text about the SNDL's public statement on day care services, which was presented to the Ministry of Social Affairs in June 1968.⁴⁷ The structure of the text reveals a deeper understanding of journalism practice than do those that are available from previous years. It consists of one paragraph, which includes only the most relevant information, answering the six basic questions of journalism: who, what, where, when, why and how.⁴⁸ The developing understanding of journalism practice is also traceable in other documents, such as a press release issued in 1968 when the SNDL's contribution to the ongoing sex role discussion was officially launched.⁴⁹ The report on activities between the General Assemblies of 1965 and 1968 therefore mentioned that relations with the media had improved. In addition to the People's Democratic Press Service (Demokraattinen Lehtipalvelu), the SNDL had begun to send press releases about the organization's main decisions to the Finnish News Agency (Suomen Tietotoimisto), as well as television and radio newsrooms. Additionally, three press conferences had been held, districts and chapters had been active in contacting local media, and the strategy of contacting women journalists in particular had been adopted.⁵⁰

New ways of appealing to the wider public also appeared in *Uusi Nainen*, the commercial women's magazine published by the SNDL. In 1966, the magazine deliberately shifted its focus towards professional interests rather than the ideological aspects of societal issues.⁵¹ The impulse to diminish *Uusi Nainen*'s ideological content was prompted by the increasing competition between women's magazines in Finland.⁵² Newly established magazines such as *Jaana* were now providing light entertainment that was more

⁴⁵ Report of activities 1965–1968. Published in *Pippuri*, No. 3, 1968.

⁴⁶ In 1965, the SNDL report of activities used the word 'enlightenment', whereas, in 1968, the word was replaced with 'activities relating to communication and publications'.

⁴⁷ Draft of a news release, 19 June 1969, VIII General Assembly, preparing the gathering, 1D Ca16, SNDLA, PA.

⁴⁸ The first five questions were introduced by Edwin L. Shuman in the second edition of his book *Practical Journalism* in 1903. The 'how' question was included in the basic formula a few years later. Antero Okkonen, *Toimittajan työ: Johdatus sanomalehtimiehen ammattiin* (Helsinki 1961), 62–3.

⁴⁹ SNDL press release, 28 October 1968, 1D2 D, SNDLA, PA.

⁵⁰ Report of activities 1965–1968. Published in *Pippuri*, No. 3, 1968; Minutes of meeting of the SNDL committee for women's liberation, 5 April 1966, 1D2 J, SNDLA, PA; Helvi Laine's circular letter to local chapters, 23 February 1967, 1D2 H296, SNDLA, PA.

⁵¹ The content was discussed in detail at the SNDL commission in May 1966, minutes of meeting of SNDL commission, 21 and 22 May 1966, 1D Cc4, SNDLA, PA.

⁵² Minutes of meeting of SNDL commission, 21 and 22 May 1966, 1D Cc4, SNDLA, PA.

appealing than *Uusi Nainen*: while the latter had been Finland's second biggest women's magazine in its late 1950s heyday, it ranked sixth at best during the late 1960s.

This more commercial spin on *Uusi Nainen* was perhaps unconvincing, since its circulation between 1965 and 1968 increased only slightly, from 64,160 to 66,011.⁵³ Nevertheless, it remained important for external outreach, and its content and readership were discussed at length at the eighth General Assembly in 1968. Its critics argued that the magazine should present the SNDL's political vision to wider groups of women, but not by flirting with commercial values.⁵⁴ However, the SNDL leadership took a more pragmatic view and saw *Uusi Nainen* as a cornerstone of the organization's evolving PR-like strategy. It was argued that the magazine was the best channel through which to reach women outside the radical left. The first SNDL chairwoman, Hellä Meltti, described *Uusi Nainen*'s significance:

Fellow comrades. *Uusi Nainen* is our own magazine. [...] With the help of the magazine, we try to connect and gain visibility in the commercial market too. Unfortunately, we cannot afford to keep the magazine as our internal paper. Let's make it as radical and different from other magazines as possible. [...] *Uusi Nainen* is the thing [...] that can help us to get close to people who are not people's democrats.⁵⁵

