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Social Scientists in Intellectual Roles

Introduction

Society can – among other things – be conceived as a system of knowledge production, transmission and use. In this essay, my purpose is to deliberate upon this topic by focusing on what Ilkka Heiskanen has specifically written about it and how he has evaluated Finnish society in this regard.

I will start by describing his notions of the role of social sciences and social scientists in the overall knowledge structure. I will then briefly discuss Sjaak Koenis's suggestion that it would be better to abandon the idea of the role of an intellectual and to replace it with the notion of an intellectual role and Harry G. Frankfurt's ideas about the nature of knowledge, specifically his distinction between careful and careless relationships to truth and reality.¹ Returning to the contributions of Ilkka Heiskanen, I examine his thoughts about a country as a knowledge society, an intelligent society and an intellectual society. This theoretical and conceptual framework is then applied to analyze Heiskanen's ideas about the role and significance of social sciences and social scientists in Finland. The article concludes with my own observations about the current state of affairs, and suggestions for further scrutiny.²

Mandarin intellectuals and practical social theory

In 1982, Ilkka Heiskanen published an essay entitled *Social sciences, practical social theory and Finland's intellectual climate*.³ In that essay, he analyzes the development and state of the art of Finnish social sciences, with special attention to the question whether and how social sciences and social scientists have influenced

the formation of the Finnish intellectual climate as well as overall social and political development.

In order to achieve his empirical goals, Heiskanen constructs a conceptual framework which links together the society's knowledge structure, practical social theory, the intellectual climate, and the producers and transmitters of knowledge, whom he calls 'mandarins'.

Firstly, Heiskanen suggests that in order to assess the social impact of a scientific field, we should be able to locate the knowledge produced in that field in the context of what he calls the *knowledge structure* of a society (Heiskanen 1982, 3). The different elements of this knowledge structure are defined in terms of their relation to everyday life, the strength of their self-analysis and self-reflection, and their degree of concrete applicability. As a result, Heiskanen distinguishes between seven types of knowledge (ibid., 3-6):

1. automatically reproduced knowledge behind everyday activities;
2. technical knowledge that works as the basis of practical action;
3. knowledge produced by concrete everyday logic;
4. knowledge that functions as the basis of technical knowledge for practical action;
5. automatically reproduced scientific knowledge;
6. 'engineering knowledge' that determines the application and application logic of academic knowledge⁴;
7. knowledge that analyzes the nature, use and position of scientific knowledge.⁵

The *intellectual climate* is then defined as the state of the art of the whole knowledge structure and its different knowledge types in a given society (or smaller or larger cultural region) in a certain moment or period (ibid., 6-7).

A good or active intellectual climate is, according to Heiskanen, normally understood so that it presupposes a) constant growth and regeneration of the different knowledge types; b) effective and diversified use of knowledge in action practices and practical action at both individual and collective levels; and c) competition and 'enriching' interaction between the different types of knowledge.⁶ Furthermore, he says, a willingness for self-analysis and self-evaluation, as well as reciprocal criticism and tolerance between knowledge types, are usually added to these criteria. (Ibid., 7.)

Nevertheless, Heiskanen continues, this liberalism-based western understanding of an intellectual climate has also been attacked. Some commentators, for example, have emphasized that all knowledge should be critical and that scientific knowledge should activate and emancipate everyday knowledge.

Others, in turn, have demanded that knowledge, especially scientific knowledge, should stand in opposition to all rigorous and disciplined quests for knowledge ('gay science'). (Ibid., 7.)

Heiskanen's own approach is more limited. He takes it as his main task to ask what kind of knowledge the social sciences have contributed to the development of the Finnish version of practical social theory, and how this knowledge has been connected to this theory. (Ibid., 7-8.)

From the point of view of the types of knowledge above, *practical social theory*⁷ (*käytännön yhteiskuntateoria*), can be interpreted as practical techniques behind social action and material production (the second grade of the knowledge structure). This knowledge, Heiskanen says, can also be understood as comprehensive and predominant conceptions that operate at two levels: 1) as action practices and practical actions (*toimintakäytäntöjä ja käytännön toimintoja*) that regulate how individuals and groups can regulate the action practices and practical action of each other; and 2) as action practices and practical actions that regulate the action practices and practical action of the whole society. As examples of the latter dimension, Heiskanen mentions the society's political steering, and the choice, maintenance and change of the ground rules of different institutions. (Ibid., 8.)

The task of social sciences is then to inscribe its research-based ideas and findings into those layers of knowledge that determine actual behaviour and social practices. In order to trace the influence of a field of scientific activity on practical social theory, Heiskanen argues, we should be able to identify the transmitters of scientific products, especially those who transform and mediate this knowledge to the wider public (ibid., 3). These persons Heiskanen calls *mandarins*.⁸

Heiskanen makes a distinction between what he calls *mandarin intellectuals* and *routine mandarins*. Mandarin intellectuals (*kantamandariinit*) are members of the society's intelligentsia (älymystö), and they represent the highest level of knowledge transmission. These persons produce knowledge about the society through research and theorizing, and they work at positions which give them recognition and credibility. Their function is to provide the society with findings and ideas that are considered relevant and important for practical social theory. (Ibid., 9-10.)

In order to get their messages transmitted, however, mandarin intellectuals usually need the assistance of another social group that Heiskanen calls routine mandarins (*rutiinimandariinit*). Routine mandarins include e.g. representatives of the media, popularisers of science, teachers at different institutions and civil servants. Their main function is to mediate the findings and knowledge of mandarin intellectuals in original or modified forms from the academic world

to other public spheres. Together, the mandarin class forms communicative chains through which social scientific knowledge and theorizing is re-interpreted and integrated into practical social theory. (Ibid., 9-10.)

