

1. PI: **Risto Heiskala**, September 2016 (abridged and updated in September 2017)
Research plan: Project proposal to the Academy of Finland for years 2017–21.
Site of research: University of Tampere, Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities.

European state nobility and fatal problems: Imaginaries of the Finnish political and administrative elite in the European Union (ESN)

2. Rationale

A wishful thinker might hope that the coordination of joint efforts in the European Union is the solution to four fatal problems that loom over our heads in the globalizing world. These four problems are a runaway global economy, the environmental crisis, inequality, and the lack of security (Mann, 2013; Beck, 2013, 1986; Victor, 2011; Therborn, 2013, 2010; Friedman, 20012, 2009; Franklin & Andrews, 2012; Castells, 1996-98). These threats are called fatal problems because of the very large scale of the challenges presented and the great number of stakeholders. This tends to result in a situation in which each partial solution to the problems in question simultaneously creates new problems (Hale, Held & Young, 2013). This is why these problems are often called 'nasty', 'vicious' or 'wicked'. However, optimism is evoked when one finds that a call for decisive action with regards to these fatal problems is indeed codified to the central policy documents of the EU (in *Europe 2020 Strategy* in the case of the three first problems and in the *European Security Strategy* in the case of the last one). Yet nothing much seems to happen with regards to solving the problems. This project provides one way of asking whether such inactivity is due to internal conflicts or the sheer chaos of the most realistic scenarios, both now and in the future; or is there a possibility that the EU could turn out to be the actor that is large and coordinated enough to solve some of these problems, which are out of the reach of the effective action of smaller agents such as the Finnish nation state.

The project at hand is based on the assumption that change will require large-scale political mobilization (requiring social movements and supportive cognitive framing in the media) or responsible elite action (within the political, administrative, and economic elites). The project studies the latter group, looking at the imageries of the political and administrative elite to find what kind 'possible world' they inhabit and if that provides them with the tools to effectively tackle the fatal problems. These elites, drawing from Pierre Bourdieu's notion of the French state nobility (Bourdieu, 1996), can be called the European state nobility. They will be studied from the perspective of Finland, one of the small member states of the union, focusing on Finnish politicians and bureaucrats in the EU as well as Finnish administrators and politicians who design the Finnish objectives with regard to the EU and negotiate the objectives with the EU bureaucracy and their national counterparts in other member states. It is expected that, in addition to Finland, part of the results can be generalized and applied to other member states and another part contributes to the cumulative comparative research into other member states.

This project is one of a series of projects that aim to determine whether the EU is capable of facing the fatal problems and acting accordingly. The first of these is the PI's already completed project *Knowledge about the economy - Analysing and contextualizing the constitution of the economy in the EU* (Academy of Finland, 2011-15). The set task of that

project was to study border maintenance between the economy and the rest of society in the EU. There is a well-established tradition of such studies in sociology (Weber, 1922; Parsons & Smelser, 1956). The curious result, which became obvious during the project, was that in the case of the EU, the question should be set in another way: as an ordoliberal political institution, the EU does not see such a border to exist at all; instead, it considers all social issues as economic issues. The existence of this peculiar cultural framing for all policies and politics in the union, and the fact that this framing regularly causes major problems for achieving targets such as inclusion and environmental sustainability recorded in the union's policy documents, is one of the two main results to be published in the book entitled *Policy Design in the European Union - An Empire of Shopkeepers in the Making?* currently under preparation as the final report of the said project (Heiskala & Aro 2017, forthcoming by Palgrave). The other main result was that the EU has serious problems in coordinating the joint actions of its member states and interest groups and, even if the existence of such problems is widely agreed, no systematic attempts to tackle the problems have been made within the EU or in social research. The project at hand will focus on this knowledge gap.

Secondly, the current project will also draw from the resources and experiences provided by the EU FP7 project Creating Economic Space for Social Innovation (CRESSI). This is a joint venture, consisting of eight national research groups and coordinated by Professor Alex Nicholls (Oxford University), which focuses on the possibilities for promoting social innovation that would enhance the position of the most marginalized groups within the EU. The PI of the current project is also the PI of the Finnish research team in the CRESSI project, providing an interface with the project at hand, especially with regard to the policies of social inclusion and innovation, as well as the difficulties in coordinating policies in the EU.

