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**FOCUS AND FUNCTIONS OF PUBLIC SUPPORT
FOR ARTISTS IN FINLAND**

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Research and Information Unit
1993*

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This paper was presented at the 19th Annual Conference on Social Theory, Politics and the Arts,
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1. *BACKGROUND: THE RESEARCH PROJECT ON THE STATUS OF ARTISTS*

The paper is based on the information gathered within a project on the social and economic status of artists in Finland, which has been carried out by the Research Unit of the Arts Council of Finland. The project was started at the mid 80's, and it covers following groups of artists:

Fiction writers

Plastic artists (painters, sculptors and graphic artists)

Photographic artists

Graphic designers

Musicians and composers (composers, conductors, opera singers, orchestra musicians, jazz musicians, rock musicians and entertainment musicians)

Theatre artists (actors, directors, state designers, dramaturges, costume designers, light and sound designers, theatre managers)

Dancers and choreographers (including dance teachers)

The aim of the project has been to map out the number and background of Finnish artists, and especially their economic situation, and to evaluate the impact of the system of artists' support adopted at the end of the 60's. Special emphasis has been given to the position of women, young artists and artists representing new art fields. It has been possible to compare the results of the project with a series of studies on the economic situation of artists launched during the 70's by the Arts Council.

Because it was considered of major importance to obtain reliable information on the income and grants received by artists, the alternative of a survey was ruled out. The usability of a survey was questioned especially because the Finns tend to consider questions about personal income very intimate. Another reason was that information on grants was wanted not only for one year, but also for a period of ten to fifteen years.

Instead of a survey the data on incomes was gathered from the register of the National Board of Taxation, and data on grants directly from different sources of support. Although the data provided by the tax register was awkward to use in some respects, and gathering data on grants rather time-consuming, what was gained was accuracy and reliability. These data sets were then supplemented as far as possible with information gathered from different artists' registers on e.g. the social background and education of artists.

One of the most difficult and interesting problems in the research project has been the definition of art and an artist. In a study like this the problem must be solved at a practical level already when selecting the research population. The theoretical background to the solution has rested on the assumption that art and artist are defined through social processes. The agents participating in the definition vary both historically and societally, and also between various art worlds. Even within the same art world these agents and the adopted criteria of definition can differ in different contexts. Art worlds typically devote considerable attention to the definition of art and an artist. The borders of the art

world as well as the right to be called an artist are objects of constant struggle in each art field (see e.g. Becker 1982, Bourdieu 1985).

Among the institutions participating in the definition of an artist there can be e.g. art schools, artists' organizations, and institutions which decide on publishing works or supporting artists financially. The state is always one of them at least indirectly, because of its legislative function. Legislation affects the conditions under which works of art can be produced and distributed. The state's influence is more direct when it exercises censorship or supports art.

On the empirical level there are numerous options for definition criteria. When defining the research populations within the project, the criteria have varied in different areas of art depending on the structure of the respective fields. Also within each field, several different selection criteria have been used. The various definitions of an artist implied in the criteria have also served as a method for obtaining information on the structure and practices of art worlds. These definitions have overlapping and reciprocal relations with each other. For example the relations of different groups with the arts administration are partly determined through the institutions and professional practices of the respective field, and on the other hand the policies of the arts administration have an effect on the position of these groups in their field.

The presentation below does not attempt to give an overall picture of the results of the project, especially while some of the reports have not yet been published. The aim is to describe and discuss in a preliminary way some of the findings concerning the role of direct public support for artists. Examples are taken from art fields representing different kinds of structures and dynamics.

2. *THE AIMS AND MEASURES OF PUBLIC SUPPORT FOR ARTISTS*

The present Finnish system of public support for artists was formulated during the 1960's, and it came into force simultaneously with the formation of the present administrative structure of arts councils at the end of the 60's. The major financial measure of direct support for artists is the system of artist grants. The distribution of these grants has remained the principal task of the National Arts Councils in terms of independent decision making.

The National Arts Councils are thus a central organization in the system of public support for arts and, in particular, to artists. This system comprises nine National Arts Councils and their joint body, the Arts Council of Finland. These national councils each represent a specific field of art. When the system was set up in 1968, they numbered seven, and currently there are nine councils. In 1977, the National Council for Camera Art was divided into councils for photography and cinema, and in 1983 dance was separated from theatre. Today there are nine national art councils: National Council for Architecture, Cinema, Crafts and Design, Dance, Drama, Literature, Music, Photography, and Visual Arts. Each council has its own statutorily stipulated quota of grants.