Heiskanen emphasizes that mandarins are never completely free and independent in their work. With some conscious exaggeration, he defines them as prisoners of the knowledge structure, their own knowledge and the rules of the application of knowledge.⁹ More specifically, the deterrents restricting the freedom of mandarins can be divided into three categories. *Situational deterrents* are bounded to the specific time and place where the mandarins are working. *Long term restraints*, in turn, emerge from the written and unwritten rules that regulate the behaviour of and mutual interaction among the intelligentsia. *Ultra-long deterrents* are obstacles of a more general kind. These can, according to Heiskanen, be located, for example, in the nature of the language in use (formal deterrents), and in the established (or even mythical) ways of thinking about social, political or cultural issues (substantial deterrents). (Ibid., 10-12.)

Within this framework, the influence of mandarins on practical social theory can take place in empirical and creative ways, the former being more modest than the latter. With *empirical inscription*, Heiskanen means respectful abstention from breaking with the premises of the old theory, which can take place in three partly overlapping ways (ibid., 13):

- *on the surface (pinnalle)* (the old theory is updated with new words);
- *around (ympäriille)* (some parts of the old theory are emphasized and promoted);
- *in between (väliin)* (gaps in the old theory are filled in with new knowledge).
- Creative action, in turn, means that the deterrents restricting the room for manoeuvre of mandarins are consciously broken down and transgressed: premises of the old theory are destroyed, or their meanings and uses are crucially transformed. This *creative inscription* can also appear in three forms (ibid., 13):
- *beneath (alle)* (premises and deterrents to the regeneration of the old theory are criticized and unveiled; theoretical alternatives are articulated);
- *inside (sisään)* (the old theory is creatively deformed so that its 'language' gets new meaning)¹⁰;
- *upon (päälle)* (new premises are inserted, and they are applied to create new syntheses).

From the role of intellectuals to the intellectual role

In his essay, Heiskanen approaches social scientists and mandarin intellectuals as a social group or category. However, he also pays much attention to the qualitative activities of these scientists and mandarins, and to their real influence in society. A high academic position in the social sciences is not a sufficient prerequisite for being a mandarin intellectual because, for example, some theorists and researchers 'write themselves out' by locating themselves voluntarily outside the sphere of practical social theory. (Ibid., 14.)

Some teachers and researchers, in turn, would want to have an influence on practical social theory but they eventually fail to do so for one reason or another, and are therefore not included in the category of mandarin intellectuals. It is the contribution to the world outside of academia that matters, Heiskanen says. This emphasis on the specific type of activity and on having true influence in society are, to my mind, interesting and important points in thinking about both the role of intellectuals, and the position, function and significance of social sciences.

At the end of the 20th century, there was a lot of academic and also more general public discussion about intellectuals, often with a critical, pessimistic or nostalgic overtone. Sjaak Koenis, a Dutch philosopher, participated in this discussion with an article in which he strongly challenged the way of understanding intellectuals as a distinguished social group in contemporary circumstances. In contrast, he suggested that intellectuality should be approached as a specific form of activity which does not have any direct or self-evident connection to a social group or category, or profession.

In the introductory part of his essay, Koenis briefly describes the historical development of intellectuals as a social class. One important turning point was the philosophical discovery of Descartes, *cogito ergo sum*, which gave a specific and noble position to intellectual work among other human activities. Secondly, modern science developed a new style of persuasion, using technical instruments like the telescope (Galileo Galilei) or the pendulum (Léon Foucault). Thirdly, the overall modernization hugely increased the insight that scientific knowledge can be exploited in a beneficial way in politics, the economy and warfare. Therefore, it seemed plausible to let the scientists use their powers of observation and reason without political or religious interference. (Koenis 1992, 24-25.)

This dream of Enlightenment provided the background against which the producers of knowledge could emerge as a social class which had an authority to express the truth in scientifically approachable issues. Fairly soon, however, scientific institutions and practitioners of science started to defend their newly

won position by defining sharply who and under which circumstances could be given the right to make scientific judgments. In natural sciences, this demarcation focused mainly on the proper use of a collectively accepted research method, whereas in the social sciences, the position of the scientific community was defined and protected through the idea of professionalism. According to Koenis (ibid., 26):

Institutional mechanisms should take care that the professional producers of knowledge have their own niche in the society. In contrast to 'lay people' who are never able to keep a distance to their passions and interests, the professionals would accomplish their work in a 'distanced' way without the interference of their own preferences or interests.¹¹

In this process, the sublime principle of freedom of thought and speech underwent a significant change. The apology for the right to produce knowledge moved slowly but surely towards the claim of a specific group to have an exclusive right for the production of pure knowledge. Nowadays, however, we know that scientists, including social scientists, have never been completely free from personal and collective interests and values, and from power struggles in society in general and in the scientific community in particular. In the latter half of the 20th century, the myth of complete scientific neutrality and value-freedom was convincingly exposed by several sociologists and philosophers of knowledge. (Ibid., 27–28.)

For Koenis, the question is now whether there is anything left that could define intellectuality in a reasonable way. Should the concepts of distance, neutrality and engagement be completely abandoned because they have lost their historical credibility? Koenis's innovative solution is to turn the traditional notion of *the role of intellectuals*, which combines intellectual distance (freedom from self-interest) and socio-political engagement (willingness to have a positive effect in the society), upside down. Instead of the role of the intellectual, he defines the notion of *an intellectual role* in terms of intellectual engagement and socio-political distance.