The third and fourth related projects are a Centre of Excellence application entitled *Sociology of democracy in the age of vicious problems*; and an Academy Professor application entitled *Coordination, conflict and chaos: The EU in the age of fatal challenges*. The former is currently under review in the Academy of Finland. This is a joint venture with Risto Kunelius (UTA), Eeva Luhtakallio (UTA), and Anu Kantola (University of Helsinki). Its scope is wider than EU studies, but includes the current PI's efforts in that field as one of the four teams. The latter was submitted to the last call for Academy Professorship applications, and decisions were made in June 2016; the application was well placed, at the third position in the final ranking. However, as only one position was available, the application was not financed. It will be resubmitted in the next call in April 2017. In comparison to these two applications, the current application is a more modest attempt to realize one aspect of the more ambitious project; more specifically, to study the world in which Finnish European state nobility lives in order to find whether political and administrative elites in the EU can conceptualize the fatal problems, reach a joint line of action, and implement the decisions made. The motivation for submitting a limited application, while decisions on the wider projects are still pending, is the uncertainty associated with the other applications. Even in the case of a positive outcome, it will take time before work can start and it would be unwise to halt on-going research for this period of time. The current application thus seeks financing for the execution of a limited but vital element of the wider whole. The project is designed so that it will produce academically fruitful results that are also of interest to society at large, even if the wider projects are not financed.

3. Objectives and expected results

3a: Objectives of the research

Joining the EU in 1995 created a sea change in the political and administrative fields of Finland. International cooperation had not been completely absent before that decision as Finland was a UN member state, had embassies around the world, and participated in several international treaties and organizations. Yet diplomacy was a small trade of a specialized profession, and the lion's share of political and administrative work was domestic. That all changed with the EU membership. For example, the previous Prime Minister Matti Vanhanen (2003-10) said in an interview that the EU currently takes 50% of the prime minister's time in normal circumstances, rising to 80% in periods of crisis.

Thus, the EU changed politicians and top administrators' use of time. It also changed their career expectations and possibilities. Before joining the EU, Finland was a relatively closed nation state in which most administrators and politicians communicated almost exclusively with other Finns, and very few worked outside the Finnish borders. The EU changed this radically. During the membership negotiation, the Finnish Parliament made changes to two-thirds of the national legislation in order to harmonize it with the EU regulations. The government established thirty-seven divisions through which the central administration prepares the Finnish line in negotiations with Brussels and other member states, and the Finnish parliament added EU policy to the tasks of its Grand Committee. Roughly 1,000 Finns (including translators) were needed to work as eurocrats for the European Commission and related organizations in Brussels and elsewhere. This change was so radical for a small country that in 2014 the then sitting prime minister of Finland, Jyrki Katainen, decided to leave his government in the middle of its term and opted instead for a post in Juncker's commission in Brussels. This is how he turned from being the prime minister of a country with a population smaller than 6 million inhabitants to a cabinet member of a political union with a population of 507 million inhabitants.

The Finnish state nobility then went through radical change, becoming one segment of Europe-wide state nobility. The Finnish segment has been studied in relation to the members of the European Parliament (Kauppi, 2005) and the emergence of a transnational administrative elite (Kauppi & Rask, 2013), but the whole Finnish segment of the European state nobility has not yet been mapped. This is the objective of this study.

Pierre Bourdieu's understanding of the field of state nobility includes a hegemonic theoretical understanding of how and why fields are constructed (Bourdieu, 1990, 1996). According to him the establishment of a field is an efficient way to achieve control of certain valuable resources, block outsiders' access to the field, and conceal this process from sight. Education and a shared embodied style ('habitus' in Bourdieu's wording) are the major means to prove oneself in a field and block access from those who are not 'people like us'. Field positions are often inherited in family. The first set of questions to be made looks at the Finnish segment of European state nobility, asking where they come from in terms of geography, the class position of the family, education, and previous career.

