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## YHTEISKUNTA

– ‘Society’ in Finnish

It has been argued in debates on postmodernity and globalization that the modern concept of society is somehow too strong and too limited to sustain. It is too strong while referring to “an integrated holistic entity” (Featherstone 1995, 134) and too limited due to its ties with the nation-state. However, at the same time “civil society” has achieved the status of a highly desirable objective, as it has been confronted with the figure of the patronizing state. Furthermore, “community” has been put forward as the means of diagnosis and cure for a wide array of troubles in society caused by the activities of markets and the state. These topics of Western academic and political debates indicate that the meanings of ‘society’ are established in various contexts, and different ‘societies’ may appear in the same discourse and in the speech of the same actor. However, these debates also imply that the ambiguity of ‘society’ is less than it used to be mantled by its being taken for granted (cf. Beck 1997, 49-55). In what follows, I will contribute to this dismantling through historical examination of ‘society’ in the Finnish political context.

*Yhteiskunta* is the Finnish word for ‘society’. It was introduced in the formative phase of the Fennomanian nationalism during which the Finnish political vocabulary was consciously “invented by the people whose educational and cultural language (together with Latin and German) was Swedish” (Klinge 1993, 70). According to the Finn-

ish etymological dictionary, *yhteiskunta* appeared for the first time in 1847, and its earliest recorded use in the “current meaning” was in 1865. Indeed, even though *yhteiskunta* is one of the neologisms from the late 1840s, it was, initially, not a translation of the Latin *societas*, German *Gesellschaft* or Swedish *samhälle*. For this purpose, there were some other candidates which only later were replaced by *yhteiskunta*. This observation, as such, implies questions on the establishing of the “current meaning” of *yhteiskunta*.

By means of various conceptual distinctions, such as those elaborated by Quentin Skinner with support of the speech act theory (see especially his texts in Tully ed. 1988), it is possible to argue that the meaning of “current meaning” is, in itself, ambiguous. The meanings of a word are constituted in the act of using the word and, moreover, it is crucial to take into account the meanings for this act itself, including its preconditions, intentions, outcomes and responses. In both dimensions, the meanings are constituted in contexts that change and vary. Meanings are shaped through the modes by which the concept operates in the (re)structuration of linguistic and non-linguistic practices, in opening and widening, closing and limiting the horizons of action and in struggles to define an agenda. Historical analysis of a contemporary concept is not simply a problem of *how* or *why* the “current meaning” has become as it is. It is equally important to ask *what* it is that it has become.

Here, this means an effort to take reflexive distance from those notions of the “current meaning” of *yhteiskunta* which I have learnt within Finnish cultural contexts as a Finnish-speaking researcher in political and social history. In accomplishing this, one point of reference lies in current debates in which ‘society’ is questioned and ‘civil society’ and/or ‘community’ are advocated. Whilst I relate my argumentation to these debates, texts produced in them are also included in the source material the historical interpretation of which forms the other aspect of problematizing the “current meaning” of *yhteiskunta*.

The source material, in general, consists of newspapers and journals, pamphlets, party programmes, administrative documents, scholarly studies, handbooks, dictionaries, etc.<sup>1</sup> These texts not only differ due to the specific historical contexts which have to be reconstructed for making sense of them, but also represent different levels

of reflexivity in their dealing with ‘society’. I do not focus on the history of theoretical reflections on society nor on the discourses of social sciences. These practices are included in the study as just more or less effective parts in the (trans)formations and tensions of what can be, somewhat vaguely, called political languages or discourses. It is crucial to trace variations and changes in the level of reflexivity in the usage of ‘society’. Admittedly, in this paper, texts expressing a reflexive attitude for this concept are “over-represented”. Nevertheless, even in reading these texts, my main interest is in the history of the taken-for-granted ‘society’.

By reflecting on pre-understanding of the “present meaning” of *yhteiskunta*, some guiding problems and hypotheses can be raised. They concern traits especially pointed out as unsustainable aspects of the modern “idea of society” (Touraine 1995, 144-145): the ties of society to the nation-state; the notion of society as an integrated holistic entity; and the notion of progress and rationalization as inherent powers and qualities of society. However, I will not just show the specific modes in which these traits might have appeared in Finland, but also oppose, by means of the Finnish case, any monolithic and unquestioned view on the meanings of ‘society’.

There are grounds for the hypothesis that, indeed, something particular can be found in the ways that the Finnish concept of society has been fixed to the nation-state, referred to an integrated entity with its own subjectivity, and included progress as an inherent code in society itself. However, several particular features seem to be common to the Nordic political languages. In the Nordic context, then, we can find some Finnish peculiarities, probably partly common to the Finnish- and Swedish-speaking Finns and partly specific to the Finnish language or political cultures among Finnish-speaking Finns.

## Finnish Society in the Nordic Context

By examining the case of Finland, it is possible to question some Swedish assumptions of the national uniqueness of Sweden. This concerns, most obviously, the relationships between ‘society’ and ‘state’.

In Sweden, the right-wing critique of the “patronizing” welfare state in the 1980s made use of conceptual historical evidence. Critics observed that in the Swedish political language no clear distinction existed between ‘state’ (*stat*) and ‘society’ (*samhälle*). Not infrequently, ‘society’ appears where one might expect ‘state’, ‘public power’ or even ‘government’. Critics concluded that this, supposedly, unique conceptual confusion indicated a weakness of liberalism and a kind of Social Democratic totalitarianism. To overcome these defects, “civil society” (*civilt samhälle*) had to be created or revitalized (for this debate, see Boréus 1994, 269-274, 325-326, 334; Trägårdh ed. 1995).

One cannot deny that the Swedes, indeed, tend to confuse ‘state’ and ‘society’. It is ‘society’ that has to carry the responsibilities for social security instead of private and voluntary actors, or, in the opposing view, should leave many of its previous functions to private and voluntary sectors. However, the confusion had begun much earlier than the era of the welfare state, wide public sector, and corporatism, i.e. those practices that are sometimes mentioned as major links between state and society and as basis for the tendency “to unify or even identify ‘state’, ‘society,’ and ‘people’” (Knudsen & Rothstein 1994, 218). Furthermore, this conceptual phenomenon does not only appear in “Social Democratic” Sweden, but also in Finland where Social Democracy has been much weaker. *Yhteiskunta* often refers to the state (*valtio*; this term, as such, is obviously, in accordance with its Scandinavian and continental European correlates, much more commonly used than ‘state’ in English). The conflation of ‘state’ and ‘society’ is, in fact, common to Nordic political languages, even though differences may exist in the frequency of referring to state (and municipalities) as ‘society’.

To be sure, ‘society’ as an actor is not a specifically Nordic phenomenon. Sociology provided its modern society with the capacity for acting as subject: society used to set the norms, distribute the roles and teach the values. In less theoretical discourses, statements in which society expects, requires or condemns something are familiar outside of *Norden*, as well (cf. Bowers & Iwi 1993). I cannot exclude that ‘society’ even in non-Nordic contexts may sometimes refer to public authorities or, at least, to public funds and tax-payers as their creators. Nevertheless, it would not be difficult to find examples of such “governmental” uses of *samhälle* (Swedish), *samfund*

(Danish), *samfunn* (Norwegian), *samfélag* (Icelandic) or *yhteiskunta* (Finnish), in which *society*, *société* or *Gesellschaft* could not serve as translations.

One line of interpreting this “confusion” might argue that Nordic political languages have, for some reasons, conserved elements from the time when society was not conceptually separated from the state. *Societas civilis et politica*, ‘civil society’ or ‘political society’, could refer to fulfilling the human nature of the *zoon politikon* above domestic society; to the association distinguished from religious society; or to the opposite of the state of nature, i.e. the civil state achieved on a contractual basis (Riedel 1975a; Bobbio 1989). Pointing out this long continuity in the history of political ideas, Mats Dahlkvist (1995) opposes those Swedish discussants who see the intertwining of ‘state’ and ‘society’ as a Swedish peculiarity and as evidence of a weak liberal tradition.

Peter Aronsson as well as Lars Trägårdh approve the view on Swedish (or Nordic) specificity, but their interpretations are different from those of the initiators of this debate. Aronsson (1995a, 1995b) suggests that a major impetus for *samhälle* becoming a term for state stemmed from the tradition of the local self-government of freehold peasants. In the middle of the 18th century, *samhälle* was introduced as the concept through which Enlightenment ideas and ideals were attached to local practices. The references of the term were then extended to larger political units, notably those to which the concept of nation would be applied. Trägårdh (1995, 1997), in turn, concludes that in *Norden* the notion of a separate (civil) society could not develop because, on the basis of peasant egalitarianism, liberation of the individual was not targeted against excessive state power but against the privileges and patriarchal powers of those between the state and the people. Another important factor preventing the conceptual separation of state and society was the absence of conflict between state and (the Lutheran) church.