Meltti's speech and the debate at the General Assembly suggest that the SNDL had not reached a solid understanding of its own PR-like strategy in 1968. Best practice continued to be discussed during the three-year period between the General Assemblies of 1968 and 1971.⁵⁶ Arguably, this resulted partly from the internal dispute between the SKP's majority and minority wings. In 1968, Anna-Liisa Hyvönen, a committed majority communist, was nominated as new General Secretary of the SNDL. Alongside the SNDL's other leaders, she took care of everyday SNDL practices, including media relations.⁵⁷ Hyvönen was not an enthusiast for women's issues; in a short memoir about her parliamentary career, she claimed she had been forced to join the SNDL in order to even out political tensions between the different strands of communism.⁵⁸ Her openly expressed view that the SNDL was a detour in her political career seems to hint that she may not have placed as strong an emphasis on media relations as her predecessors. For example, the action plan for 1972–1974 returned the focus to the people's democratic press, although it acknowledged the importance of television and radio:

We need to develop our connections with the people's democratic press. [...] We must attempt to gain visibility for all the major events from the Finnish Broadcasting Company

⁵³ *Levikkitiedot 1965* (Helsinki 1965), 47; *Levikkitiedot 1968* (Helsinki 1968), 59.

⁵⁴ Minutes of the VIII General Assembly 1968, 1D Ca15, SNDLA, PA.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵⁶ Report of Activities 1968–1971. Published in *Pippuri*, No. 3, 1971.

⁵⁷ Katainen, *Akkain aherrusta*, 355–8.

⁵⁸ Anna-Liisa Hyvönen, 'Tieni eduskuntaan', in Markku Aaltonen, ed., *Miten meistä tuli kansanedustajia?* (Seinäjohti 2007), 86. See also Katainen, *Akkain aherrusta*, 357.

as well as local radio channels. Additionally, we must promote the visibility of women's issues in these media channels.⁵⁹

This tendency can also be seen in the action plan for 1974–77, according to which the systematic use of the media should be developed through the detailed planning of communication strategies. Additionally, it emphasized the need to 'discuss and negotiate with newsrooms about an increase in the visibility of women's actions'.⁶⁰ Thus, the SNDL was clearly aware of the benefits of a pre-planned PR-like strategy, but the proposal to negotiate over content with newsrooms hints that it was targeting people's democratic journalists – that is, those who shared the radical left worldview – rather than journalists in the wider mainstream media.⁶¹ The people's democrats thus reappeared as the SNDL's most important audience at a moment when the disruption of the radical left in general, and the disappointment of younger women in particular, was elevating new people to leadership positions in the SNDL.⁶² At the same time, worsening political tensions between bourgeois forces and the fragmented spectrum of left-wing groups pushed the dominant public and the people's democratic counterpublic further apart.⁶³ The growing importance of the SNDL's own reference group also had an effect on the channels through which that group was addressed. Alongside mainstream media, other ways of reaching this audience had traditionally been used, and these remained important at the turn of the 1960s and 1970s.

Spreading the Message in More Traditional Ways

The SNDL's adoption of PR-like strategies from the mid-1960s onwards fits to some extent Grunig and Hunt's conceptualization of the development of modern PR in the Global North. According to them, the post-war period was an 'advocacy era' characterized by the wish to modify attitudes and influence behaviour. Furthermore, Grunig and Hunt view post-war PR as a two-way process that grounded itself on research-based knowledge.⁶⁴ This, in particular, resonates with the SNDL, which had traditionally used social research to justify their claims with regard to improvements in women's status. Like other post-war party political women's organizations, for whom soapbox

⁵⁹ SNDL action plan 1972–73–74. Published in *Pippuri*, No. 1, 1972.

⁶⁰ SNDL action plan 1974–1977. Published in *Pippuri*, No. 2, 1974.

⁶¹ This can also be seen in *Pippuri*, in which some texts mention the 'people's democratic' papers, in particular when challenging the members to contact local media in the early 1970s. E.g., 'Ohje kansainvälisen naistenpäivän vietosta', *Pippuri*, No. 1, 1972.

⁶² Katainen, *Akkain aherrusta*, 355–8.

⁶³ The 1970s was a decade during which the politicization of Finnish society was at its peak. The tension between the radical left and bourgeois forces in the society appeared also in the media. Heidi Kurvinen, *'En mä oo mies enkä nainen. Mä oon toimittaja': Sukupuoli ja suomalainen toimittajakunta 1960- ja 1970-luvulla* (PhD thesis, University of Oulu, 2013), 109–16.

