

Risto Alapuro

* 28.4.1944 † 6.12.2022



Professor Emeritus Risto Alapuro died on 6 December 2022, at the age of 78. He had a remarkable career of over 50 years as a researcher, teacher, and professor. Alapuro was one of Finland's best-known sociologists and a pioneer of historical, political, and comparative sociology.

Alapuro presented his PhD thesis in 1973 at the University of Helsinki. He was appointed Professor of Sociology first at the University of Jyväskylä in 1986 and later at the University of Helsinki in 1991. He was an Academy Professor from 2005 to 2009 and retired in 2010.

From the very beginning, Alapuro was internationally oriented. He received a post-doc scholarship to the University of Michigan, where he worked in 1973–1974. He was a researcher at the École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales (School of Advanced Studies in the Social Sciences) in Paris in 1980–1981, a visiting professor of Finnish history and culture at the University of Paris (III) in 1985–1987, and again in 1999–2000. He was also a visiting researcher in Moscow and Leningrad in 1990–1991.

Alapuro's doctoral dissertation, *Akateeminen Karjala-seura: ylioppilasliike ja kansa 1920- ja 1930-luvulla* ("Academic

Karelia Society: Student Movement and the People in the 1920s and 1930s"), is an in-depth analysis of the ideology, actions and memberships of this extreme right-wing political movement. From the 1970s to the early 1990s he participated in the writing of basic textbooks on the history of Finnish sociology and Finnish society and on the development of Finnish popular movements and the rise of civil society. Later, he continued to work with the rise of civil society in the Nordic countries and developments in Russia.

Alapuro's book, *State and Revolution in Finland*, was published in the United States in 1988. It provided a sociological and comparative account of developments in Finland from the 19th century to the attempted revolution in 1917–1918, inspired by great names in historical sociology, Charles Tilly, Barrington Moore Jr., and Immanuel Wallerstein. This book made Alapuro an internationally known representative of historical and comparative sociology.

Besides historical macrosociology, Alapuro was also interested in microhistory and in social networks. In his 1994 book, *Suomen synty paikallisena ilmiönä 1890–1933* ("The Emergence of Finland as a Local

Phenomenon 1890–1933”), Alapuro analysed the social structure of one local community, the reactions of various local groups towards economic and social changes, and their activities in the Civil War and in the making of an independent Finland.

Alapuro also participated in an extensive European research project led by French micro-historian Maurizio Gribaudi, introducing the study of professional networks to Finnish sociology. Alapuro and his group studied the networks of various occupational groups in several countries.

Russia was one of Alapuro’s research interests. He published several articles on the problems of Russian society and, together with Oleg Kharkhordin, edited the book *Political Theory and Community Building in Post-Soviet Russia* in 2011. In 2021 he published a book based on his authentic diaries written during his visit to Moscow and Leningrad in the turbulent years of 1990–1991. With his Estonian colleagues, Alapuro studied the civil society in post-communist Estonia from a microsociological perspective.

At the turn of the 2000s, Alapuro’s research shifted back to macro-level processes and developments of civil societies. As an Academy Professor, he established a new research group, coordinated Nordic cooperation, and opened new avenues for research cooperation with French scholars. Among other things, these projects pro-

duced the book *Nordic Associations in a European Perspective: European Civil Society* (2010), edited with Henrik Stenius, and two doctoral dissertations by the members of his research group, building on Alapuro’s research programme on the prerequisites of civil society and democracy. Collaboration with the French sociologist Laurent Thévenot, a key figure in French pragmatism, paved the way for even more new openings in Finnish political sociology.

Alapuro served as editor-in-chief of the Finnish journal *Sosiologia* in 1979–1980. He was a board member of the Kone Foundation in 1995–2014. He became a member of the Finnish Historical Society in 1980, *Academia Europaea* in 1998, and the Finnish Academy of Science and Letters in 1993.

Alapuro’s passionate hobby was basketball. He played for a long time in the basketball club Helsingin Jyry, and later in the Finnish national team for players aged 70 and over. He was also a movie enthusiast, and literature and music were also important to him. He enjoyed long evenings in good company and loved Paris, which over the years became his second hometown.

As a teacher, tutor, and friend, Risto was helpful, intelligent, versatile, discreet, and friendly. He will be missed by his life partner Dominique Pelou, sons Aappo Kähönen and Mikko Alapuro, and many colleagues and friends.

*Matti Alestalo, Eeva Luhtakallio
and Hannu Uusitalo*