Engagement now means belief in and an application of a certain intellectual style where the crucial point is the transformation and transmission of ideas from one social or political context to another. The concept of distance, in turn, is reformed to denote a state of mind that fosters a sceptical attitude towards conceptions and practices that are generally accepted. (Ibid., 29.)

According to Koenis, it is essential for an intellectual role that the people in that role distance themselves from established visions and interpretations, and are willing to and capable of taking a position and defending their point of

view in public spheres outside the academic world as well. Through these activities they can change the image that people have about themselves and their practices. As a specific form of activity, intellectuality is in principle open to everyone, and it does not come guaranteed to any holder of a high academic position. (Ibid., 30–31.)

Furthermore, this approach implies that the intellectual role cannot be found in a single public space, and definitely not only in universities. The transmission of knowledge and new ideas has to be explored in places and spaces where ideas and practices rub against each other and where two or more public spheres are in contact. People in these crossroads and nexuses are building bridges through which theories can have a practical effect. (Ibid., 32–34.)

People who frequently occupy an intellectual role are, according to Koenis, often homeless people in the sense that they do not feel comfortable in the theoretical sphere only, but neither are they satisfied with exclusively practical work without a possibility for theoretical thinking and critical analysis. In Heiskanen's terms, we could maybe say that people in intellectual roles would rather be interested in practical social theory than 'social theory proper' or 'pure everyday practice'.

Salman Rushdie wrote about migrants that 'Our identity is at once plural and partial. Sometimes we feel that we straddle two cultures; at other times, that we fall between two stools.' (Rushdie 1991, 15.) People in an intellectual role are, Koenis says, also in a precarious position. If they orientate too much to theory, they become exclusively scientists and lose contact with the practical world. If they focus too much on practical issues, in turn, they easily lack the necessary critical insights and distance. (Ibid., 33.)

Intellectual action or just bullshit?

Neither Heiskanen nor Koenis have elaborated more precisely on the nature of the knowledge that intellectuals/people in an intellectual role are supposed to produce and distribute. The issue of knowledge is huge and definitely out of the scope of this article. However, one excursion can be made into that question in this context.

An American philosopher, Harry G. Frankfurt, published in 1986 in the journal *Raritan* an essay on the production and transmission of knowledge, provocatively titled as *On Bullshit*. When the essay was republished as a separate volume in 2005, it became a non-fiction bestseller. Frankfurt approaches the question of relevant knowledge by analyzing what it is not, that is, bullshit.¹²

According to him, the abundance of bullshit is one of the most salient fea-

tures of our culture, but there is no clear understanding of ‘what bullshit is, why there so much of it, or what functions it serves’. Therefore, he has made an effort to develop a theoretical understanding of bullshit by providing some tentative and exploratory philosophical analysis which aims at giving at least a sketchy articulation of the structure of the concept. (Frankfurt 2005, 1-2.)

In an earlier essay on the prevalence of humbug, Max Black had defined his topic as ‘deceptive misrepresentation, short of lying, especially by pretentious word or deed, of somebody’s own thoughts, feelings, or attitudes’ (quotation from Frankfurt 2005, 6). Frankfurt admits that this account of humbug fits certain paradigms of bullshit quite well. Nevertheless, he suspects that it does not quite grasp its essential character. (Ibid., 18.)

Frankfurt searches, then, for answers to what is and what is not bullshit from another source. According to him, Ludwig Wittgenstein had devoted ‘his philosophical energies largely to identifying and combating what he regarded as insidiously disruptive forms of ‘nonsense’, which makes him an interesting person to consult (ibid., 24). Firstly, he approaches the famous philosopher through a bit of verse by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow that Wittgenstein has said could serve as his motto:

*In the elder days of Art,
Builders wrought with greatest care
Each minute and unseen part;
For the Gods see everywhere.*¹³

In Frankfurt’s interpretation, these lines tell that once upon a time craftsmen did not cut corners but worked carefully, considering every part of the product, and designing and making them to be as exactly as they should be. ‘So nothing was swept under the rug. Or, one might perhaps also say, there was no bullshit.’ (Ibid., 20.)

For Frankfurt, it seemed fitting to consider ‘carelessly made, shoddy goods as in some way analogous to bullshit’. But the question still remained, in what way precisely? (Ibid., 21.) Here, he notes that Wittgenstein obviously did not oppose ‘nonsense’ in his professional life alone, but also in his personal life. Frankfurt recalls the anecdote that Wittgenstein had felt disgusted when a friend of his, Fania Pascal, told the philosopher to feel ‘just like a dog that has been run over’. Wittgenstein’s rude response was that: ‘You don’t know what a dog that has been run over feels like.’ (Ibid., 24.)

This unfriendly statement can no doubt be interpreted in many ways. The essential point for Frankfurt is that Wittgenstein accuses Pascal not of lying but of another sort of misrepresentation. He perceives what she has said ‘as being

(...) unconnected to a concern with the truth'. (Ibid., 28–30.) For Frankfurt, it is exactly 'this lack of connection to a concern with truth – this indifference to how things really are' – that he regards as the essence of bullshit (ibid., 34–35).

Telling a lie is an act with a sharp focus. It is designed to insert a particular falsehood at a specific point in a set or system of beliefs, in order to avoid the consequences of having that point occupied by the truth. This requires a degree of craftsmanship, in which the teller of the lie submits to objective constraints imposed by what he takes to be the truth. The liar is inescapably concerned with truth-values. (Ibid., 51.)

