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## НАУЧНАЯ ЖИЗНЬ

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«ЖИЗНЬ ИССЛЕДОВАНИЯ ПОСЛЕ ИССЛЕДОВАНИЯ:  
КАК СДЕЛАТЬ РЕЗУЛЬТАТЫ ПОНЯТНЫМИ И ПОЛЕЗНЫМИ»

**Markku Kangaspuro**  
**WHERE DO THE SOCIETAL DEMAND AND THE ACADEMIC SUPPLY  
OF KNOWLEDGE MEET?**

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Societal trust and cohesion are significant preconditions for fruitful interaction between academic research and the societal demand for knowledge produced by the academic community and experts. Societal trust is connected to the temporal dimension of community development, to the trust that decisions are based on the correct knowledge, and that the best knowledge for directing societal development is produced in the institutions established for that purpose: research and expert institutes, expert committees, universities, think tanks, etc.

This logic is framed by a worldview that rests upon the ideas of the Enlightenment. It relies on the belief that history is a tale of continuous progress and that it will continue to be so. The assumption is that economic growth and human progress will result from science, the conquest of nature and the creation of great natural wealth. This narration, and consequently the dominant “rational, knowledge-based world view,” was challenged during World War I and World War II and also during the fall of the Soviet Union, when Francis Fukuyama wrote his famous *The End of History and the Last Man* (1992). The great narrations of modernisation and the linear progress of the society were challenged, and trust in rationality, science and the prevailing institutions faltered.

Consequently, expectations of future development are often a more important determinant of trust than the actual situation in which people live. Rose, Mishler and Munro have concluded that there is direct causality between distrust in beliefs

about economic growth and societal trust in the regime. They point out that the key factor is the extent to which people consider that the current and future economy affects their living conditions: 'For each one point change in the evaluation of the economy, political support is likely to go up or down by just less than half a point' (Rose et al., 2011: 151).

Thereby people's distrust in the future (and the regime) also has direct consequences on the extent of trust in the institutions that produce and deliver knowledge for societal purposes. This concerns not only policy-related knowledge producers but the whole mainstream field of institutions, including universities, research institutes, the media etc.

There is clear causality between the extent of societal distrust and the extent to which "alternative beliefs" such as conspiracy theories are spread. According to a recent survey, around 90 per cent of the Finnish population has lost trust in the news (sometimes for good reason), and parallel to this development, rumours, urban myths, and all kinds of conspiracy theories have gained strength. This feature is also well known in the United States, where in 2006, more than one third of the population believed that the 9/11 terrorist attack happened with the assistance of federal officials (or at least they took no action to stop it). At the same time, global problems foreground a growing demand for alternative conclusions and solutions based on relevant knowledge production.