All these interpretations leave some questions unanswered. It is easy to find that, in Nordic political languages, a ‘society’ also appears over which a separate ‘state’ uses power as well as a ‘society’ that in some sense is outside of the power sphere of the ‘state’. Furthermore, one can recognize a ‘society’ that is not defined through state/society distinctions. It is a sociological entity in a sense criti-

cized in debates on postmodernity and globalization as the modern idea of society. This 'society' is in another way related to the state: through its being self-evidently limited by the borders of the nation-state and the population within them. This 'society' may, then, include within itself the state or, rather, "the political institutions" or "the political system".

The Nordic society-as-state itself bears different historical strata of meanings as well as meanings stemming from different discourses. These meanings can be actualized and modified in various ways, by various combinations and hybridizations in different contexts. Moreover, different intersections may occur between these meanings of 'society' and those in which the term does not refer to the state. In so far as 'society' comes to replace 'state', it may not only be a matter of actualizing meanings of the term from "before" state/society distinction, but this may imply that 'state' is provided with properties associated with the non-state society. Correspondingly, there are grounds for assuming that 'society' referring to the state may have been transported, as particular rhetorical charges, into those uses of 'society' where the term as such is no synonym of 'state'.

From this direction, we may approach differences between Finland and Sweden. It is reasonable to suggest that 'society' in referring to the state has been a conceptualization for different modes of action and thought in Finland and Sweden. Arguably, the notion of politics as a non-political fulfilling of externally determined national necessities, which are mediated through the nation-state, has been stronger in Finland than in Sweden, due to diverging political experiences and hegemonic settings (Kettunen 1997, 122). There are also remarkable historical differences between Sweden and Finland concerning the ways in which some important practices linking the "state" and "society" were developed in the 20th century. In Sweden, much higher status was addressed to the principle of regulating industrial labour relations through mutual agreements between the strongly organized collective parties, instead of direct legislative interventions. My hypothetical conclusion is that in Sweden, the primary aspect of the society-as-state has been the conception of state in terms of "society", whereas in Finland, the society-as-state has, rather, meant the providing of "society" with the normative contents of the state.

This hypothesis derives some further support from the lexical observation that, in an international and even Nordic comparison, the Finnish word for society, *yhteiskunta*, is at present exceptionally exclusive in relation to anything smaller (or larger) than the nation-state. This exclusion is paradoxical as the word itself appears to be, in a double sense, very “communitarian”, combining the adjective *yhteinen* (common) and the noun *kunta* (commune).

In differentiating from ‘*société*’ or ‘society’, *yhteiskunta* does not have, and has seldom had, the meaning of the distinguished social intercourse of the upper classes (*seurapiiri* in Finnish). Neither can *yhteiskunta* be applied to a voluntary association or an economic enterprise as can be ‘*société*’, ‘society’ and ‘*Gesellschaft*’. In these respects, *yhteiskunta* resembles the Swedish *samhälle*, which, however, used to have such meanings (Aronsson 1995a). In the Nordic context, the most remarkable current peculiarity of *yhteiskunta* is its lack of applicability to local communities. For example, in Swedish (in Sweden as well as in Finland), *samhälle* can be applied to the local community, the term for ‘local community’ being *lokalsamhälle*. In Finnish the corresponding usage of *yhteiskunta* is no longer appropriate – although it used to be at least until the 1930s. The current translation of the Swedish *lokalsamhälle* would not be *paikallis-yhteiskunta* but *paikallisyhteisö*. Finnish *yhteiskunta* is more unambiguously than the Swedish *samhälle* fixed to the borders of the nation-state.<sup>2</sup>

The range of the meanings of *yhteiskunta* has been limited in such a way that, more clearly than most of its correlates in other languages, this term seems to manifest the appearance of the “second nature” – a Marxian characterization of bourgeois society. *Yhteiskunta* is, at the same time, both impersonal and natural. Despite the elements of the word itself, the explicit meanings of either personal community or intentional voluntary association and agreement have disappeared. This does not exclude the fact that such connotations might exist in the Finnish concept of society. One of the paradoxes with this concept is that this type of connotations may be found, in the first place, in the use of *yhteiskunta* as a term for the state. It is reasonable to presume, however, that these connotations are weaker than in the corresponding use of *samhälle*. While the state in both cases is provided with the legitimizing notion of common interest, *yhteiskunta* seems to present

this common interest to a larger extent as being something pre-given and inherent within the state. The establishing of this meaning of *yhteiskunta* is the first topic in the following historical interpretation based on a still preliminary and partial reading of the source material.

## *The Invention of Yhteiskunta*

The introduction and translation of *societas civilis* in 18th century Sweden (e.g. *borgerlig sam(man)lefnad*, *borgerligt sällskap*, *borgerligt samhälle*) is beyond the scope of my study (cf. Saastamoinen 1999). Still, it must be kept in mind that in the political philosophy of natural law with its contract theory, the concept of civil or political society did not refer to any sphere distinct from the state, but expressed a particular understanding of the state. This is true, for instance, for the meanings of *samhälle* and *samfund* in the works of the Ostrobothnian reformer-clergyman Anders Chydenius (1888 [1778] § 11).

Some of the first attempts to translate *societas civilis* into the language of the common people in the Finnish provinces of Sweden seem to have occurred within the confrontation between natural law and contract theory, and the Pietist interpretations of Luther's two regiments (spiritual and temporal) and the Lutheran order of *hustavlan* (Swedish) or *huoneentaulu* (Finnish) with its three estates (the spiritual estate, the secular authority, and the household). Thus, in the sermon book by the Pietist clergyman Johan Wegelius, from the mid-18th century, the expression *maailmallinen cansakäyminen* (worldly intercourse) was, obviously, a translation for *societas civilis* and, at the same time, a target for heavy criticism (Kauppinen 1977, 64). However, *maailmallinen cans(s)akäyminen* appeared in affirmative use as well. In the Swedish Law of 1734, the field to be protected by the law was named as *det borgerliga sällskapet*. In the Finnish translation of the law, published in 1759, the corresponding expression was *yhteinen maailmallinen canssakäyminen*. This was, obviously, compatible with the Lutheran division of two regiments, yet the presentation of the temporal regiment with the terms for *societas civilis* indicates the influence of another political language, that of modern natural law (Saastamoinen 1999).

Let us, however, turn to the decades during which the Finnish political vocabulary was actually invented, beginning from the 1840s, about forty years after Finland had been connected to the Russian Empire. Both *valtio* (state) and *yhteiskunta* appeared in public use in 1847, and both were neologisms, although the latter was more directly composed of previous elements. However, the collective referred to by *yhteiskunta* was not the civil or political society, neither in contractarian nor Hegelian senses. To apply a distinction by Reinhart Koselleck (1979, 121), the semasiological perspective on the word *yhteiskunta* is as important as the onomasiological perspective on the activities and relationships that were later conceptualized by this word.

*Yhteiskunta* was introduced as a juridical term for the whole consisting of the landed properties in a single village. It provided a substitute for various provincially used Finnish words (*jakokunta*, *lohkokunta*) and the corresponding Swedish terms *skifteslag* or *samfällighet*. The entity referred to as *yhteiskunta* in the mid-19th century was a target for or a result of an administrative act from above: the execution of the Enclosure (*isojako*) that had been initiated by the Crown of Sweden in the 18th century.

Pietari Hannikainen has been given the honour of introducing *yhteiskunta*, notably in his translation of a juridical guide in 1847. He was a Fennomanian author but earned his living as a surveyor (*maanmittari*), a civil servant who concretely dealt with the entities he chose to call *yhteiskunta*. At the end of the book he had translated, he felt himself obliged to add a terminological correction: in the chapter dealing with the Enclosure, there appeared the word *yhteyskunta* although the right term was *yhteiskunta* (R. Trapp, *Asianajaja*, 1847, according to Rapola Database, Ktkk). As a topic for speculation, the causes of the error are less interesting than the motives for the correction, i.e. Hannikainen's willingness to distinguish between *yhteiskunta* and *yhteyskunta*.