Bullshitting, then, is not the same as telling a lie. Producing bullshit requires no such a conviction that one should know the truth but does not tell it. For Frankfurt, the bullshitter is neither on the side of the true nor on the side of the false because his eyes are not on the facts at all (ibid., 55–56). Someone who lies and someone who tells the truth, he continues, are kind of playing on opposite sides in the same game whereas the bullshitter ignores the demands of the truth altogether. As something that totally ignores facts and the truth, bullshit is also a greater enemy of the truth than lies are. (Ibid., 61.)

After this conceptual analysis, Frankfurt returns to his initial statement that there is so much bullshit in the world. One reason for this is that (ibid., 63):

Bullshit is unavoidable whenever circumstances require someone to talk without knowing what he is talking about. Thus the production of bullshit is stimulated whenever a person's obligations or opportunities to speak about some topic exceed his knowledge of the facts that are relevant to that topic. This discrepancy is common in public life, where people are frequently impelled – whether by their own propensities or by the demands of others – to speak about matters of which they are to some degree ignorant.

According to Frankfurt, there are, however, also deeper sources for the proliferation of bullshit. He mentions specifically the various forms of scepticism which 'deny that we can have any reliable access to an objective reality, and which therefore reject the possibility of knowing how things truly are'. These attitudes, approaches and doctrines, he argues, 'undermine confidence in the value of disinterested efforts to determine what is true and what is false, and even in the intelligibility of the notion of objective inquiry'. A consequence of this is that individuals are turning toward trying to provide honest representation of themselves rather than seeking to arrive at accurate representations of a common world. (Ibid., 64–65.)

From the point of view of Heiskanen's and Koenis's ideas about producers

of knowledge influencing social and political thinking, it goes without saying that 'bullshit' is not the kind of knowledge that they are looking for. Indifference to things that are commonly perceived of as true can certainly enhance socio-political distance (in Koenis's terms) or promote the creative production of knowledge (in Heiskanen's terms). However, if important facts are either missing or wrong, or if the researcher's conclusions are otherwise obviously 'not of this world', the likelihood that the message of the researcher can be transmitted to other people (intellectual engagement) diminishes dramatically. Therefore, a certain striving to give an as accurate as possible representation of reality, and a successful accomplishment of this goal, can be considered as prerequisites for functioning in an intellectual role (being a mandarin intellectual).

Thus, we can make some amendments to the list of deterrents hampering intellectual activity in Heiskanen's essay. Frankfurt's analysis can be elaborated so that we make a distinction between internal (researcher-based) and external (environment-based) factors that increase the risk of producing non-intellectual knowledge (bullshit). Furthermore, we can make another division between problems in goal setting, on the one hand, and in practical realization, on the other. Taken together, we can theoretically find four possible sources for unsatisfactory knowledge production and transmission:

- The social and media environment is more interested in 'good stories', irrespective of how representative they are of reality, than of well-measured and carefully interpreted, often more or less complicated, analyses.
- The researcher him/herself has a conviction that because there is no access to objective reality, all subjective notions are as valuable as anything else, and therefore valid conclusions of scientific research.
- The social and media environment requires the researcher to show up in public or to participate in discussions on issues where he or she actually does not have a sufficient level of knowledge to act as an expert, nor time to make scientific inquiries into the subject.
- The researcher him/herself is not capable of 'wringing with the greatest care' because of lack of skills, time, interest, or for other reasons. As a corollary, this inability produces carelessly made, unfinished knowledge products.

Knowledge society, intelligent society, intellectual society

After these excursions, we can now turn back to Ilkka Heiskanen's contributions on the subject. An interesting source is a speech that he gave in August 1991 at the Elorihhi conference at Aavaranta. This unpublished paper was entitled *Minun visioni – kohden älykstä ja äyllistä yhteiskuntaa* (*My vision – towards an intelligent and intellectual society*). In his speech, Heiskanen focused on the questions 'to what extent, in which ways, and how efficiently a society as a whole is capable of using knowledge or, in other terms, allows the use of it'. (Heiskanen 1991, 1.)

In the paper's opening sections, Heiskanen draws some conclusions based on his work related to the problems of producing and transmitting scientific knowledge. He emphasizes that knowledge alone does not matter much if there is no ability or will to apply it. Furthermore, he points out that instrumental use of knowledge is not enough either, if the producers and users of knowledge are not intellectually fit in regenerating their conceptions of and opinions on the problems that have to be solved in a society. (Ibid., 1–2)

In order to illustrate his message about the situation of knowledge production and transmission in Finland, Heiskanen makes a conceptual division into three types of societies. In an *information society* (*tietoyhteiskunta*), the technical prerequisites of knowledge production and transmission are at a high level of efficiency. In an *intelligent society* (*älykäs yhteiskunta*), the knowledge available is efficiently internalized and applied to practical purposes. Finally, in an *intellectual society* (*älyllinen yhteiskunta*), there is a permanent discussion about the society's basic problems, and this discussion also has an impact on the production and use of knowledge. The following table summarizes the basic features of these three ideal types (*ääriyyppeä*). It also includes some problem areas. (Ibid., 2–3.)

Even though Heiskanen does not use the concept of mandarin in his paper, it is obvious that in an intellectual society there should be both mandarin intellectuals and routine mandarins producing and transmitting knowledge in a creative way: writing new ideas and observations inside, upon and beneath the predominant social and political thinking.