The members of the National Art Councils are appointed for a period of three years. According to the law, they have to be elected among candidates proposed by the prominent organizations and institutions in respective art fields. Consequently, they are not elected as private individuals, but as representatives of certain organizations and institutions. The majority of members are artists. In this sense the artists themselves implement public art policies through their organizations. This emphasizes the central position held by artists' organizations in the art fields, and contributes to their further reinforcement. The definitions of an artist applied by these organizations are therefore decisive also in the decision-making of public arts administration.

The general principles behind the policy formulation can be described with the terms used by DiMaggio and Useem (1978). According to them, at the core of conflicting issues of art policy there are two fundamentally different images of what art should be. Implicit in one conception is a focus on excellence. This implies strong boundaries between performer and audience, professional and amateur, high versus popular forms of art. Art policies guided by the concept of excellence strive to support mainly traditionally defined high art of high professional standard. Implicit in the other conception is a focus on participation; a notion of art as something belonging to everybody's sphere of experience, and avoidance of strong boundaries. Art policies in compliance with the concept of participation aim at broadening the audience, and sometimes even the definition of art. (DiMaggio, P. & Useem, M. 1978; see also Mulcahy, K. 1985; Banfield, E. 1984.)

According to the Government ad hoc committee preceding the 1968 reform of the arts administration, the most crucial factor affecting the standard and influence of art was the independent and free development and artistic expression of an artist's personality. Accordingly, the most important task of public policies promoting the arts was to create as favourable conditions as possible for the artists in this respect. For the committee the social function of art was to be art. The social value of the arts was thus not defined in terms of indirect promotion of other societal policy objectives like e.g. democratic participation or economic vitality. The definition of "art" was not referred to as a problem. Implicitly art was defined in terms of traditional high culture, which can be considered as the prevailing interpretation of the 60's in Finland. The committee also stressed the importance of promoting art of high professional standard.

When the system of National Arts Councils and artist grants was established, the principle of excellence was unambiguously the driving force behind it. Art policies strived to support mainly traditionally defined high art of high professional standard. On the other hand, the role of the Regional Arts Councils, established at the same time, can be seen to relate to the principle of participation in the sense of democratization of culture, and more specifically, to the geographical diffusion of art. These regional councils are financed by the central authorities, and the financial resources at their disposal are relatively modest. The principle of participation was further introduced in the Finnish arts administration in the 1970s, when it became the principle guiding especially municipal cultural policy.

The major Government ad hoc commission dealing with cultural policies in the 70's (1974) defined its scope in terms of the wider concept of "culture" and saw cultural policies as a part of the general policies formulated by the society. The commission emphasized the democratization of culture and art especially in the meaning of widening audiences but to some extent also cultural democracy¹ in the meaning of widening the concept of art. The legislation following the report of this commission dealt with the cultural activity of municipalities. When it came to direct support for the professional artists, there were no legislative changes to the prevailing situation. In the division of labour between the national arts administration and the municipalities, supporting professional artists remained primarily the task of central authorities, i.e. the National Arts Councils and the Arts Council of Finland. The Regional Art Councils were left in charge of promoting art at the regional level.

The general objectives of artist policy were reflected in the legislative measures concerning public support for artists. Support for artists was defined in the Act and Statute on Artist Professorships and Artist Grants (1969). The Statute defines the quotas of grants between different fields of art, and states that different fields of art must be represented as far as possible among the artist professors. In addition, language and regional aspects are to be taken into consideration in the distribution of grants. According to the Act, project grants as well as three and five year grants must be awarded primarily "to artists who have already proved their creative capability", and 15-year grants "to full-time artists accomplished in their field, whose artistic activity is not carried out as permanent employees". The holder of an artist professorship must be "an especially outstanding artist".

Artist grants distributed at the national level are thus meant to the best and most accomplished professional artists. They are distributed to artists representing different art forms according to quotas defined in legislation and following the division of National Arts Councils. The support granted by National Art Councils thus presupposes that the recipient can be defined as an artist in the sense of both classification and evaluation.

The aspect of economic support comes into consideration with the term "full-time artists", which is stated by the legislation as a precondition for 15-year grants. In practice, this means that the receivers of these grants are not allowed to have permanent full-time jobs. The arts administration applies the same type of conditions also to short-term grants, with some variation between different arts councils. The economic aspect – grants as economic support – was also considered when the quotas between different art fields were defined. The greatest relative share of grants, and especially the grants for more than one year, were directed to artists representing free creative arts like authors, painters and sculptors, and composers, i.e. artists having no employment status as artists.