The latter element in both these compounds, *kunta*, would later (since the 1860s) become the word for the secular local (self-governing) units (municipalities), but even after then, this word sustained its old popularity as the latter part in various compound words. In a dictionary from the 1820s (Renvall 1826), the Latin equivalents for *kunta* were *complexus* and *collectio*. For Hannikainen, the meaning of the combination of *yhteys* and *kunta* was different from that connecting

*yhteinen* (*yhteis-*) to *kunta*. *Yhteys*, meaning connection, provided *yhteyskunta* with a notion of an association through mutual connections of its members. Hannikainen himself had used this term for voluntary association in the newspaper *Kanava*, which he edited and published in Viborg in 1845-1847 (e.g. *Kanava* 1846:6, Rapola Database, Kktk). Obviously, this was not a proper connotation in a word to be used for a collective that was a target for or a result from an administrative act.<sup>3</sup> Instead, *yhteiskunta* in which the adjective *yhteinen* (with its roots in the word *yksi*, one) referred to a more fixed, possessive collectivity could better serve as a concept for such an order.

*Yhteyskunta* – but only later *yhteiskunta* – was one of the candidate translations of *societas*, *Gesellschaft* and *samhälle*. It could be applied to the state (*Suometar* February 16, 1848) as well as to the village as a unit of popular education and moral self-control within a local parish (cf. Honkanen 1999, 106). There were some other candidates that still more than *yhteyskunta* implied mutuality, reciprocity and association (*keskuuskunta*, *seuruuskunta*, *liittokunta*, *kan(s)sa-kunta* (*isuus*), *kansallisyhteys*, *yhteyselämä*). However, since the mid-1860s, these terms were more and more replaced by the word that had referred to a local collective of landed properties (cf. Europeaus 1853, 503; Ahlman 1865, 622). Perhaps this change was not entirely accidental.

Thus far, I can only suggest hypothetically that this was a part of the same change in which the meanings or, at least, connotations of the terms with the beginning *kans(s)a-* became altered. In these terms, the meaning of *kans(s)a* corresponding to the preposition ‘with’ (in Swedish: *med*) was no longer actualized; instead, the meaning of *kansa* corresponding the noun ‘people’ (in Swedish: *folk*) was. Thus, *kansalainen* became associated with membership in the *kansa*, *folk*, a given collective entity, while it lost those meanings of mutuality and of membership in civil society which remained evident in the corresponding Swedish term *medborgare*.<sup>4</sup> It seems to have been in line with this change that *yhteiskunta* was substituted for *yhteyskunta*, *keskuuskunta* and *seuruuskunta* – these three terms all disappearing from the Finnish language during the late 19th century. At the same time, distinct terms were adopted for voluntary association, be it the company form of economic enterprise or the organized unit of popular movement. In the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, these words, *yhtiö* and *yhdistys*, were still partly used synonymously – *yhtiö* had not yet been delimited for an eco-

conomic company as it later was – but it was no longer possible to use them in connection with state or society as it had been.

The adjective *yhteinen*, included in *yhteiskunta*, deserves further attention. In many contexts, *yhteinen* was, in the Finnish of the 19th century, used as a synonym to *yleinen* (general). It is reasonable to assume that this (later weakened) synonymity of *yhteinen* and *yleinen* contributed to the conceiving of ‘society’ in terms of the state (rather than the conceiving of ‘state’ in terms of society). True, *yhteiskunta* was occasionally used, even without any attribute, as the term for the contractarian civil or political society, or for Hegelian civil society (Perander 1866). Nevertheless, any idea that *yhteiskunta* would be a sphere for promoting private interests got in trouble with the conventions of language. Instead, the thought according to which *yhteiskunta* represented the general and public was excellently compatible with those conventions. *Yhteiskunta* could easily combine the (already intertwined) meanings of the Swedish terms *samhälle* and *det allmänna*, the literal translation of the latter being ‘the general’ and its reference being the state. Moreover, these connotations of *yhteiskunta* contributed to intertwining of the notions of the autonomous public sphere and public authorities. *Yhteisö* that later became the word for ‘community’ could, in the late 19th century, be used not only as a synonym for *yhteiskunta* but also for *yleisö*, public audience, *allmänhet* in Swedish.

However, the direction in which the meanings of *yhteiskunta* were shaped was not only an intra-language problem. It was not only a matter of translating words, but also of making sense of something and creating conceptual resources.

## Hegelian Tradition without Civil Society

Romanticism, Hegelianism and the natural law with its contract theory landed in Finland simultaneously and were, intertwined and simultaneously, applied to the Acts of 1809. All of them also worked in the same direction, united the nation and the state in one organism and projected to the past, to the year 1809, the act and moment of the birth of the consolidated nation-state.

The historian Osmo Jussila (1987, 64) refers in this quote to the Finnish nationalist interpretation of what had occurred between the Emperor Alexander I and the Estates of Finland in Porvoo 1809, after the occupation of Finland by Russia. The quotation includes a concise characterization of the theoretical and political contexts and intentions through which ‘society’ was shifted from political philosophy into the language of political practices and struggles.

*Yhteiskunta* became a term for the united nation and state. It reflected a particular way of looking at this “organism” rather than any notion of a distinctive sphere or a particular type of relationships or activities within it.

This is not the whole story. As we shall later see, popular ways of using *yhteiskunta* appeared in more limited or differentiated senses – not only as a term for society in contrast to the state but also as a term for the state in contrast to something that might be reasonably called society. An *yhteiskunta* also developed that defined the main target of social knowledge, concerned about the “social question” through which ‘society’ was connected with the concept of class (*luokka*).

However, even these meanings of *yhteiskunta* were inflected by its ties to the nation-state. The political potential of the concept would lie in its being both taken for granted and ambiguous. The concept achieved such status in political discourse at the same time as it became obvious that the theoretical reflections making a distinction between state and civil society quite rarely turned into conceptualizations of political practices. A question of special importance concerns the role of Hegelian tradition in Finland. Arguably, this tradition became influential in Finland, but in a way that pushed off the concept of civil society.

The Hegelian distinction between state and civil society was in Finland most systematically presented by J. V. Snellman, with some original modifications. The term *samhälle*, as such, did not even in the Hegelian context turn to express something of a specific sphere separate from the state. According to *Läran om staten* by Snellman (1993 [1842], 333-335), state (*stat*), civil society (*medborgerligt samhälle*) and family (*familj*) were all societies, each of them a particular type of *samhälle*. At the same time, both civil society and family were “necessary moments in the state”. In this sense, civil society and family were included in the particular society constituted by the state, yet Snellman

certainly did not suggest anything like the later sector or level divisions within an all-embracing society.

As to its extent and the number of its members, civil society was identical with the state; their difference was not the one between the smaller and larger societies. Civil society was a particular mode of moral action and consciousness of individual, defined on the one hand by the need, will and education of the individual, and on the other hand by the particular social institutions (laws) that govern the action of the individual in the way that all other members of the society can act equally freely. The individual was a member of the civil society (*medborgare*) in so far as he tried to promote his own private interests without hurting the freedom of the rest of its members, whereas as a member of the state (*statsborgare*), he oriented his action to the general, the preservation of the state itself, without remaining a non-free instrument in the service of the state.

After Snellman, the distinction between state, civil society (*kansalaisyhteiskunta*)<sup>5</sup> and family preserved the status of being occasionally referred to as a disposition of the "human common life" (e.g. Rosenqvist 1923, 5). However, the way Snellman himself defined the relationship between civil society and the state made possible a political reception in which the concept of civil society would vanish.

*Medborgerligt samhälle* by Snellman did not refer to economies in the sense Hegel's *bürgerliche Gesellschaft* did. For Snellman, the distinction between state and civil society was based, as Tuija Pulkkinen (1989, 128-131) notes, on the difference between various acts of the individual or even between the ethical orientations of visibly similar acts. As *medborgare*, the individual acted law-abidingly, while as *statsborgare* his action was ethical in a deeper sense expressed in the national spirit. The action in the state was more valuable than the action in civil society, yet even the latter was necessary and useful. However, by taking a step forward from this position, a possibility for a further modification was opened, which indeed seems to have happened within Fennomania. The mode of acting that Snellman associated with the state was not only conceived of as the higher mode, but was also expected to overcome and replace the lower mode of acting, that associated by Snellman with civil society. However, *samhälle* and, still less, *yhteiskunta* were not appropriate terms to be used for the latter type of action. *Yhteiskunta* itself represented the

general in contrast to the acts motivated by private and particular interests.