⁶⁴ James E. Grunig and Todd Hunt, *Managing Public Relations* (Fort Worth, TX 1984), 13–46. See also Smith, *Public Relations*, 48, 96–100.

campaigning to spread their political message was a cornerstone activity,⁶⁵ the SNDL embraced the need to use various methods to reach people. Consequently, the mass media formed only one aspect of its strategy to spread its ideological message to the general public from the mid-1960s onwards.

Throughout the 1960s, the SNDL relied heavily on more traditional forms of communication, such as leaflets and local meetings, which offered room for reciprocal communication between the organization and its members. For example, in 1966 local chapters were encouraged to organize panel discussions and visit workplaces in connection with International Women's Day. There was no mention of any need to contact the media.⁶⁶ Often these more traditional forms of communication were nevertheless combined with visibility in the people's democratic press. For example, in 1966 the SNDL was instrumental in a fundraising campaign for children in Vietnam. The fundraising call appeared in the people's democratic press, complemented by 2000 flyers that women from various left-wing organizations distributed to the public.⁶⁷

The balanced view of the importance of media relations and other activities is evident in the instructions issued to districts concerning the Parliamentary elections in spring 1966. The districts were competing to win an honorary flag from the organization, on the basis of points awarded for tasks in three categories: (1) political motions related to the SNDL's election programme; (2) events organized in relation to the elections; and (3) communications. The last category had two subdivisions: articles in the people's democratic and other daily papers, and flyers and other materials.⁶⁸ There was a similar tendency in a resolution accepted by the 1965 General Assembly, which formed the lines of action for the next three-year period. According to this resolution, the SNDL would increase Finns' awareness of the organization by taking a more active role in public discussions, but first and foremost this meant organizing events and presenting motions.⁶⁹ This can be seen in the following extract, where General Secretary Tuominen envisions future SNDL activities at the turn of 1965–1966:

It is said that communication has a lot to offer. Our league has the best women's magazine in the country – *Uusi Nainen*. [...] However, the ideological state of mind and the positivity that are characteristic of our league cannot be replaced by radio and television. These characteristics also attract people to us.⁷⁰

Tuominen's comment reflects the rapidly changing society of 1960s Finland, which had led the organization to seek new models of action that would enable it to spread its

⁶⁵ E.g., Blaxland, 'Women in the Organisation', 236–56.

⁶⁶ Kirsti Ryyänen, 'Kansainvälisen naistenpäivän ohje. Naisen asema – yhteiskunnan kehityksen mittapuu', *Pippuri*, No. 1, 1966.

⁶⁷ Report of Activities 1965–1968. Published in *Pippuri*, No. 3, 1968.

⁶⁸ Minutes of meeting of SNDL commission, 12 December 1965, annex 8, 1D Cc4, SNDLA, PA.

⁶⁹ Resolution of the VII General Assembly, 1D Ca13, SNDLA, PA.

⁷⁰ Tyyne Tuominen's speech at the VII General Assembly, 5 November 1965, minutes of the VII General Assembly, annex 8, 1D Ca13, SNDLA, PA.

ideological message to wider circles. There was a particular need to reach young women, who were absent from activities at all levels of the SNDL.⁷¹ One way of doing this appeared in autumn 1965, when the sex role debate in Finland intensified and the radical sex role ideology – which demanded changes in the roles of both women and men – challenged the SNDL to take a more active part in societal discussions concerning women's status. Although the SNDL in many ways supported the ideas of Association 9 (Yhdistys 9), the main promoter of radical sex role ideology, it saw itself as having a responsibility to add a political dimension to the discussion.⁷² Tuominen formulated the need for a people's democratic view in the meeting of the SNDL commission in May 1966: 'At this point, we need to boldly direct the activities of the league towards developing and enlarging the women's emancipation movement, eliminating women's unequal position, destroying the double burden on women, promoting the social equality of men and women'.⁷³