The type of background study outlined above is a necessary sociological starting point. Taken alone however it would lead to the over simplified conclusion that members of the European state nobility act cynically only to promote their own interests. However, as Weber maintains (1922), in addition to material interests, people also have ideal interests (Collins, 1986). These too may sometimes be tied to the habitus of certain exclusive group

of insiders, but often they also have to do with more general and collective interests. In the case of the European state nobility, distinctions can be made according to how (a) their own material interests are related to their ideal interests to serve and promote the position of (b) some narrowly defined specific group, (c) the Finnish nation, (d) the whole EU, and/or (e) humankind. This study will ask Finnish members of the European state nobility to what degree and how they are motivated by each of the interests (a) to (e).

In addition to this, the study will pay attention to cognition, following neoinstitutionalist thinking (Berger & Luckmann, 1966; Powel & Dimaggio, 1991; Scott 2001; Schmidt, 2006, 2008; Schmidt et al., 2011; Heiskala, 2003, 2016). In this study the cognitive categorization of reality will be approached from two main angles: (a) in what kind of a reality the Finnish members of the European state nobility live and (b) do they perceive the fatal problems; if so how do they conceptualize the problems and possibilities of solving them.

Institutions in the sense of their organizational constraints will also be studied. The main questions to ask will be: what kind of a political and administrative reality the EU is; and what are the major processes producing chaos or conflict instead of orderly attempts to solve the fatal problems.

Going through these steps it is possible to create a description of the Finnish segment of European state nobility in terms of its habitus and style, and including a description of its background, interests, ideas, and felt institutional constraints. Additionally, it is also possible to ask if these people form a network that can be expected to be willing and able to act as a responsible elite striving for the solution of one or more of the fatal problems.

3b: Effects and impacts beyond academia

The problems of this study are not just academic. The capability or lack thereof of the EU to politically formulate solutions to grand issues, and administratively implement programmes adopted, is currently one of the major issues under political, administrative, and civic debate in every member state. Fatal problems too are not just academic concerns. They overshadow the life of each and everybody in the current world. Therefore, the results of the study at hand will have value beyond the academic world at least in two senses. They have (a) communicative use in civic debate and (b) strategic use in the context of different organizations and interest groups promoting some specific goals (Habermas, 1987). The audience groups most likely to have an interest in this study will have an ongoing project with regard to the EU or one of the fatal problems, or both. It may also be of value to parties interested in the democratic control of public powers.

3c: Publication plan

The project will publish a monograph as its final report, which will be entitled *European State Nobility and Fatal Problems. Case Finland*. This will be an academic monograph, jointly written by Heiskala and Aro (and possibly N.N.), and published by a JUF03 level rated international publisher. In addition to the project's research, the design of the book draws from three previous model studies. These are *The State Nobility* (Bourdieu, 1996), with regards to studying the emergence and practices of the political and administrative field of the European state nobility; *Habits of the Heart* (Bellah et al., 1985) in studying dialogically the worldview and ideal interests ('civil religion' in their wording) of the interviewees; and *Money, Morals and Manners. The Culture of the French and American Middle Class* (Lamont, 1992), in terms of the methodologies of research based on interactive interviews with elite

interviewees in a setting theoretically inspired by Bourdieu's field theory.

In the years 2018-20, the researchers will also publish various preparatory materials for the monograph, together and possibly jointly with third parties. This includes working papers, and also at least six international academic journal articles on topics such as the theoretical approach behind the project, methodological issues, background, interests, ideas, and the perceived institutional constraints of Finnish members of European state nobility. Target journals include *Acta Sociologica*, *International Sociology*, *European Journal for Cultural and Political Sociology*, *European Societies*, *European Union Politics*, and *Theory and Society*.

Doctoral student N.N. will prepare a PhD thesis on gender among European state nobility. Its central findings will be published either as a monograph or in the form of three academic journal articles. She will also write a chapter or section on gender for the final report of the project.

In addition to the academic publications in English, publications for the wider audience will be prepared both in English and in Finnish, and the project's bilingual (Finnish and English) website will also help to disseminate the results. Everything will be done in the power of the project group to ensure all its publications are open access.