Thus, one of the most prominent Fennomaniian leaders, Yrjö Koskinen, wrote in 1874 in his series of articles which established the “labour question” on the political agenda:

The society (*yhteiskunta*), the state (*valtio*), is the basis on which all historical progress is grounded, and it is the task of the society (*yhteiskunta*) to watch that the selfish interests and efforts are in no field of the society (*yhteis-elämä*), including the economy, allowed to influence with such a freedom that the happiness of the weaker would be lost in this struggle or that the progress of society (*yhteiskunta*) itself would be damaged (Koskinen 1874, 4).

No longer was the state categorized as one particular type of society as it had been in the study of Snellman in 1842 as well as in the newspaper *Suometar* on 16 February 1848 where a particular “society (*yhteiskunta*) called state (*valtio*)” had been discussed. For Koskinen, the state was not *a* but *the* society. Yet there can be seen two meanings of society in the quoted text. In addition to the explicit identification of society with the state, there was another level, referred to by the word *yhteis-elämä* that literally means ‘common life’. It corresponded to the Swedish word *sammanlefnad* that had been used for *societas*, e.g. in the 18th century translations of Locke and Pufendorf (Saastamoinen 1999). In the above passage of Koskinen’s text, *yhteis-elämä* bore the meaning of the Hegelian *bürgerliche Gesellschaft* (as had *yhteiselämä* in the article in *Suometar* in 1848). However, there was little analytical power in this distinction between two ‘societies’. In this article of Koskinen, the ambiguity of *yhteiskunta* was already evident. *Yhteiskunta* was supposed to regulate *yhteiskunta* to solve the *yhteiskunnallinen* (social) question. *Yhteiskunta* appeared as the synonym of state, as the practices to be regulated by the state, as the order created by this regulation, and as the totality within which even the state was situated. Obviously, many ingredients of the “current meaning” of *yhteiskunta* were included in this text.

The *yhteiskunta* of Koskinen got its meaning in a political context in which “the will of the people” was made by the Fennomaniians to a crucial political argument and criterion of legitimate power

(Liikanen 1995), but in which, at the same time, the people and their will were experienced as a “problem” needing definition and governance. *Yhteiskunta* expressed the demand for the moral relationship between the state and the people. There were, implicitly, two normative ‘societies’, the one referring to the state that fulfilled the good (and, hence, the will) of the people, the other meaning the people living in the order that was established by the state.

The political context was international, in various ways. One of the most striking aspects in Koskinen’s article on labour question was what might be called a strategy of the educated elite for a peripheral country. The strategy presumed that “problems” were anticipated by keeping an eye on the more highly developed countries and learning about their solutions and mistakes. The domestic circumstances had to be observed, as Koskinen urged, “from the European point of view”. Koskinen talked in plural about “European societies”, but also in singular about the “European society” that had got into turmoil due to social conflicts. Two points are worth noting here. Firstly, applied to Finland, the attribute ‘European society’, in itself, included the idea of immanent temporal criteria by which Finnish conditions and the prospects for change could be accounted. Secondly, even when Koskinen discussed conflicts leading the society into a state of turmoil, he did not conceive the conflicts as an inherent property of *yhteiskunta*, but as the major threat to society and its “health”. As a normative concept, *yhteiskunta* offered the means of defining what type of actions represented the real and true will of the people or, respectively, a rebel generated by the labour question.

It seems to me that in the usage of *yhteiskunta* and *valtio* in the late 19th century, these terms tended to turn upside down with respect to the concepts of Hegel. Not infrequently, *yhteiskunta* referred to the state in the contexts in which the moral aspect was emphasized, whereas *valtio* might often be the term for those legal institutions which in Hegelian logic belonged to civil society, the sphere of necessities and force. This was a matter for the reception of Snellman rather than a change at the level of political philosophy. The problem of reception, in turn, was actualized in the context of the opening of space for modern politics.

Many of the controversies between the Fennomans and (Swedish-speaking) Liberals in the late 19th century Finland could after-

wards be conceptualized as having concerned the relationship between the state and civil society (Pulkkinen 1989). However, this was not the way the parties of these controversies themselves conceptualized their positions. At the time characterized by later research as the birth of civil society, the concept of civil society seems to have largely disappeared. It can be questioned whether the Liberals articulated any distinctive concept of civil society which they would have contrasted with the state and with Hegelian civil society. *On Liberty* by John Stuart Mill, published in 1859 and translated soon into Swedish, was influential even in Finland but did little to contribute to the discussion in terms of the distinction between the state and civil society. The ‘society’ of Mill referred to a combination of legal authorities and public opinion, and his main concern was the principles according to which this society had the right to set limits to the life of the individual.

In the first Finnish “party programme”, that of the Liberal Party of 1880, ‘society’ appeared as an appreciating concept but without having any reference to a sphere free or separate from the state. The programme, published in both Swedish and Finnish, declared that each generation had the duty, in accordance with its own needs and ideas, to extend, strengthen and beautify the “building of society” (*samhällsbyggnad; yhteiskunnallis-rakennus*) that it had inherited from previous generations. If this reform work was neglected there was a risk for destruction of this building (Borg 1965, 12-20, 389-396). The metaphor had appeared, for instance, in Koskinen’s articles on the labour question. A spatial metaphor was used in a sense that indicates, with the terms of Koselleck, the temporalization (*Verzeitlichung*) of a concept, yet it is clear that ‘society’ here did not, as such, indicate any novel, modern phenomenon.

A remarkable part of those controversies between the Fenno-manians and Liberals, which in a later view could be and have been conceptualized by means of the state – civil society distinction, were articulated by using the concepts of society, individual, people, and national. In the Fennomanian view, the relationship between society and individual was supposed to be mediated by national solidarity which, in turn, would constitute in the encounter of the “will of the people” and the activities of those fulfilling the mission of “national awakening”. Bridging the concepts of people and nation, the noun *kansa* (people, but also

nation, *kansakunta*) and the adjective *kansallinen* (national rather than popular) were crucial in the conceptual construction of the harmony between society and the individual.

Sometimes, this construction was associated with the conditions peculiar to Finland by making use of comparison between Finland and Sweden. This was the way Thiodolf Rein, professor of philosophy, put the question in *Valvoja* in 1881. In his review on Finnish translations of some texts of Snellman, Rein concluded that, in a sheltered country such as Sweden, it might be appropriate to adopt the view that the state (*valtio*) was simply an institution for serving the pursuit of private interests, and the individual had the right to try as much as possible to rid himself of its obligations. In a country such as Finland, which had to struggle to survive, however, the relationship between individual and society (*yhteiskunta*) had to be of a different quality, “i.e. more determined by the common good than in the countries which were not exposed to any danger” (Rein 1881). It is worth noting that although using *valtio* and *yhteiskunta* synonymously, Rein chose to use *yhteiskunta* when he discussed what he conceived as the higher moral level of the state–individual relationship, the level defined by the general instead of private and particular.

I do not want to claim that this was the only way of discussing ‘society’. Perhaps the most interesting representative of a diverging way among the Fennomaniacs was J. J. F. Perander (cf. Liikanen 1995). In his article *Yhteis-kunta uutena aikana* (Society in Modern Times) in *Kirjallinen Kuukauslehti* in 1866, Perander used the word *yhteis-kunta* (or *yhteiselämä*, common life) in the meaning of civil society that in the Hegelian and Snellmanian sense was distinguished from state (*valtio*) and family (*perhe*). He noted that the French Revolution had given impetus to the autonomous logic of civil society which was characterized by the consciousness of rights and the struggles between the members of civil society. It is noteworthy that Perander did not mention Hegel or Snellman, although he widely introduced and commented on political and moral philosophers such as Montesquieu, Rousseau, Smith, Saint-Simon and Proudhon. Perander’s *yhteis-kunta* differed from Snellman’s *medborgerligt samhälle* through emphasis on the conflicts of interests, even those between capital and labour (Perander 1866).

Fifteen years later, in 1881, Perander examined the conflicts of industrializing society from a perspective that resembles the later critiques of both the “dialectics of Enlightenment” and “globalization”. Among the authors he now referred to were Sismondi, Mill and the French scholar in economics Leroy-Beaulieu. In Perander’s view, technological progress and development of the world economy had resulted in what he called the “Sisyphian work in the national economy”. A distinction between state and civil society played no role in this argumentation nor did Perander include any explicit reflection of *yhteiskunta* in this text. Nevertheless, his *yhteiskunta* was not even now synonymous with the state. It rather referred to national economy (*kansallis-talous* by Perander, later *kansantalous*), seen from the point of view of the conflicting and common interests of different classes and the corresponding factors of production (land, capital and labour). This was the ‘social’ (*yhteiskunnallinen*) point of view.