The SNDL's contribution to the development of a more democratic and gender-equal society had begun to take shape in early 1966, when the SNDL's committee for liberating women was announced. This resulted in the launch of the 'Woman, Man, Democracy' programme in 1968.⁷⁴ At first the committee focused on internal discussions, but the need to reach wider audiences gradually became apparent. This was initially done through traditional communication channels, as Helvi Laine, member of the SNDL commission, formulated it: 'We must promote the discussion of the women's issue not only in the papers but also widely among women'.⁷⁵ Similarly, Tuominen emphasized the variety of ways of approaching Finnish women. Although she mentioned the need to encourage newspapers beyond the radical left to report on the issue, she also prioritized discussion events, among other things.⁷⁶ At the same time, the organization acknowledged the expertise of single-issue movements, particularly Association 9, in reaching the wider public: 'One becomes almost envious when one sees how this tiny association has gained visibility and influence. We could learn from them in terms of propaganda, as well as otherwise'.⁷⁷

The balance between traditional communication methods and the use of mass media can be seen in the instructions given to local chapters concerning the 'Woman, Man, Democracy' programme when the first draft was published at the beginning of 1967. The programme was about to be finalized after an extensive crowdsourcing campaign, during which local chapters had an opportunity to comment on the text. Additionally,

⁷¹ E.g. Minutes of the VII General Assembly 1965, annex 70, 1D Ca13, SNDLA, PA; Minutes of meeting of SNDL commission, 3 June 1965 and 22 May 1966, 1D Cc4, SNDLA, PA.

⁷² Kurvinen and Turunen, 'Radical Sex Role Ideology', 65–71.

⁷³ Minutes of meeting of SNDL commission, 21 and 22 May 1966, 1D Cc4, SNDLA, PA.

⁷⁴ Kurvinen and Turunen, 'Radical Sex Role Ideology', 66.

⁷⁵ Helvi Laine's speech at the commission, minutes of meeting of SNDL commission, 9 January 1966, 1D Cc4, SNDLA, PA.

⁷⁶ Tyyne Tuominen's speech at the General Assembly, minutes of the VII General Assembly 1965, annexes, 1D Ca13, SNDLA, PA.

⁷⁷ Aili Backlund comment at the commission, minutes of meeting of SNDL commission, 22 May 1966, annex 31, 1D Cc4, SNDLA, PA.

local members were encouraged to circulate the draft within their own communities and collect comments on it. This could be done by organizing events, visiting workplaces, and seeking opinions from prominent community members. However, the instructions did not mention the role of the media.⁷⁸ In practice, the discussion took place both at various events and to a lesser extent in the media. Altogether 35,000 people were reported to have participated in the crowdsourcing phase, when the programme was discussed at over 1000 public events across the country, accompanied by articles in local people's democratic newspapers.⁷⁹

A year later, in June 1968, the 'Woman, Man, Democracy' programme was approved in connection with the General Assembly. Additionally, a seminar on the programme was organized to which journalists were invited, and this resulted in wide media coverage in the people's democratic press. No seminar press releases or invitations are preserved in the archive, but the programme's framing was clearly ideological; as a result, no newspapers beyond the radical left reported on either the seminar or the programme. For instance, *Helsingin Sanomat* did not mention the General Assembly or the 'Woman, Man, Democracy' programme but focused on other news stories, including the Whitsun holiday weather, secondary school examinations, and the murder of Robert Kennedy.⁸⁰ Most likely the press material consisted of speeches given at the seminar, on the basis of which the articles in the people's democratic press repeated the formulations of the official speakers. The biggest radical left newspaper, *Kansan Uutiset*, wrote:

This document is a revolutionary flag against prevailing conditions, laws and the lack of them, rules and collective agreements. It is not new for the SNDL per se, but what is new is the way of rebelling against customs, thoughts and attitudes, against institutions, against the entire status quo that guides both women and men, often unconsciously.⁸¹

The exact same sentences can be found in the SNDL's second chairwoman Irma Torvi's speech, which is archived alongside other documents from the seminar and General Assembly.⁸² Thus, the people's democratic press's willingness to publish SNDL messages verbatim arguably hindered the organization from using more professional practices to communicate with the media. This had an impact on the seminar's coverage – or lack of it – in newspapers beyond the radical left.

Nevertheless, within the people's democratic press, the seminar coverage was successful, making the two-year journey towards the 'Woman, Man, Democracy' programme a reference point for future activities related to the SNDL's PR-like strategy. The lessons learned during the programme's crowdsourcing were used the very next year as the

⁷⁸ 'Nainen – mies – demokratia. Ohjelman käytöstä', *Pippuri*, No. 2, 1967.