4. Research methods, materials, and support from research environment

The project will utilize three datasets:

- (I) Public documents and statistics, including material found from the webpages of the EU and the Finnish state.
- (II) Literatures that include research literature, memoirs, biographies, pamphlets, blogs, and other public writings that focus upon the personal experiences and views of state nobility members.
- (III) Forty interviews with different Finnish members of the European state nobility.

Datasets (I) and (II) will be utilized for the description of the structure, volume, and ways to work of the bureaucracies and organization of the EU and the Finnish state. The description will have the widest possible scope and will not be restricted to the interviewees of dataset (III) or their immediate organizational environment. Methods ordinarily used for the description of institutions, organizations, and social worlds in the scientific community, such as text analysis, statistical comparison, and organizational analysis, will be utilized; in this sense the project's work will not include anything exceptional. Dataset (III), however, is different and thus its construction (IIIa), structure of the interviews (IIIb), methods of analysis (IIIc), and relationship to the other datasets (IIId) will all be briefly described. This dataset is vital for the success of the study, and is grounded because much of the information that is sought can only be accessed through interviews with people who hold or have held key positions in the field of European state nobility.

IIIa. Constructing the interview dataset (for the data management plan see a separate appendix): The interviews are planned to be quite extensive, lasting approximately two hours, in order to cover a very large number of topics. Therefore, their number is limited to avoid an unmanageably large dataset, which would make careful qualitative analysis

impossible. However, there are several actor positions to be covered. To ensure careful coverage there should be at least three interviews for each position to enable the researchers to detect idiosyncrasies and other exceptions, as well as the more representative material. The positions to be covered are:

- The Finnish state: prime ministers.
- The Finnish state: other ministers (finance, foreign, labour and social issues, environment).
- The Finnish state: chairs of some of the thirty-seven EU divisions (same fields as above).
- The Finnish state: some members of the grand committee of the Finnish Parliament.
- The Finnish state: Finnish ambassadors in Brussels: COREPER1 and COREPER2.
- The EU: Some Finnish MEPs.
- The EU: the Finnish commissars and other high officials.
- The EU: the Finnish members of the governing council of the European Central Bank.
- The EU: the Finnish members of the European Court of Justice.
- Lobbyists: for business, labour unions, farmers, human rights and environmentalists.

The group of possible interviewees is well defined and easy to reach. The strategy for finding interviewees who fit the listed actor positions is the qualified snowball method, in which previous interviewees help the researchers in finding and establishing contact with further interviewees. Access to the field is also facilitated by some of the interviews done in the PI's previous EU project, which gave the research group a trustworthy reputation within the networks of the relevant target group. Much work will nevertheless still be needed to gather a balanced set of interviewees, in terms of actor positions, the balance between politicians and bureaucrats, and also with regard to gender.

IIIb. Structure of the interviews: Interviews will be semi structured, meaning that the interviewer has a checklist of issues to be covered during the interview, but the interviewees will be allowed great freedom to guide the interaction and the order in which the topics are discussed if they so wish. The scope of the interviews was briefly described in subsection 3a above and are specified here. The five principal sections to be covered and some examples of questions to be put to the interviewees are:

- Background: 'Tell us, in your own words, who you are'; 'here is what we know about your background and career from publicly available sources; would you like to give us a pictorial representation of your life and career as a line with upward and downward curves, and then explain the ups, downs, and junctions to us'; 'what are the principal musts and not-to-dos of a successful eurocrat/europolitician'; 'is style important, and how'; 'is gender important, and how'.
- Institutional practices and realities: 'What are the main institutional realities where politics and the administration of the EU are concerned'; 'what are the main differences between the official version and the actual backstage reality'; 'could you mention some examples'.
- Scenarios of the future of governance in and through the union: 'Will the union erode into pieces'; 'will it be a federal state'; 'what are the intermediate alternatives between these two extremes of the continuum'; 'how will relations to that part of the world that does not belong to the union/Euro area develop in the future'; 'what are the most important processes to pay attention to if we think about the future in a span of several decades'.
- Ideal interests: 'If we now bracket the administrative realities for a while and move to the-meaning-of-life type of issues, are there some vital tasks that should be executed in