Perander contributed to the shift of *yhteiskunta* from the context of political philosophy into that of social research in which it was viewed at as a target for empirical knowledge. This change was parallel to the shift of *yhteiskunta* from political philosophy into the language of political practices and struggles in which *yhteiskunta* was discussed as an actor or subject, the representative of the general interest. Later, these discourses were intertwined in the programmes of the labour movement. The characterization of prevailing circumstances as “class society” (*luokkayhteiskunta*) was included in the first explicitly socialist party programme of the Finnish labour party, the so-called Forssa programme of 1903. At the same time, the programme formulated the goal according to which “society” should possess the means of production.

For the construction of society as an object of empirical and practical knowledge, the adjective *yhteiskunnallinen* is crucial. In the last decades of the 19th century, this adjective was provided with the charge stemming from the close connection between the building of the nation-state and the formation of particular social knowledge (cf. Wagner & Wittrock 1996; Hall 1998). This connection was expressed by the term ‘social question’ (*yhteiskunnallinen kysymys*).

## Society and Social

*Social* -> *Yhteiskunnallinen*, *Political* -> *Valtiollinen*

A striking difference appeared in the relationships between the nouns *valtio* and *yhteiskunta*, respectively the corresponding adjectives *valtiollinen* and *yhteiskunnallinen* in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. While *yhteiskunta* was to a high degree identified with *valtio* (state), *yhteiskunnallinen* and *valtiollinen* were often used as a dichotomy. This was most obvious when these adjectives appeared as attributes to different “questions”. The *yhteiskunnallinen* question referred to the problem of class divisions and conflicts (both urban and rural), and it still did in the 1920s. The *valtiollinen* question, again, might concern, e.g. for Koskinen in 1874, the principles and organization of political representation, but since the turn of the century it would mostly refer to the relationship of Finland to the Russian Empire.

To understand this discrepancy between the nouns and adjectives, it has to be noticed that *yhteiskunnallinen* was, primarily, not a derivative from *yhteiskunta*, but the result from the attempt to find a Finnish word for ‘social’, a word, due to its domestic origin, better than *sosia(a)linen*. Correspondingly, *valtiollinen* was adopted as the Finnish word for ‘political’, in the spirit of preferring the purely Finnish translations to those of foreign origin, in this case, to *poliittinen*.

Again, being the translation of ‘social’ with a strong concern for class relationships was not the only way of using *yhteiskunnallinen*. This adjective could refer to something that was thought to concern the society as a totality, thus meaning nearly the same as *kansallinen* (national). *Yhteiskunnallinen* was also applied – as it seems to me, more frequently before the real actualizing of the “labour question” – to what in current popular terms might be called acting in civil society, i.e. in voluntary associations and publicity (e.g. Palmén 1884, 124, 132; Järnefelt 1994 [1893], 127). Furthermore, *yhteiskunnallinen* might be used for *civilis* in the sense this had been included in *societas civilis* of the natural law and contract theoreticians. Thus, *Tankar om borgerliga friheten* (*De libertate civili*, On Civil Liberty, 1759) by Peter Forsskål, a scholar of the Swedish Age of Freedom, was in 1910 published in Finnish under the title *Yhteiskunnallisesta vapau-desta* (Forsskål 1910).

To add still one particular usage, *yhteiskunnallinen* could – and can – be contrasted with *yksityinen* (private) in such a mode that even this adjective referred to the state. For the socialist labour movement, the state was the nearest reference of *yhteiskunnallinen* in the goal of transferring the means of production from private ownership into the *yhteiskunnallinen* property. After the First World War, the foreign terms for this act, *Sozialisierung* and *socialisering*, were translated by constructions on the basis of this adjective, *yhteiskunnallistuttaminen* (socialization, ‘making social’). Its synonyms were *sosialisointi* that soon proved to be more competitive (Kettunen 1986, 269-276) and later, after World War II, *kansallistaminen* (nationalization), the internationally adopted expression that indicated the strengthened notion of national societies as functional wholes. In juridical discourse, however, *yhteiskunnallistuminen* (socialization, ‘becoming social’) had a diametrically opposite meaning, the delegation of administrative functions from public authorities to private actors (Tarjanne 1937, 510).

For my argument here, however, the observation of primary interest is that the Finnish words for ‘social’ and ‘political’ were in the late 19th century constructed on the basis of *yhteiskunta* and *valtio*. There were particular prerequisites for as well as particular outcomes from these operations. Being worried about the *yhteiskunnallinen* problem would actually imply, in a very direct way, a concern about that entity of state and society that was referred to by *yhteiskunta*. There were corresponding benefits in *valtiollinen*, in comparison to *poliittinen*, as an attribute for “problems”. Above all, it could include both internal affairs and external (or rather, in the Grand Duchy of the Russian Emperor, half-external) relationships of the state. These translations were, arguably, effective in the sense of defining and delimiting horizons of political action.

The regulative activities of the state in the area of “social question” were, in the first decades of the 20th century, called *yhteiskuntapolitiikka*, a translation of *Sozialpolitik* and *socialpolitik* (e.g. Ehrnrooth 1913). In this compound word, *yhteiskunta* referred to a specific target field of policies (social relations, especially the conditions of the working class), but was also strongly present in some further connotations: being the authority that shaped and executed this policy (state) and being the entity to be preserved, reinforced and promoted by means of this policy (the social order within and through the nation-state). It is also to be noted that the word *politiikka* mostly

appeared as the latter part in this type of compound words, meaning ‘policy’, i.e. the results of political actions and processes, and expressing, schematically speaking, the direction from the state to society. Politics, political action, the struggles and compromises preceding the policies, were, however, until the 1920s, quite rarely called *politiikka*. The most usual expression for them was *valtiollinen toiminta* (action in or towards the state).

However, even the merely linguistic troubles could hardly be avoided, since *valtiollinen toiminta* was expected to result in the interfering of *yhteiskunta* with its public authority into the different problems of *yhteiskunta*, such as those called the *yhteiskunnallinen* and *valtiollinen* questions. In addition, signs emerged in the 1920s and 1930s of a view that something that should be conceptualized was ignored by this usage of terms. It is possible to recognize a search for ‘political’ that would not be reduced to the state and for ‘social’ that would not be reduced to society. Through this search the meanings of *valtiollinen* and *yhteiskunnallinen* were changed, as well. This was also the change in which the limits of *yhteiskunta* towards anything smaller than the nation-state were gradually established.

## Separation of *Yhteiskunnallinen* (Societal) and *Sosiaalinen* (Social)

Until the 1920s, the synonymy between *sosia(a)linen* (in compound terms: *sosia(a)li-*) and *yhteiskunnallinen* (in compound terms: *yhteiskunnallis-* or, more frequently, *yhteiskunta-*) seems to have been undisputed.<sup>6</sup> The first text in which I have, thus far, found an explicit distinction between *yhteiskunnallinen* and *sosia(a)linen* is the massive and very influential presentation of social policies by Eino Kuusi, published in two volumes in 1931. Instead of *yhteiskunta-politiikka*, Kuusi had decided to use the term *sosiaalipolitiikka*, which was also the title of the book. For Kuusi, a difference existed between *yhteiskunnallinen* and *sosiaalinen*, the former lacking the warm ingredients of mutual solidarity and aid which were included in the latter word that had its background in the Latin word *socius*. Yet Kuusi found it necessary to warn the reader of mixing the words

*sosialinen* and *sosialipolitiikka* with *sosialistinen* (socialist) and *sosialismi* (socialism) which meant “something completely different” (Kuusi 1931, 13-14).

However, Kuusi certainly did not abandon society, *yhteiskunta*. The motives of social policy in his presentation were full of interests, needs, demands, obligations and acts of ‘society’. In his argument, *sosialinen* was associated, not only with warm mutuality among the people, but primarily with class conflicts that threatened the social cohesion or, rather, society itself. I would suggest that, in Kuusi’s view, the words *yhteiskunta* and *yhteiskunnallinen* should be reserved for the essential national, political as well as economic unity that had been fatally threatened by the Civil War and abortive proletarian revolution of 1918.