In Koenisian terms, in turn, there should be enough people occupying intellectual roles in different sectors and spheres of society. Heiskanen also pays special attention to the importance of non-institutionalized knowledge producers. He strongly emphasizes that the redefinition and re-interpretation of important issues such as the conflict between capital and labour, the tensions between sexes, or the generation gap cannot be the monopoly of academics

Table 1. Relations between knowledge and society. Three ideal types and their problems

	Information society	Intelligent society	Intellectual society
Basic characteristics	Knowledge is produced and distributed in an efficient way.	Knowledge is efficiently internalized and used in practice.	Ability to redefine the questions related to the society and humankind is at a high level.
Source of development	Constant acceleration of the growth of the knowledge volume, of the processing of knowledge and of its transmission processes.	'Wise structures' that change along with new knowledge and that allow for the learning of new knowledge in new ways.	Constant suspicion towards the human ability to know, and towards knowledge and language in general.
Problem areas	1) Knowledge becomes too fragmented, divided into different 'cultures' such as scientific-technological and humanistic knowledge.	1) Production of knowledge is concentrated only on areas that are considered important; lack of critical and alternative knowledge production.	1) 'Intellectual debate' and the processes of knowledge production become separated and cease to support each other.
	2) Creativity is paralyzed by the schematization and legal regulation of knowledge ('systems', standards, patents, copyrights).	2) Social problems are 'restrained' and remain imperceptible; difficult and unconscious tensions arise.	2) Social problems are 'worked out' too far, and they are perceived as insoluble; defeatism breaks out.
	3) Conflicts between the autonomy of knowledge production and its dependence on politics, administration and the economy.	3) 'Wise structures' form unperceived constraints to knowledge and language that oppress individuals and creativity	Popularized forms of intellectual debate (quasi-wisdom) paralyze the proper production of knowledge.

and other position-based intellectuals. (Ibid., 4.)

From Frankfurt's point of view, it would seem that Heiskanen's requirement of constant suspicion towards human understanding and awareness of the limitations of language, which he mentions in relation to an intellectual society, would easily lead to a kind of anti-realistic attitude that produces worthless knowledge ('bullshit'). However, it is evident that this risk is clearly included in the problem areas of that ideal type: as the separation of knowledge production and the intellectual debate; as the proliferation of quasi-wisdom; and as pessimism with regard to social problems and their solutions.

Finland, intellectual climate, intellectual society

Against this theoretical-conceptual background, we can now look at the Finnish intellectual climate and Finland as an intellectual society as seen through the analytical but also consciously polemical lens of Ilkka Heiskanen. In his 1982 essay, Heiskanen divides the development of Finnish social sciences from the perspective of its influence on practical social theory into three peace-time periods: 1) 1920-1939; 2) 1950-1969; 3) the 1970's.

This article does not allow for a detailed examination of Heiskanen's description and analysis, but the general contours can still be depicted. In the first period, Heiskanen argues, social science was uncertain of its own basic points of departure, suffered from a narrow orientation towards the society's general knowledge structure, and lacked reflection on its own position and production. Furthermore, the social sciences had hardly any influence on the development of Finnish practical social theory. The main form of activity consisted of writing 'in between', that is, filling in knowledge gaps that did not challenge the predominant ways of thinking. (Heiskanen 1982, 21.)

The second, and in Heiskanen's analysis also the most central period, is characterized as the imperialistic era of Finnish social sciences. During the 1950's and 1960's, Finnish social sciences 'modernized'¹⁴, and this process included e.g. the following features (ibid., 23-25):

- Research tradition based on positivist theories of science consolidated; empirical research increased significantly.
- Economics (*kansantaloustiede*) developed rapidly as a professional research discipline; among economists there grew an idea about the right and the duty to participate in political and administrative decision-making.
- Social policy moved towards a development and planning science which was based on the idea of and supported economic growth.
- Behavioralism broke through in political science, though without completely displacing the traditional institutionalist or historicist approaches.
- The social sciences institutionalized in two ways. For one, education and research units were established within universities; and there was also development within the framework of institutionalized research practices (databases and registers, statistical methods, computer facilities, etc.).
- 'Basic social sciences' (*'kantayhteiskuntatieteet'*¹⁵) separated from humanistic and psychological research while the link to philosophy remained.

This also strengthened the positivistic approach.

- Perspectives and approaches of the ‘modernized’ social sciences proliferated imperialistically to other disciplines and research areas, replacing their traditional notions of mankind, society and the world with social scientific ideas and conceptions.

According to Heiskanen, the general interpretation of this process strongly emphasizes the role of social sciences and their intellectual mandarins in the modernization of Finnish society. He points out, however, that reality is indeed more complicated. Firstly, war and the period of reconstruction had already changed Finnish everyday knowledge and practices in a way that paved the road to more theoretical reforms. Secondly, mandarin intellectuals did not work completely outside of the practical world, but were in several ways personally interconnected to politics, administration and the economy. Thirdly, mandarins in social sciences received, especially during the period of cultural radicalism in the 1960’s, important assistance from other intellectuals such as foreign policy experts, historians, writers and artists. (Ibid., 26–28.)

Furthermore, Heiskanen argues, the changes in practical social theory were, in fact, less dramatic than might seem at first glance, and that important signs of continuity can be traced as well. For example, he points out that the agrarian ‘clear and construct’ way of thinking was rather reproduced and symbolically reformed than completely replaced, despite major changes in social and economic structures such as urbanization and industrialization. Heiskanen also underscores that the new liberal, egalitarian and tolerant principles of the 1960’s contained a strong top-down perspective and attitude. Instead of old conservative obligations, everybody now *had to be* emancipated from norms and understand each other. (29–35) Despite all these obvious changes, Heiskanen concludes, the field ploughed the farmer (*pelto muokkasi kyntäjiään*) rather than vice versa. (Ibid., 34.)