⁷⁹ SNDL press release, 28 October 1968, 1D2 D, SNDLA, PA.

⁸⁰ 'Helluntaiheleä Helsinki houkutteli ulkoilemaan', *Helsingin Sanomat*, 4 June 1968; 'Oppikouluun pyrkijät tulossa vielä tänään', *Helsingin Sanomat*, 5 June 1968; 'Kennedy yöllä yhä tajuttomana', *Helsingin Sanomat*, 6 June 1968.

⁸¹ 'Nainen, mies, demokratia: Ohjelma vanhoillisuutta vastaan', *Kansan Uutiset*, 5 June 1968.

⁸² Irma Torvi's speech at the 'Woman, Man, Democracy' seminar in 1968, Ca16, SNDLA, PA.

SNDL prepared to organize the World Congress of Women in Helsinki in June 1969. However, one should not underestimate the contribution of the main organization, the WIDF, to the more systematic use of the media in this case. The WIDF had organized five world congresses before Helsinki, and as a major transnational organization it had a highly functional organizing body.⁸³ The conference space included a press room, and the international press committee consisted of eight women from different national chapters of the WIDF. The Finnish representative was the journalist Kirsti Ryyänen; she was accompanied by two other SNDL members, Ahonen and Ritva Cortes, who both had a background in journalism.⁸⁴ Based on its press release, 74 journalists from 19 countries in total followed the congress, which resulted in extensive coverage in foreign press.⁸⁵

The ‘Woman, Man, Democracy’ programme provided the main framework for the 1969 congress, but wider ideological messages also needed to be conveyed to the public through the media. To this end, a communication section was established, led by communications secretary Ahonen, and a PR-like campaign began a year before the congress.⁸⁶ The first press conference was held as early as November 1968, when the head of the WIDF visited Finland; during the congress itself, three press conferences were held, and press releases were issued in both Finnish and English.⁸⁷ Additionally, local chapters were encouraged to take an active role in spreading information to wider groups of people and in relation to the local media. Altogether, 200 events were organized by local chapters, in which approximately 8000 women participated. In particular, the events organized in connection with International Women’s Day on 8 March 1969 were seen as crucial for the recognition of the congress beyond the SNDL’s own circles.⁸⁸

While the people’s democratic press remained eager to cover the congress, other newspapers were more reticent. Nevertheless, *Helsingin Sanomat* published a couple of brief news articles on the congress, as well as one bigger piece. The ideological message of the SNDL and WIDF did not claim any space in the paper, but the news barrier was crossed with the attendance of the Soviet astronaut Valentina Tereshkova and a demonstration organized by Association 9. Additionally, a dialogue was published between members of Association 9 and the Women’s Rights Association Unioni (Naisasialiitto

⁸³ Katharine McGregor, ‘Indonesian Women, The Women’s International Democratic Federation and the Struggle for “Women’s Rights”, 1946–1965’, *Indonesia and the Malay World*, Vol. 40, No. 117 (2012), 196–200; Magdalena Grabowska, ‘Beyond the “Development” Paradigm: State Socialist Women’s Activism, Transnationalism, and the “Long Sixties”’, in Barbara Molony and Jennifer Nelson, eds, *Women’s Activism and ‘Second Wave’ Feminism* (London 2017), 150, 159–60.

⁸⁴ Work plan for the first conference day in 14 July 1969, 1D H2, SNDLA, PA.

⁸⁵ Short material relating to the participation at the Helsinki World Congress of Women’s and its resolutions, 1D Hu, SNDLA, PA.

⁸⁶ Preparations for the World Congress of Women in 1969, 1D H2, SNDLA, PA.

⁸⁷ Invitation to the press conference, 16 November 1968, 1D H2, SNDLA, PA; Press kit, 20 November 1968, 1D H2, SNDLA, PA.

⁸⁸ Preparations for the World Congress of Women in 1969, 1D H2, SNDLA, PA; ‘Miten vietämme kansainvälistä naistenpäivää’, *Pippuri*, No. 1, 1969; Report of activities 1968–1971. Published in *Pippuri*, No. 2, 1971.