Social policy was but one context for the idea of the society defending itself against those who acted against the society. Actually, this topic was much more accentuated in the discussion on practices with more explicit intentions of control. The experiences and conclusions of the Civil War resulted, among the White winners, in new emphases on society. In more concrete terms than before, *yhteiskunta* was seen as an actor in the struggle against those whose ideologies and actions were labelled as being “anti-societal” (*yhteiskunnan-vastainen*). Society must be provided with various types of weapons and be ready to use them in this struggle; this was the mission of the “pro-societal” (*yhteiskuntaasäilyttävä*) people. This topic was most obvious in right-wing party programmes and pamphlets, but far from absent even among those non-socialists who argued for parliamentary democracy (e.g. Aho 1961 [1918-1919]; Alkio 1919).

In any case, the reification of society contributed to the fact that the synonymy of *yhteiskunnallinen* and *sosia(a)linen* became problematic. This reification was, however, not only a matter of political but also of economic history. For the distinction between *yhteiskunnallinen* and *sosia(a)linen*, the conceptual constructions of ‘economy’ (*talous*) are important.

Koskinen distinguished, in 1874, between two extreme views to be opposed: “economism” that was based on the truths discovered by Adam Smith but neglected “the moral (*siveydellinen*) aspect, or society”, and “socialism” which claimed to be social but in a wrong

and threatening fashion. Somewhat later, ‘social’ and ‘economic’ were connected in the noun *yhteiskuntatalous* (social economy) and the adjective *yhteiskuntataloudellinen* that were used synonymously with *kansantalous* (national economy) and *kansantaloudellinen*. The approaches of *yhteiskuntatalous/kansantalous* and *yhteiskuntapolitiikka* were at the turn of the century largely intertwined. In both cases, economy was to a high degree dealt with from the point of view of the ‘social question’, *Kansantaloudellinen yhdistys* (The National Economic Society) being a major forum for discussion on this question.

The national economic and social political approaches had become more differentiated until the time of Kuusi’s *Sosiaalipolitiikka* in the early 1930s.<sup>7</sup> As an attribute for economic life, *yhteiskunnallinen* would increasingly be associated with the principles of “planned economy” that under the economic depression of the 1930s became, internationally, a popular objective, with various political colours (e.g. SDP 1933). In the 1940s, during and after World War II, the adjective *yhteiskunnallinen* was in many texts still more explicitly associated with the regulation and governance in the name of real economic rationality and rationalization (e.g. Railo 1942). *Sosiaalinen*, again, had a quite different meaning in this context of economic rationalization. It was associated with the delimiting or compensating of those outcomes of the (capitalist) economic rationalization that endangered the welfare of those involved and threatened the cohesion of society.<sup>8</sup>

An order was even created between *yhteiskuntapolitiikka* and *sosiaalipolitiikka*. In his academic textbook, Armas Nieminen in 1955 defined *yhteiskuntapolitiikka* (societal policy) as the general concept for “the efforts and measures intended to arrange the circumstances in the society (*yhteiskunnan olot*) in a way seen appropriate and right”. *Sosiaalipolitiikka* (social policy) was a subconcept. It included “the efforts and measures intended to guarantee the standard of living seen reasonable, social security and satisfaction to the different social groups, families and individuals” (Nieminen 1955, 43, 95). Thus, the manifest motivation of social policy was no more based on class conflicts.

In his *60-luvun sosiaalipolitiikka* (The Social Policy of the 60s, 1961), a book often regarded as the plan for the Finnish welfare state, Pekka Kuusi adopted the corresponding conceptual hierarchy between *yhteiskuntapolitiikka* and *sosiaalipolitiikka*. Kuusi, however, program-

matically treated social policy as a part of the general societal policy, the goals of which even those who shaped the social policies had to clarify for themselves. Furthermore, Kuusi manifested, in the spirit of Gunnar Myrdal and others, his strong confidence in virtuous circles within modern society: “In contemporary society, democracy, social equality and economic growth seem to be interdependent in a fortunate way” (Kuusi 1961, 8; cf. Kettunen 1997). It was within this society of virtuous circles that social policy had to play its crucial role. The ‘social’ no longer represented a counterprinciple to the ‘economic’. Kuusi’s favourite expression was “growth-oriented society” (*kasvuhakuinen yhteiskunta*). In his strong programmatic pathos, this society, being simultaneously the subject, object and framework of the growth-oriented action, was “our” society.

The specific concept of *sosiaalinen* had implications for the concept of *yhteiskunta*. In this respect, the expansion, differentiation and re-orientation of social sciences after World War II had an ambivalent impact.

### *Society, Social Sphere, and Individual*

The turn towards American sociology after World War II meant, for one thing, an adoption of conceptual tools that included little reminding of the distinction between *sosiaalinen* and *yhteiskunnallinen*. A former tradition, named in the history of Finnish sociology as “the concrete social research”, had been oriented towards Germany and influenced by the German language, as had been the Finnish scholarship more generally, with the remarkable exception of anthropological sociology in the footsteps of Edward Westermarck, which had been Anglo-Saxon and French in orientation. In their attempts to avoid words of foreign origin, Finnish scholars had preferred *yhteiskunnallinen* to *sosiaalinen* as the translation of *sozial*, yet the different meanings of the German words *sozial* and *gesellschaftlich* may have contributed to the distinction between the corresponding Finnish words, for instance, in Eino Kuusi’s thought.

The English word ‘social’, instead, could easily be given wide meaning and status as the basic concept for all ‘social sciences’. By reading the Finnish Handbook of Social Sciences, *Yhteiskuntatieteiden käsikirja*,

published in 1963-1964, one might draw the conclusion that *yhteiskunta* had mostly disappeared, especially when one compares this publication with the corresponding previous handbook *Valtiotieteiden käsikirja* from the early 1920s. The latter included a long chapter on *yhteiskunta*, written by Rudolf Holsti, a politically active sociologist in the Westermarckian tradition, and in addition several chapters under various compound terms beginning with *yhteiskunta-*. In the handbook of the 1960s, however, the concept was just shortly tackled in the chapter on "Social Community" (*sosiaalinen yhteisö*) by Knut Pipping. According to him, 'social community' was a wider concept than 'society' that "usually means temporally and spatially defined communities (e.g. the Finnish society)" (Pipping 1964, 642). In his chapter on "Social System" (*sosiaalinen järjestelmä*), Yrjö Littunen, in turn, provided this term with the status of the general concept and defined it by means of Talcott Parsons' theory on the basic functions of social systems (Littunen 1964, 622-625).

The sociological widening of *sosiaalinen* or inclusion of 'society' into 'social community' remained, however, rather distant from the processes of conventional language. For example, the distinction between *yhteiskunta* and *yhteisö* developed after World War II in a way that *yhteiskunta* could no longer be applied to local communities as it could in the 1930s; *yhteisö* was now the appropriate term for them.<sup>9</sup> When the sociologists suggested that 'community' and 'social' were the wide basic concepts, this was contrary to the tendencies in the less reflexive usage of these words.

In fact, the rise of 'social sciences' after World War II, and especially in the 1960s, greatly contributed to the popularity of 'society'. This was already implied by the Finnish term for 'social sciences', *yhteiskunta-tieteet* (sciences of society), having a structure similar to the Swedish *samhällsvetenskaper* and *Gesellschaftswissenschaften*, the German term parallel to *Sozialwissenschaften* (although the old concept *valtiotieteet*, i.e. *Staatswissenschaften*, *statsvetenskaper*, was only slowly and partially replaced). The 1960s was a decade during which sociologists with stronger involvement and better success than before influenced political discourse on "the Finnish society". The social sciences had a remarkable impact on party programmes as well as on official committee reports, the type of document crucial to Finnish and, more generally, Nordic policymaking. Most notably,

this was to be seen in the increased frequency of the term 'society' in these documents (Honkanen 1999). Applied in administrative and political discourses, the concept of *yhteiskunta* had the important capacity of providing the idea of "systemic integration" (economy, administration) with the connotation of "social integration" (culture), stemming from the ties of this concept to the nation and nation-state.

One of the questions most discussed for which sociologists offered both definitions and solutions in the 1960s was that of national integration, thus following the long great line of the close connection between the academy and the nation-state. A major problem of national integration was seen in the strong support for Communism and the weak integrated-ness of the Communists in society. The diagnosis made by Erik Allardt in the Durkheimian framework with inspiration from Ralf Dahrendorf, concluded that to strengthen organic solidarity, the high degree achieved in the division of labour had to be combined with a lower degree of pressure for conformity. The latter meant that social conflicts had to be recognized and institutionalized. The title of Allardt's theoretical presentation on this problem, *Yhteiskunnan rakenne ja sosiaalinen paine* (The Structure of Society and Social Pressure, 1964) expressed the setting in which the "social pressure" mediated between the "structure of society" and the individual and collective behaviour of people.