The third period, the 1970’s, is described as a civil war within social sciences, and simultaneously as a war against itself. The first dispute arises from the tensions between traditional academic research and the – increasingly Marxist – interpretations and claims of students and young researchers. The second conflict is related to the increasing participation of social sciences in the social, economic and political planning and steering of the society. This participation drew social sciences ever closer to politics and administration, but the price was that the autonomy of scientific practice simultaneously diminished. (Ibid., 36–42.) Heiskanen’s general conclusion about the role of social sciences in Finnish society is not too flattering (ibid., 43):

Edellä esitetty voidaan myös lukea tarinana yhteiskuntatieteitten ulkoisesta noususta ja – jos ei suoranaista tuhosta, niin ainakin – vaikeuksista ja alamäestä. Heikoista juurista ja osin myös satunnaisesti valituista lähtökohdista huolimatta yhteiskuntatieteet nousivat 1950- ja 1960-luvuilla näkyvään ulkoiseen asemaan ja vaikuttivat melko voimakkaastikin myös käytännön yhteiskuntateorian uusiutumiseen ja muokkaamiseen. Tämä vaikuttaminen kuitenkin syötti takaisin yhteiskuntatieteisiin synnyttäen sisäistä hajaannusta ja oman autonomian menetystä sekä sterilisoivaa riippuvuutta julkisen vallan poliittisista, byrokraattisista ja teknostruktuuri-intresseistä. Tämän kehityskaaren aikana yhteiskuntatieteellinen tutkimus pääsi harvoilla – tai tuskin millään – tutkimusalueellaan syvään, yhteiskunnan tietorakenetta todella uudistavaan analyysiin. Samoin sen hakemat vaikutukset muiden tieteiden alueella olivat vähäiset ja sen antamat vaikutteet muiden tieteitten alueelle olivat ylimielisen dogmaattisia. Yhteiskuntatieteitten vaikutuksia koko tietorakenteen kehitykselle ja maamme älylliselle ilmastolle voidaan tuskin hyvällä tahdollakaan pitää suurina – eikä usein myöskään siunauksellisina. Positiiviselle puolelle on kuitenkin laskettava osallistuminen yhteiskunnallisen kehityksen stabilisointiin maan jälleerakennusvaiheessa. Tämäkin valitettavasti syötti voimistavia vaikutteita julkisen sektorin kasvuun, politisoitumiseen ja byrokraatisoitumiseen sekä julkisen ohjauksen yleiseen voimistumiseen ja keskittymiseen. Samoin positiiviselle puolelle voidaan laskea yhteiskunnan 'vapaamielistäminen' ja radikalisointi. Nämäkin saavutukset kuitenkin syöttivät voimistavia vaikutteita uuteen 'vapaamielisyys ja edistys' -ortodoksiaan ja sisäisiin ristiriitoihin.

To make a Koenisian interpretation, it appears as if the majority of mainstream social scientists were intellectually engaged, but they were also lacking sufficient socio-political distance in order to be really creative and to challenge established ideas and opinions. The more critical researchers, in turn, were pre-occupied by this distance which simultaneously marginalized them from socio-political realities. A necessary prerequisite for being in an intellectual role, the combination between intellectual engagement and socio-political distance seems, from this perspective, to have been quite exceptional.

At the end of his analysis, Heiskanen nevertheless notes that some self-reparation processes were taking place. There had been critical assessments concerning the basic research premises, increases in the practicing of the philosophy of science, new research perspectives and conceptual frameworks that emphasized the autonomy of non-scientific knowledge, and also efforts to study knowledge and recognition from the point of view of acting subjects. Therefore, he also expresses a hope that social sciences and the new mandarins could, in the future, push along a wholesale reform of Finnish practical social theory. (Ibid., 45.)

Ilkka Heiskanen's paper of 1991, however, shows that these expectations have not yet come true. No one would deny that Finland had become a knowledge society. However, Heiskanen argues that the terms 'intelligent' and 'intellectual' would need to be stretched until they were unrecognizable before they could be applied as characterizations of Finnish society. (Heiskanen 1991, 5.)

The 'wise structures' implied in the table above were, according to Heiskanen, practically non-existent in the decision-making institutions both in the administration of knowledge production and in the political system in general. However, he admits that post-war Finland is a kind of a 'success story'¹⁶. The overall positive development requires that there must have been wisdom and intelligence somewhere. The factor behind the Finnish success story has, Heiskanen argues, been the intelligence and independent pursuit of operative individuals and groups, the activities of whom Finnish politics and public administration have not been able to impede completely. (Ibid., 6-7.)

Jos sitä [viisautta] on vaikeaa löytää päätöksenteon ja hallinnon tasoilta, on sen täytynyt sijoittua toimintojen alemmille operatiivisille tasoille. Toisin sanoen, varsinaiset tiedontuottajat (tutkimus, tuotekehittäminen, selvitystyö) tuottavat – hallinnosta ja päätöksenteosta huolimatta – soveltamiskelpoista tietoa; ja käytännön soveltajat ovat kouliintuneet sen valikointiin ja vastaanottoon, toistettakoon jälleen, päätöksenteosta ja hallinnosta huolimatta.

Heiskanen also considers the Finnish intellectual debate of that time, arguing that the mere increase in that debate would not suffice to enhance Finland's credibility as an intellectual society. What would be needed is genuine and conscious – and at the same time 'in the right way sceptical' – redefinition of the society's and citizens' basic problems. Even though the radical critique of the 1970's can be blamed for both unnecessary emotionalism and serious dogmatism, he continues, it definitely redefined some social and political problems. The shipwreck of socialism has hampered academics from making new and more reasonable intellectual efforts. (Ibid., 7.)