Unioni) – one of Finland’s oldest women’s organizations – on the role of women and men in society, whereas the congress organizers and their ideas were ignored.⁸⁹ Thus, once again, the wider public sphere remained largely inaccessible to the SNDL, which in the minds of bourgeois society represented the post-war communist threat.⁹⁰ Probably as a result of the SNDL’s difficulties in reaching the dominant public, along with Finland’s intensified political tensions, the division between the two public spheres in the SNDL’s rhetoric strengthened at the turn of the 1960s–1970s. This in turn affected its understanding of the relevant audience for its message.

Intensified Tension between the Two Public Spheres

As a party political women’s organization, the SNDL focused on the fight to dismantle capitalism; the socialist worldview also framed its work on gender equality. This choice of emphasis was clear, and it can be explained through different levels of loyalty in the work of women’s organizations.⁹¹ As Thomsson has argued, political women’s organizations are tied to the ideology of their main party.⁹² In practice, this meant the SNDL actively participated in political campaigns for women candidates in particular, and in formulating gender-specific election programmes, as well as spreading the ideological message to the wider public.⁹³ Both lines of work were important, but ultimately the enemy was the right-wing parties that were moving the country away from the ideals of the radical left.

Simultaneously, gendered practices of the radical left politics affected the SNDL work. As an example, the more active role adopted by the organization in the public sphere was partly a reaction to the ongoing debate about the SNDL’s specific role within the people’s democratic movement. As the new welfare state began to improve women’s societal status in the Finland of the 1960s and 1970s, the need for political women’s organizations in general – radical left or otherwise – was being called into question.⁹⁴ For the SNDL the emerging discussion of sex roles offered a channel to justify its existence.⁹⁵ Simultaneously, wider societal developments pushed the SNDL into a more

⁸⁹ E.g., ‘Naisia 110 maasta maailmankongressiin’, *Helsingin Sanomat*, June 14, 1969; Carl Henning, ‘Kaksi ryhmää suomalaisen naisen (ja miehen) asialla’, *Helsingin Sanomat*, 15 June 1969.

⁹⁰ E.g., Eskola, *Vasen laita lavea*; Setälä, *Uusstalinistin uskontunnustus*.

⁹¹ E.g., Helen Laville, *Cold War Women: The International Activities of American Women’s Organisations* (Manchester 2002), 8; Ruusala, *Vasemmiston naisjärjestöjen aktiivijäsenistö*.

⁹² Ulrika Thomsson, ‘Rätten till våra kroppar: Kvinnorörelsen och våldtäktsdebatten’, *Tidskrift för Genusforskning*, Vol. 21, No. 4 (2000), 58. See also Ellen C. DuBois, ‘Eleanor Flexner and the History of American Feminism’, *Gender & History*, Vol. 3, No. 1 (1991), 81–90; de Haan, ‘Continuing Cold War Paradigms’, 557.

⁹³ Eeva Ahonen, ‘Naisehdokas tunnetuksi’, *Pippuri*, No. 1, 1966; Kirsti Ryyänen, ‘Naisen asema: Yhteiskunnan kehityksen mittapuu’, *Pippuri*, No. 1, 1966; ‘Kunnallisvaalit syksyn tärkein tapahtuma’, *Pippuri*, No. 3, 1972.

⁹⁴ E.g., Solveig Bergman, *The Politics of Feminism: Autonomous Feminist Movements in Finland and West Germany from the 1960s to the 1980s* (Åbo 2002), 145; Tuija Parvikko, ‘Conception of Gender Equality: Similarity and Difference’, in Marja Keränen, ed., *Finnish ‘Undemocracy’: Essays on Gender and Politics* (Helsinki 1990), 97.

⁹⁵ Kurvinen and Turunen, ‘Radical Sex Role Ideology’, 66.

active public role. According to media scholar Saarenmaa, male hegemony dominated Finnish public discussions at this time, which meant that male public speakers continued to be seen as the norm. However, the public sphere gradually became more diverse and open to conflicting ideas.⁹⁶ Particularly during the late 1960s, more and more women entered the public sphere in various roles, such as journalists, politicians and popular culture figures, and the sex role debate gave women – and to a lesser extent men – an opportunity to redefine ideas about gender roles.⁹⁷ The SNDL's more vocal participation in the public sphere can be seen as another example of this change, even if its results were restricted by the politicized atmosphere of Finnish society. In 1967, the pseudonymous Mikonpoika explained to a 'radical' reader why a motion presented to parliament by the SNDL had not been reported in the local newspaper *Länsi-Savo*:

We must admit that a normal journalist – and reader – sees red when they are reading [a press release or news item] and see the words 'Finnish Democratic' and so on. A communist comes to mind. This is not far off the mark. Even though there was some information at the end, the road towards the newsroom's 'filing cabinet', i.e., the bin, was inevitable.⁹⁸

The text reveals the prejudices of people outside the radical left against the people's democratic movement in late 1960s Finland. The explicit bias was not against the SNDL per se, but it reflected Finland's political atmosphere. The momentum of the left-wing politics in the mid-1960s had intensified the rhetoric of 'left-wing threat' among the political right, which strove to maintain bourgeois hegemony amid societal change.⁹⁹ Simultaneously, the media visibility of the right-wing National Coalition Party (Kansallinen Kokoomus) and the populist Party for the Finnish Countryside (Suomen Maaseudun Puolue), and their success in the 1970 elections, led the SKDL to view the mainstream media as the servants of bourgeois propaganda.¹⁰⁰ The growing support for right-wing parties also seems to have exacerbated the constant sense of minority status within the people's democratic movement, intensifying tensions across the political spectrum. Within the SNDL, this gave rise to the rhetoric of a 'fight' against bourgeois society, particularly during election campaigns.¹⁰¹

As political tensions intensified from the early 1970s onwards, the SNDL returned to a narrower understanding of its target audience as consisting mainly of people's democrats, as has been noted earlier in this article. The idea of the bourgeois media remained in the SNDL's rhetoric, but instead of seeking visibility within those media, the SNDL began to

⁹⁶ Saarenmaa, *Intiimin äänet*, 252–77.

⁹⁷ Kurvinen, 'En mä oo mies enkä nainen', 399–415; Kurvinen and Turunen, 'Radical Sex Role Ideology', 64–5.

⁹⁸ Mikonpoika, 'Nurkantäyteeksi: Sosialisoidaan', *Länsi-Savo*, 15 December 1967.

⁹⁹ Okkonen, *Peruskoulua vastaan*, 78–9, 152–4; Ruusunen, *Todeksi uskottua*, 66–7; Krohn, *Aatteen paloa*, 71–2.

¹⁰⁰ E.g. Laura Saarenmaa, 'Unohtetun kansan Leena: SMP:n nousu ja nuoret naiset – lähihistorian yhteen sopimattomat elementit', in Erkkä Railo and Paavo Oinonen, eds, *Media historiassa* (Turku 2012), 164–5.

¹⁰¹ E.A., 'Sananvapaus on vaarassa', *Pippuri*, No. 1, 1971; 'Valppaina oikeiston hyökkäystä vastaan!', *Pippuri*, No. 4, 1971.

criticize the content they produced. In 1971, *Pippuri* reflected on this concern about the influence of bourgeois parties on society and particularly the media:

The press publishes texts hostile to the Soviet Union. They try to promote hysteria among Finns, cause prejudice and intolerant attitudes. [...] The regressive era also continues in the Finnish Broadcasting Company and on television. Programmes that are progressive [i.e., represent the people's democratic movement] are censored and 'shelved' almost every day. Also, the lack of labour-sensitive programmes on television reveals [...] the pogrom against progressive journalists.¹⁰²

A few years later, in 1973, this concern was written into the SNDL's draft political programme:

The mass media have a huge impact on changing attitudes and ideas. The bourgeoisie keeps the biggest papers in the country in its possession. Those papers offer their readers twisted ideals and a one-sided worldview. [...] Bourgeois women's magazines and sensational magazines, in particular, [...] try to shift women's interest away from societal realities and the problems of working life.¹⁰³

The rhetoric used by the SNDL resembles the common post-war Marxist critique of the mass media.¹⁰⁴ It also explains the SNDL's waning enthusiasm with respect to reaching the dominant public. Because the mainstream media were seen as dominated by bourgeois ideas, their role in the SNDL's PR-like strategy diminished. The shift was exacerbated by the dominant public's focus on individuals and personal lives, which became more central particularly in magazines during the late 1960s and early 1970s.¹⁰⁵ This more intimate approach to readers conflicted with the ideological premises of the radical left. A hint of this troubled relationship with the media can be found in *Uusi Nainen*, which reflected changing attitudes towards bourgeois society within the people's democratic women's movement. Like other women's magazines – and magazines in general – *Uusi Nainen* published interviews where the focus was on one person, but compared with other publications these articles had a clearly ideological tone. The magazine also published articles that criticized the media's more intimate way of addressing the audience.¹⁰⁶ Thus, the development of the two

¹⁰² 'Valppaina oikeiston hyökkäystä vastaan!', *Pippuri*, No. 4, 1971.