There is something in this setting that can be traced back to the problem definitions that had been shaped during World War II. These problem definitions implied a construction of social reality in which there were three levels: the society, the social sphere and the individual. This three-level disposition had diverging predecessors.

There had been the Hegelian disposition by Snellman, consisting of three societies: state, civil society and family. Another conceptual construction can be read in those late 19th and early 20th century texts that dealt with *valtiollinen kysymys* (political question), meaning the relationship between the Finnish nation-state and the Russian Empire, and *yhteiskunnallinen kysymys* (social question), meaning the problem of class divisions and conflicts. Even in the context of this discussion, the construction of social reality included three levels: nation, class and citizen, i.e. society as the entity identified with the state and nation, society as the sphere for social question,

characterized by the concept of class, and the level of citizenship, *kansalaisuus*, the membership of the nation.

During World War II, practical necessities appeared that created prerequisites for distinction between society, social sphere and individual. Firstly, the notion of society as a functional whole that must and can be steered and planned was reinforced. This mode of thought was to be seen especially in national economic ‘postwar planning’ done during the war. Secondly, adjusting of the individuals into the tasks of this whole became, in a new way, an urgent problem. Thirdly, war-time experiences contributed to a new notion of a social sphere that was located between society as a functional whole and the individuals fulfilling its tasks. This was thematized in some postwar scholarly and literary interpretations (Pipping 1947; Linna 1954; Koli 1955; Seppänen 1958) as the discrepancy between official and unofficial norms and as the autonomous nature of the laws of group dynamics. It was assumed that such tensions between the sets of norms as well as conflicts within an organization might have positive outcomes for functioning of the organization.

This line of argumentation gained more impetus in the sociological and sociologically informed political discourse of the 1960s which assumed that conflicts, if recognized and institutionalized, could improve the effectiveness and integration of society. Obvious friction existed between this emphasis and the influential tradition of conceiving politics as the fulfilling of national necessities in the name of the general interest of society. However, one solution was offered by the conception of society as a functional whole that was kept in movement, change or progress through various inter- and intrasocietal powers. In this understanding, society as an entity was not identical with the state; yet it could function as an actor that was even able to anticipate its further development and possessed the criterion of self-criticism.

### *Society Capable of Anticipating and Criticizing Itself*

An evolutionist reflection on society as a functional whole was offered in the previously mentioned handbook article on *yhteiskunta* by Rudolf

Holsti in 1924. A representative of anthropological and historical sociology, Holsti was sensitive to the relationship between the universal and particular in societies, and he did not identify or even attach 'society' to the nation-state. In his Darwinist view, societies like all other organisms contested with each other, the economic competition being the most important external factor that shaped the fates of societies. In accordance with Comté, Holsti distinguished between the "social static" that concerned the preservation of society and the "social dynamic" that concerned the development of society. Referring to Spencer, he noted that the direction of evolution was from the vague, similar and diffuse to the definite, dissimilar and solid. According to Holsti, simple and unorganized work will be replaced by developed and highly organized work in all fields of human activity, whereby the support of science will become more and more unavoidable. In the future, he concluded, "the scientific method in the management of societies will be necessary; the organized representation of class and party opinions will not be sufficient" (Holsti 1924, 626).

The vision of Holsti is interesting, not least because it was connected with the discussion on political democracy, scientific expertise on society and the representation of different economic interests or functions in the political process. In the Finnish history of political thought, Yrjö Ruutu, with his organistic and energetic reflections on state, society and "economic democracy", is perhaps the most famous innovator in this discussion of the 1920s and 1930s. Here, however, I must bypass this discussion and focus on the notion of a kind of self-anticipating society in Holsti's text.

Holsti's vision of society in the process of coming was an evolutionist variant of what Yrjö Koskinen in 1874 had pondered from the perspective of the centre–periphery relationship. For Koskinen, the code of the social future in Finland was to be found by gazing towards those countries that had further proceeded along the road of "European society". In this sense, it is possible to draw a line from Koskinen via Holsti to the "new" American-oriented social sciences after World War II. The problems of the modernizing society were recognized by importing theoretical and conceptual tools from the milieu in which the centre of modernization now was found, from America. Arguably, the image of "the Finnish society" was modernized more rapidly than the social circumstances themselves. In any

case, the future change of society following this approach was inherent in the society itself and, still more, the society had a reflexive capacity for gaining knowledge of this code.

In the post-World War II decades, ‘society’ was provided with various attributes that have a mixed character of expressing the anticipated future in the present and claiming something about the society’s “own” normative standards. Many of these attributes have been explicitly temporalizing, such as the “industrializing society”, “modernizing society”, “changing society”, “dynamic society” and “growth-oriented society”. Since the 1950s, party programmes and official committee reports have been a treasury of such expressions.

One of the most interesting is “the Finnish society” (*suomalainen yhteiskunta*). This very popular expression seems to have gained wider use only after World War II. “The Finnish society” bridged the division between the new social sciences, which were interested in the problems of (the national) modernizing society, and the academic history writing that was seriously concerned about the preserving of national continuity. In this sense, the book *Suomalaisen yhteiskunnan rakenne* (The Structure of Finnish Society, 1948) by Heikki Waris, a professor of social policy, was illuminating. The very concept of *suomalainen yhteiskunta* was given a charge in which the essential national continuity and the profound, accelerating transformation towards growing equality, democracy and wealth were intertwined. Generally, there were varying modes of combining these two sides in “the Finnish society”; e.g. in the name of the organization *Suomalaisen Yhteiskunnan Tuki* (Support for Finnish Society, founded in 1952) this expression bore the charge from the anti-Communist aims of the organization.

Attributes such as ‘Finnish’ or ‘growth-oriented’ have been applied in the contexts where ‘society’ has not been identical with ‘state’, but a sociological construction. However, even this ‘society’ has appeared as an actor; ‘growth-oriented’, ‘dynamic’ or ‘pluralist’ imply, themselves, a subjectivity of ‘society’. Moreover, this ‘society’ has been defined and limited by the nation-state. The same has been true of the ‘society’ with transnational attributes as ‘European’ or ‘Nordic’. Such attributes indicate the importance of international comparison as a practice for shaping national institutions and discourses. However, ‘European’ or ‘Nordic’ have not only referred to international

contexts of a national society. Rather, they have been intended to express something inherent in the national society, often something that includes either the future code or the normative standards of the society and, thus, the means by which the society was supposed to anticipate or criticize itself. The end of this idea of society is one theme in the debates on postmodernity and globalization.

## Unsustainable Society?

The British sociologists Scott Lash and Johns Urry note that the central feature of Western social science has been the study of ‘societies’, each of which is seen as deriving its specific character from the particular relationship of nation and state. It was believed that the members of a society share a particular community of fate, that they are governed by a state to which duties and responsibilities are owed and by which certain rights are guaranteed. In the analysis of such ‘societies’ it is presumed that most aspects of the lives of its members are determined by factors endogenous to the society; and that a fairly clear distinction can be drawn between these endogenous factors and those which are external (Lash & Urry 1994, 320).

Not surprisingly, Las and Urry are of the opinion that due to the processes called globalization this concept of society will lose and has already lost much of its analytical and political power.

It is possible to argue against Lash and Urry by directing attention to those big names in the history of social sciences to whom (in particular, Weber and Simmel) society as an entity largely was an “absent concept” (Frisby & Sayer 1986, 54-74). It is also possible to find cases in which ‘society’ has been explicitly detached from its ties to the nation-state. Such examples can be found even in the history of the Finnish *yhteiskunta*. The tradition of Marxist social theory and research has been thin in Finland, yet there have been some Marxist attempts to think of the very concept of society in an unconventional fashion. Thus, J. W. Keto, in his textbook on “the sociology of Marx” from the 1940s, rejected the territorial identity of state and society and noted that “the capitalist society extends over the territories of numerous states” (Keto 1946, 22-23). As the consciousness of worldwide threats

and interdependencies in the 1960s and 1970s was reinforced, the idea of a society that was more extensive than the nation-state and even covered “the entire globe”, could be read in the official committee report on school reform (Honkanen 1999, 120).

The conclusions of Lash and Urry can be questioned from the opposite direction, as well. In the end, conventional ‘society’ seems to be very persistent. Even in the time of EU citizenship and globalized finance markets, use of ‘society’ in a meaning that extends over the borders of nation-state is more probably a conscious provocation than an indicator of a gradually eroding old concept.