As in the earlier paper, Heiskanen does not end with a pessimistic lament, but rather makes a number of proposals for action which would help Finland develop towards an intelligent and an intellectual society. For example, Heiskanen suggests that unnecessary boundaries and superfluous competition between different disciplines and forms of knowledge should be abolished. Furthermore, the wise structures at the operational level should be complemented with more flexible and less corporatist structures in the decision making and administrative structures related to the production, transmission and application of knowledge – and in Finnish politics and public administration in general. (Ibid., 7-8.)

Furthermore, he urges the Finnish information society to educate a new generation of intellectuals. These persons should be able to follow social and political developments closely, and to participate actively in the production of knowledge and in different decision making processes. Whenever needed, they should also revise and redefine basic societal problems. And finally, Heiskanen repeats one of his central messages that these new intellectuals should be prepared and willing to question all authoritative knowledge and language, including its own. (Ibid., 8.)

If we look at the situation from today's perspective, about 20 years after Heiskanen's latest accounts on the role of social scientists in Finnish society, what can we find? Given the lack of systematic and comprehensive analyses, we have to be satisfied with some fragmentary observations that the author of this article has made in his roles as university teacher, researcher and editor or board member of scientific journals. Despite the limitations of this method, I believe it is difficult not to agree with the general conclusion that the overall situation has not much improved.

This does not mean that there have been no positive developments at all. During the last two decades, a new generation of academically educated people has certainly grown up, testified to by the large number of doctoral theses in the social sciences. Decision making structures in academic education and research have, at least in principle, been made less rigid and corporatist. There are also more translations of social science literature into Finnish than previously. Different forms of substance-based 'studies' such as gender studies, area studies, youth studies etc., have fostered cross-disciplinary activities.

Nevertheless, in some other areas, the situation has clearly deteriorated. At least the following observations, and factors behind them, can be mentioned:

- Increasing competition within the academic community and the criteria for judging competence have forced researchers to concentrate on narrow fields of expertise rather than broaden their field of activities. As a corollary, relatively few social science professionals seem to be able or willing to think analytically about the society at large (and the role of individuals and groups in the society, and the place of the society in the world). As a result, the influence of social sciences on practical social theory remains limited.
- Because of the dominance of English language publication and the need to publish in international fora, academic debate and the domestic socio-political debate are becoming more and more separate. Finnish language academic journals are suffering from a lack of high quality contributions, whereas the non-academic Finnish public is not follow-

ing international social science journals very closely. This means that the findings of Finnish social scientists are not effectively transmitted into the society at large.

- In their pursuit of evidence-based public policy, politicians and civil servants usually need data and knowledge in a statistical or otherwise measurable form. However, the vast majority of social scientists are using qualitative methodology and/or applying research settings which do not produce policy-relevant information. As the demand and supply of social scientific knowledge do not meet, policy-makers become less interested in following developments in the social sciences.

Furthermore, in a commentary upon the Finnish translation of Frankfurt's book (2006), the sociologist J-P Roos mentioned that 'bullshit' kind of academic writing can be found also among Finnish sociologists and philosophers.¹⁷ He pointed out that some authors write as if their texts were music.

Musiikillehan voi toki kukin antaa vapaasti mitä tahansa konkreettisia tulkintoja, mutta sen ominaisuutena on, että sen totuusarvolla ei ole merkitystä. Tällaiset kirjoittajat käyttävät käsitteitä miten sattuu eivätkä osaa yhdistää kirjoittamaansa mihinkään todella tapahtuneeseen tai tapahtuvaan.

In this context, it is impossible to estimate empirically the scope of this sort of knowledge production and dissemination. Drawing on my own experiences in the academic community, certain observations can be made, however:

- The lack of interest among scholars to gather the necessary basic information about their research topic before throwing themselves into theoretical and empirical analysis is surprisingly frequent. By 'necessary basic information', I am referring to e.g. relevant legislation, historical developments, statistical contexts and previous research on the topic.
- The tendency in the media to prefer 'sexy' topics and interpretations to low-key (but important) research issues and to balanced and moderate conclusions still seems to have strengthened. In order to get their findings published, scholars are therefore urged to go beyond their own competence and to radicalize their interpretations, with the obvious risk of producing 'bullshit'.
- There has been a general increase in work pressure both among teachers and researchers at academic institutions and among the representatives of media and publishing industries. Stress and overwork, in turn, easily lead to sloppy, negligent presentations of research results. As a

consequence, the general public is inclined to lose confidence in academic knowledge.

Conclision

The main conclusion of this article is that it might be worthwhile to do a comprehensive and systematic assessment of the role of the social sciences in Finnish society. Here I have mainly concentrated on Ilkka Heiskanen's contributions on the subject, but there are also other indications which make it plausible to suppose that regenerative social scientific knowledge has not been transmitted very effectively to social and political thinking in Finnish everyday life. It might also be the case that this influence has diminished even further in the recent past.

This is, of course, a hypothesis that should be tested. If such an evaluation upon the influence of social sciences in the society were made, this article argues, an approach which combines the conceptual frameworks of Ilkka Heiskanen and Sjaak Koenis could prove to be useful. In this approach, intellectuality is not a position but a specific form of activity in which intellectual engagement and socio-political distance are the most central components. Intellectual engagement means that ideas and knowledge are deliberately transmitted from one public debate or from one sphere of action to another. Socio-political distance, in turn, implies that actors in an intellectual role have a critical relation to commonly shared ideas and opinions, even to the most basic notions and conceptions.