¹⁰³ Draft of the SNDL platform. Published in *Pippuri*, No. 7, 1973.

¹⁰⁴ Marxist media scholarship saw mass media as a tool for persuasion and propaganda in the 1960s and 1970s. Farooq Kperogi, 'Marxist Theory of the Media or Theory of the Media by Marxists? Reconciling Adorno with Other Marxist Media Theorists', *Journal of Communications Media Studies*, Vol. 7, No. 1 (2015), 61–78. See also Bradley, *Mass Media*, 17–8.

¹⁰⁵ Saarenmaa, *Intiimin äänet*, 145–8; Railo, *Henkilökohtainen on poliittista*, 30–1, 47–8.

¹⁰⁶ E.g., Allan Aho, 'Helvi Niskanen', *Uusi Nainen*, No. 9, 1975; Irja Kaisa Vierula, 'Aili Backlund', *Uusi Nainen*, No. 11, 1975; Tuulaliina Saarikoski, 'Missi. Kuplajulkkis suomalaisen tapan', *Uusi Nainen*, No. 4, 1978.

public spheres – the dominant public and the people’s democratic counterpublic – in opposite directions gives us tools to understand why the SNDL’s more open strategy towards the media did not last as the PR-oriented late 1960s became the openly politicized 1970s.

Conclusion

During the analysed period, Finnish society changed rapidly, and it became increasingly important for different areas of life, from the corporate world to political organizations, to acquire new methods for reaching people. This included the SNDL, a women’s organization on the radical left, which began to discuss the significance of PR-like strategies from 1964 onwards. The new-found realization of the importance of public relations resulted in a double strategy for reaching new audiences. First, the SNDL approached working-class women in workplaces and at its local meetings, where leaflets and other study materials were shared. Second, it targeted the mass media. However, its strategic use of the media beyond the radical left was not very successful, and the party press – that is, the people’s democratic counterpublic – remained the cornerstone of the SNDL’s media visibility.

The rationalization of society, and the role of PR as the hot topic of the early 1960s, offers central explanations for the SNDL’s growing interest in developing PR-like strategies. Women’s gradually increasing participation in public discussions was another important factor. Although the SNDL’s basic ideas about women’s place in society had been formulated during the 1940s, the mid-1960s media debate about sex roles led it to pursue a more active role in public discussions.¹⁰⁷ It did this to gain visibility for the radical left, and to spread the socialist worldview to wider groups of people in Finland. However, the public role taken up by the organization was also inspired by internal discussions within the people’s democratic movement about the meaning of a separate women’s organization. To be able to demonstrate the importance of a gender-specific organization within the radical left, the SNDL needed a visible role in public discussions, and it could achieve this by becoming more active in relation to the public sphere.

To conclude, this article demonstrates the importance of analysing a party political women’s organization in two contexts: the party political context, and the wider societal discussion of gender-specific issues. More importantly, it widens our understanding of the strategies that party political women’s organizations use when striving for social change. If we view media relations and other forms of communication as two sides of one PR coin, women’s organizations’ active role in setting the agenda becomes more visible. Although the complementary uses of various media may not have been clearly strategic, this article reveals the flexibility that a party political women’s organization can show in the face of wider societal developments by adopting new ways of acting and claiming their place amid a changing political atmosphere. Additionally, it reveals how PR was gradually adopted outside the corporate world in 1960s Finland, challenging

¹⁰⁷ Katainen, *Akkain aherrusta*; Kurvinen and Turunen, ‘Radical Sex Role Ideology’, 65–7.

future research to incorporate PR into the history of party political and other organizations.


Acknowledgements

The author offers warm thanks to the peer reviewers for their insightful comments. Additionally, she wishes to thank Professor Lucy Delap, Dr Hannah Yoken and Dr Riitta Matilainen for commenting on an earlier draft of this article.

Funding

The author disclosed receipt of the following financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article: This work was supported by the Academy of Finland (decision number 316287).

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