While Lash and Urry presume that the modern concept of society is becoming unsustainable due to its ties to the nation-state, the French sociologist Alain Touraine, in turn, argues that ‘society’ will be questioned due to its being the replacement for God:

The idea of modernity replaced God with society. Durkheim is quite explicit about this – more so than anyone else. The crisis of modernity is now leading to the disappearance of the idea of *society*. That idea was once a unifying principle, and even the principle of good, whereas evil was defined as anything that hindered social integration. We had to play our parts, fulfil our functions, and we also had to know how to welcome newcomers and re-educate deviants. The idea of modernity has always been associated with this construction of society: mechanical society was transformed in to an organism, in to a social body whose every organ contributes to its smooth working (Touraine 1995, 144).

In Touraine’s view, such a society “still colours official discourses, but it has lost its power”. He concludes that “we” have learned “to defend individuals against citizens and society, and to refer what we once called integration as control or manipulation” (ibid., 145).

One may find conceptual evidence for this change, e.g. in the new introduction of the parole of ‘civil society’ in the 1980s. This ‘civil society’ was entirely different from the *bürgerliche Gesellschaft* of Hegel that had referred to necessities and compulsions: the system of needs, the administration of justice and the wide spectrum of practices called police. ‘Civil society’ was vitalized, internationally, with references to Tocqueville’s idea of democracy based on free association and local self-government – his account of the American lessons for Europe. The new confidence in the possibility and curing capacity of

‘communities’ has been an aspect of the same change, although there have been diverging points of departure for the reliance in community (cf. Rose 1999, 176).

My preliminary conclusion is that in Finland, ‘civil society’ was not raised as the critique of the welfare state to the same degree as in Sweden (cf. Trägårdh ed. 1995). However, corresponding to the Swedish right-wing critique against the identification of state and society, the party programme of the Finnish Centre of 1996 particularly pointed out that for the Party, “state and society are two different things”. Nevertheless, the concept of ‘civil society’ (*kansalaisyhteiskunta*) did not appear in the programme. A still “warmer” and more decentralizing concept was introduced: ‘civil communities’ (*kansalaisyhteisöt*).

A more symptomatic change of the political vocabulary may be, however, that ‘welfare state’ (*hyvinvointivaltio*) is being replaced by ‘welfare society’ (*hyvinvointiyhteiskunta*); e.g. in the party programme of the Social Democratic Party of 1999, only the latter concept is used. In its ambiguity, ‘welfare society’ is a very serviceable concept. Firstly, it can be provided with a meaning that includes the critique of the “patronizing” welfare state; ‘society’ associated with ‘civil society’ and the emphasis on private and voluntary actors. Secondly, ‘welfare society’ can, however, be used with the intention of strengthening the legitimacy of the welfare state; with ‘society’ acquiring its meaning in the long Nordic tradition in which ‘society’ represents the general and public against the particular and private. Thirdly, ‘welfare society’ can be used by analogy in such expressions as ‘industrial society’, ‘service society’, or ‘information society’, as a description of prevailing circumstances or developments. Thus, in a remarkable way, controversies concerning the welfare state can be concealed by making use of ‘welfare society’.

Even in other ways, ‘society’ shows, after all, a surprising vitality. In the 1994 party programme of a short-lived neoliberalist party, the Young Finns, no suspicions concerning the existence of society could be seen (in contrast to the famous statement of Margaret Thatcher on the non-existence of society), and the first slogan of the program was “The Activating Welfare Society” (*kannustava hyvinvointiyhteiskunta*). In its program of 1998, the Left Alliance that has its historical roots in the Communist movement formulated its goal as

“the good society”. This society is very much an actor that, among other things, “treats animals with respect” and “endeavours to secure the living conditions for natural species”.

A critical study has been made of the ‘society’ of the largest newspaper in Finland, *Helsingin Sanomat* (Pietilä & Sondermann 1994). The study seems to have had very little impact on the way *yhteiskunta* appears in the editorials. *Yhteiskunta* demands, intends, feels, hopes, holds its breath and does not want to be brought to its knees (e.g. the editorial on the firemen strike, *Helsingin Sanomat* January 10, 1998).

However, there are grounds for arguing that something in the concept of society has become questioned. Many such elements of meaning that had been adopted after World War II have become problematic. This is true of the ideas of *yhteiskunta* as a target of rational knowledge and planning or as the actor that from above distributes the roles, teaches the values and provides its members with rights and duties. Conflicts are, arguably, less than previously defined in a way in which ‘society’ would be the self-evident frame of reference. This means, however, not just a dissolution of a previous image of entity. As former issues on the political agenda of national ‘society’ are transformed into external imperative conditions of global market, the notion of the national “imagined community” (Anderson 1983) may be strengthened, and the national competitive community may reshape or replace the concept of society.

## Notes

- 1 A remarkable part of the source material consists of the common corpus collected in the project Concepts in Motion. The Conceptual History of Finnish Political Culture, in which my study on ‘society’ in Finland is involved.
- 2 *Yhteiskunta* may refer to entities not yet defined by the nation-state – one can discuss the primitive or feudal *yhteiskunta* – but within the contemporary *yhteiskunta* there are no smaller units to be referred to as the *yhteiskunta*. The municipalities are included in the *yhteiskunta* but no single municipality (*kunta*) is the *yhteiskunta*.
- 3 True, *yhteiskunta* was still in 1848 provided with this meaning in a list of

- some recommended novel words in the Finnish newspaper *Suometar* (March 25, 1848). It is possible that the writer had read the above-mentioned translation of Hannikainen but had failed to notice the correction concerning this term.
- 4 These changes are far from unambiguous; e.g. as the Finnish equivalents of *medborgare*, both *kansalainen* and *yhteiskuntalainen* (member of society, a term unfamiliar in contemporary Finnish) were mentioned in a dictionary in 1883 (Ahlman 1883). In another dictionary (Ahlman 1865, 1872) *borgerligt samhälle* was translated *kansallinen l. kansa-kunnallinen yhteys l. yhteisö*. In his translation of a juridical handbook (Palmén 1863), Elias Lönnrot translated *borgerligt samhälle* into *kansakunta*. His terms for *samhälle* were *yhteisö* and *yhteis-elämä*, while *yhteiskunta* appeared as a translation of *kommun* (commune, municipality). *Det borgerliga sällskapet* in the Swedish Law of 1734 was in 1865 translated *yhteinen kansakunnallinen elämä* (Ruotsin Waltakunnan Laki), instead of *yhteinen maailmallinen canssakäyminen* in the previous Finnish translation of 1759.
  - 5 This Finnish term appeared in 1883 in a dictionary as the translation of *medborgerligt samhälle* (Ahlman 1883). The philosophical works in which Snellman presented this conceptual distinction were only later translated into Finnish.
  - 6 There had been cases in which it had been difficult to translate ‘social’ in any way other than *sosia(a)linen*, e.g. in the compound words for ‘social democracy’ (*sosialidemokratia*) and ‘the Ministry of Social Affairs’ (*sosialiministeriö*). Even some authors on ‘social question’ chose to use *sosia(a)linen* (e.g. Rosenqvist 1923). However, *yhteiskunnallinen* was preferred to *sosialinen*, e.g. as the attribute for the local educational activities of the university students among the working class people (e.g. K.E.P.H. 1920a, 1920b, 1924). As the Finnish word for ‘social ethics’, *yhteiskunnallinen siveysoppi* (Pietilä 1925) was, probably, much more popular than *sosia(a)lietiikka* (Rosenqvist 1923).
  - 7 Nevertheless, Kuusi’s book was published in the series *Kansantaloudellinen käsikirjasto* (National Economic Handbooks Library). Ernst Nevanlinna, in turn, entitled his presentation of national economy, published in 1932 in the same series, as *Yhteiskunnallisen talouselämän pääpiirteet* (Main Outlines of Social Economic Life). At that time, Nevanlinna’s terminology already tended to be outdated. At first sight, a reader might have thought that this conservative scholar was describing principles of socialist economic system or advocating a “planned economy”.
  - 8 At least in part, this was also the meaning of ‘social’ in the slogan of “social market economy” which the German Christian Democrats, on the basis of the critique of planned economy ideas, developed in the 1950s; the slogan that was soon adopted in the party programme of the

Finnish conservative party, the National Coalition Party (*sosiaalinen markkinatalous*).

9 In his doctoral thesis on the working class community in Helsinki, Heikki Waris (1932, 1934) used the term *työläisyhteiskunta* for this community. At the time when *Yhteiskuntatieteiden käsikirja* was published (1963-1964), this would probably no longer been the appropriate term; it would instead have been *työläisyhteisö*.

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