People in an intellectual role therefore provide society with new and useful knowledge that develops and improves practical social theory in empirical and creative ways. Special attention should be paid to the latter, that is, how social scientists manage a) to reveal the barriers that old conceptions form for societal regeneration; b) to offer alternative, and better, theoretical and practical solutions; c) to reform language and thinking patterns so that they serve better contemporary circumstances; and d) to create new syntheses concerning individuals, society and humankind. Furthermore, recalling Frankfurt, these tasks should be accomplished without losing contact with reality.

The methodology for such an assessment has yet to be developed. Needless to say, however, that the commonly used methods for evaluating the achievements of academic institutions and professionals in fulfilling the 'third task' of universities, that is, to be in interaction with the rest of society and to promote the social impact of research results, do not give sufficient information about the true influence of social scientific knowledge in society. Participa-

tion in seminars, workshops and steering groups, being used as an expert by public administration, companies or third sector organizations, or appearance in the media, do not necessarily imply that one has an intellectual role – even though these operational contexts may give good possibilities for practicing such a role.

Heiskanen's notions about the deterrents restricting the freedom and influence of mandarins in the transmission of knowledge could also be developed further. In principle, we could analyze the assets and obstacles for social scientists in taking an intellectual role a) by dividing them into situational, long-term and ultra-long-term deterrents; b) by distinguishing between intellectual engagement and socio-political distance; and c) by looking individually at all three central spheres of action: academic education and career development; public spheres and other arenas of knowledge transmission; and the operating institutions in political decision-making and public administration. Also the 'deeper' layers of mental and cultural structure such as values, attitudes and language, should be taken into account. (Table 2)

Table 2. A framework for the analysis of the assets and obstacles for social scientists in occupying an intellectual role

	Intellectual engagement	Socio-political distance
Situational deterrents	Social science institutions Media and publishing industry Political system and public administration Mentality, language, culture	
Long-term deterrents		
Ultra-long-term deterrents		

By way of conclusion, the Finnish system of social scientific education and research could tentatively be asked at least the following questions:

- To what extent do Finnish institutions of social science provide researchers and other professionals with a personal relation to knowledge production and transmission which would enhance their acting in an

- intellectual role?
- Does the Finnish academic education and career system contribute in a positive way to the will and skills of social scientists to participate in Finnish-speaking public debates and in spheres of action other than academia?
 - Are Finnish social sciences doing their best to encourage people who have not been educated in the social sciences to be interested in relevant social and political issues and in providing theoretical, conceptual and methodological tools for those who wish to do independent studies and other explorations?

Endnotes

- 1 The list of consulted literature has deliberately been kept at minimum in this essay. For those interested in the production of knowledge, see. e.g. Gibbons et al. 1994; Nowotny et al. 2001; Starbuck 2006.
- 2 Ilkka Heiskanen also touched upon these themes in many other publications. In this context, however, I have chosen to concentrate on the two texts I consider seminal for the purpose of my essay.
- 3 In Finnish, *Yhteiskuntatieteet, käytännön yhteiskuntateoria ja maamme älyllinen ilmasto*. The essay was also included as an epilogue to the book edited by Dag Anckar and Jaakko Nousiainen (1983) on the historical development of political science in Finland.
- 4 Quotation marks in the original.
- 5 For more detailed descriptions of the knowledge types, the reader is advised to consult the original essay.
- 6 Quotation marks in the original.
- 7 It is difficult to make a literal translation into English of '*käytännön yhteiskuntateoria*'. I have here preferred 'practical social theory' to alternatives such as 'social theory of practice' (i.e. Bourdieu 1977; Turner 1994) or 'theory of social practices' (i.e. Reckwitz 2002), because I believe it better reflects the original meaning of the concept.
- 8 The concept of mandarins is borrowed from Fritz K. Ringer (1969) who used the concept in his seminal work on the German academic community in the decades before the takeover by Adolf Hitler. Ringer (ibid., 5-6), defines the mandarins as 'a social and cultural elite which owes its status primarily to educational qualifications, rather than to hereditary rights or wealth. The group is made up of doctors, lawyers, ministers, government officials, secondary school teachers, and university professors, all of them men with advanced academic degrees based on the completion of a certain minimum curriculum and the passing of a conventional group of examinations. The 'mandarin intellectuals,' chiefly the university professors, are concerned with the educational diet of the elite. They uphold the standards of qualifications for membership in the group, and they act as its spokesmen in cultural questions.'
- 9 In Finnish, 'Kärjistäen voidaan sanoa, että mandariinit itse ovat usein yhteiskunnan tietorakenteen, oman käytössään olevan ja käytäntöön hyväksyttävän tiedon ja yhteiskunnan hyväksytyjen tiedonkäytön sääntöjen vankeja.'
- 10 Quotation marks in the original.
- 11 Quotation marks in the original.

- 12 There is also a special reason for using Frankfurt in this context. During the time I was Ilkka Heiskanen's student and younger colleague he used to provide his students and young researchers regularly with texts to read which strikingly often were not social or political science in a strict sense (books by Norman O. Brown, Tove Jansson, Hans-Magnus Enzensberger, Ingeborg Bachmann and Wisława Szymborska, among others). The latest volume that I received, in 2006, was exactly this essay of Harry G. Frankfurt.
- 13 This quotation is taken from the Maine Historical Society Website on Longfellow (<http://www.hwlongfellow.org/>). In Frankfurt's essay, the last line is: 'For the Gods are everywhere'.
- 14 Quotation marks in the original.
- 15 Quotation marks in the original.
- 16 Quotation marks in the original.
- 17 The discussion took place after the book review in Helsingin Sanomat by Jyrki Alenius on 28 October 2006 at the newspaper's website.

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