the future by or for some specific group, the Finnish nation, the EU and/or humankind, what and how'; then, after the interviewee has run through his or her own views, 'we have given the term *fatal problems* to the problems of the runaway global economy, environmental crisis, inequality, and lack of security. Do you find one or more of these to be vital issues to work on'; 'would you be willing to devote your life to tackling one or more of these problems, or are there more urgent concerns in terms of, say, practical significance or the development of your career'; 'what values and goals do you think that you share with some specific group, citizens of the Finnish nation, citizens the EU and/or members of humankind as a whole'; 'is talk about these kind of eternal issues useful at all or should it be avoided'.

- 'What did we forget to ask'; 'what else should we take into account when writing a book about the EU, fatal problems, and Finnish administrators and politicians'; 'we are approaching the end of this encounter, would you like to recall some topic and specify or change what you said before'.

IIIc+d. Methods of analysis and comparison of the data within and over the datasets:

Normal methods of analysing qualitative data, especially those of analysing discourses and narrations, will be used to organize the material provided by the interviews (see Greimas, 1983; Fairclough, 2003; Howarth & Torfing, 2005; Berg, 2008; Birkland, 2010; Bardach, 2011) with much of the theoretical background drawn from sociology of knowledge (Berger & Luckmann, 1966; Knorr Cetina, 1999; Heiskala, 2003, 2014a, 2014b). The aim of analysis, however, will be somewhat unusual because it constructs what philosophers call 'possible worlds' from the data. Descriptions of a possible world list the entities there are in that particular world and the possible, necessary, and non-existent relations between the entities. Constructing a possible world based on an interview starts from the question 'what are the entities that must exist in a world in which this text is true' and goes on with the question 'and what are the possible relations between the entities?'. The methodology makes it possible to find whether the interviewees' discourse is in unison, implying only one possible world; polyphonic, where more than one possible world is implied; or contradictory, where there is such a polyphonic set of possible worlds that all of them cannot exist at the same time. The approach based on the semantics of possible worlds also makes it possible to compare the discourse of different interviewees to each other and study whether unison, polyphonic, or contradictory settings arise. Furthermore, the methodology also makes possible comparisons with literary narrative materials and pamphlets (part of the dataset 2) and even policy documents of the EU and the Finnish state (dataset 1). These are very useful qualities of the methodology. Another benefit is that the more the study concentrates on implied possible worlds, the less it is vulnerable to cases where the interviewees have some motive for concealing facts or bending the truth; lying too must be based on culturally shared categories, and from this perspective it is as informative for the constructor of a possible world as a plain truth. Less encouraging is that there are several versions of the methodology in use in literary studies (Doleel, 2000; Ryan, 1992) and sociolinguistics (van Dijk, 2014, 1980; van Dijk & Kintsch, 1983), none of which fit exactly to the purposes of the current project. The additional task of methodological development work thus arises; the project group does not find this to be an insurmountable obstacle however as both senior members of the group are well versed in such theoretical and methodological work in their previous careers.

Support from the University of Tampere will include facilities and 10% additional financing for research projects, which are funded by the Academy of Finland. The University of Tampere is an ideal research environment for this kind of project because its strategic focus lies in the study of society and the promotion of health. More closely, the project is

located in the School of Social Sciences and Humanities (42 professors and 227 faculty members), and specifically in its Research Centre for Knowledge, Science, Technology, and Innovation Studies (TaSTI), which has thirty researchers, and of which the PI is currently the Chair of the Board. Close cooperation will be established with the Institute for Advanced Social Research (IASR), which has thirty researchers, and of which the PI is currently the director. Intellectual support of the local, national, and international research environments is described more closely in Section 7.

Critical points and alternative strategies: Risk 1: The Academy of Finland cuts the financing from the Euro 0.65 million sought to Euro 0.45 million, as happened last year. Reaction: Cut the PhD student from the plan and seek financing for her from foundations such as Kone and Aaltonen; reduce other costs to a minimum (note that the costs have already been reduced by cutting out financing for longer stays abroad and the PIs research leave for the project). Risk 2: Access to the field transpires to be difficult. It may be challenging to persuade interviewees in the highest positions, such as the sitting prime minister and commissar, to spend two hours with a researcher. Reaction: The first strategy will be to turn to one or more former holders of the post and, if that does not work, to go lower in the hierarchy (to the head of cabinet if the commissar is unavailable, and the permanent secretary in the case of an unavailable minister). Note that this risk is reduced due to the research group's good reputation in the relevant networks, based on the PIs previous project. Risk 3: Methodological problems with the semantics of possible worlds. Reaction: Given the PI's and the senior researcher's previous work and experience this is not a serious threat.

5. Ethical issues

In addition to the responsible treatment of interview data, the project does not have any ethical issues that need special attention. Except for interviews, all the above data is publicly available and there are no specific problems in its use or storage. Interviews are confidential, stored in locked cabinets and, when digitalized, protected with passwords and reserved only for the use of the research group, and anonymized whenever used in publications. However, after the research is completed, the interview data will be stored in the Finnish Social Science Data Archive for future research, if the informants give their written consent. (See also the appendix that includes the data management plan.)

6. Implementation: Schedule, budget, and distribution of work

Schedule: During the years 2017-19, emphasis will be placed on a literature review and on gathering and analysing data. In the years 2020-21, the emphasis will be on completing the final report as outlined above. Articles and working papers will be written and published throughout the project. In 2018 the project will be responsible for organizing the sixth international biennial Power Conference in Tampere. The topic will be 'power and fatal problems', and one of the four plenary sessions as well as a distinct stream will be devoted to the EU. Streams on the EU will also be organized in the 2020 and 2022 Power Conferences. The project will run a monthly research seminar with its PhD students and have a smaller weekly meeting on Mondays for the division of work and regular assessment of its progress.

Cost estimate: See the application form.

Division of work: The PI will devote 25% of his working time to the project in years 2017-19 and more in years 2020-21, when the final report will be finalized. The senior researcher and the doctoral student will devote 100% of their time to the project. The members of the research team will conduct all of the work related to the project, with the PI taking overall responsibility.

7. Research team

The PI completed his PhD in Sociology at the University of Helsinki in 1997 and has since been an Academy Research Fellow at the University of Helsinki, Professor of Public and Social Policy at the University of Jyväskylä, and Professor of Sociology at the University of Tampere. He is currently the tenured director of the Institute for Advanced Social Research (IASR), a member of the University Board, and chair of the board of the Research Centre for Knowledge, Science, Technology, and Innovation Studies (TaSTI), all at the University of Tampere. Nationally, he has directed the Finnish Doctoral Programme in Social Sciences (SOVAKO), has been the member representing the social sciences in the steering committee of the Publication Forum (JUFO) of the Federation of Finnish Learned Societies, is a member of the Finnish Academy of Science and Letters, and has been editor of the journal *Sociologia*. Internationally, he has been a member of the executive committee of the European Sociological Association (ESA) and coordinator of its Social Theory Network, as well as on the editorial board of several journals such as *Acta Sociologica* and *European Journal of Cultural Studies*. Some of his research interests and current projects have been described on Pages 1-2 of this plan. His responsibility in the project will be that of PI, but he will also conduct hands-on work in all phases as much as other duties allow.

Dr Jari Aro completed his doctoral dissertation, entitled *Sociology and the Use of Language*, in Sociology at the University of Tampere in 1999. He has since worked as a junior and senior lecturer and project researcher at the University of Tampere. He worked as a project researcher in the PI's previous Academy of Finland based project on the EU and the EU FP7 Project CRESSI/Finland, also directed by the PI. His expertise is in qualitative methods, policy analysis, and social theory. His responsibility in this project includes the major aspects of the interviews and data processing. Both researchers contribute equally to the final report in a book form.

N.N. is a doctoral student to be recruited for a PhD project in the field of the project's research. The tentative topic of the PhD is gender among European state nobility, although the PI is open to the negotiation of alternative topics related to the project's objectives, depending on the interests of qualified candidates. N.N. will conduct some of the interviews and participate in authoring the final report, providing that it does not disturb her work on the PhD too much.

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