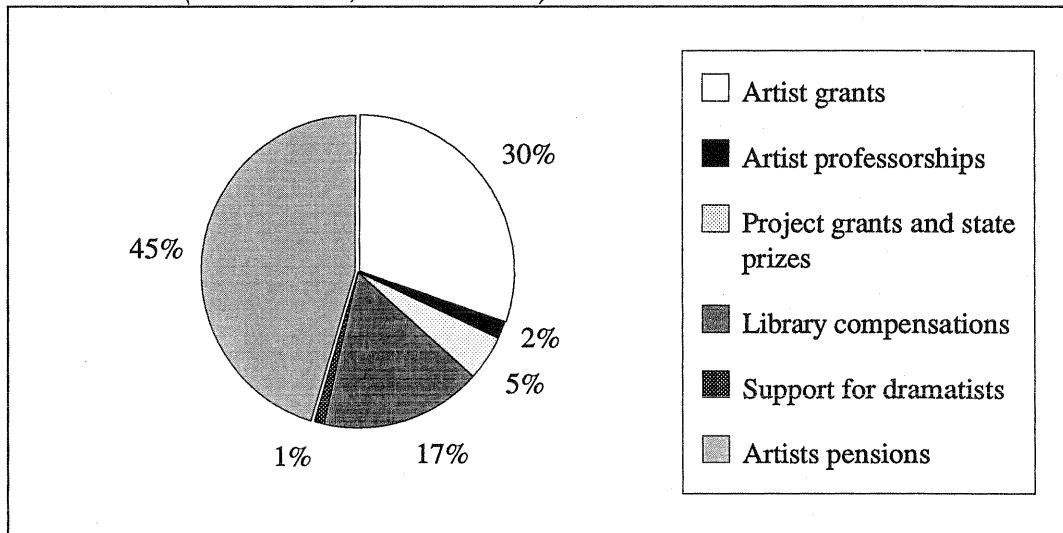
The system of state grants to artists and artists professorships is complemented by a system of project grants to artists. In addition there is a system of library compensations or grants awarded to writers and translators, an artists' supplementary pension system, a system of state prizes to artists as well as travel grants, project grants for the field of childrens culture and support for

¹Of the concepts see e.g. Moeckli 1981: 91-93.

dramatists. A more detailed description of the different forms of direct public support for artists is given in appendix.

Figure 1 presents the relative proportion of each support scheme in monetary terms. The pensions share is about one half of the total sum. The system of artists grants is the most important form of support for active artists. The relative volume of library grants, granted exclusively to writers and translators, is remarkably large. This reflects the central position held by literature in cultural policy, pertaining to the role of literature and language in the safeguarding of national identity, one of the foremost aims of national cultural policy.

FIGURE 1. The direct support for artists from public authorities at the national level in 1991 (Total = 101,9 million FIM)



Figures 2–4 show how the grants to artists have been focused according to different art forms. The "free creative arts", i.e. literature and fine arts, but also music, have received the lions share. The "new" areas, in terms of the development of arts administration, especially dance and photography, have remained marginal. The remarkable share of "others" in the case of project grants is worth mentioning as well. Project grants are one of the few support categories with no quotas according to art fields. Thus the share of this "homeless" group of artists becomes visible in the statistics. In this case it presents itself as larger share of many of the areas represented by National Arts Councils. It is however difficult to tell the exact size of this group, because the classification has varied over the years.

FIGURE 2. Number of one-, three- and five-year artist grants distributed annually by art form (total = 175 years)

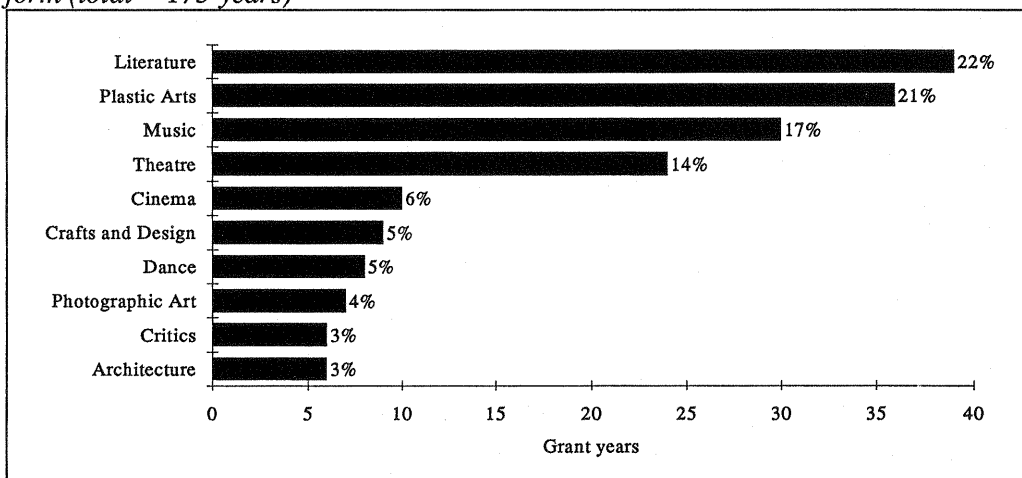
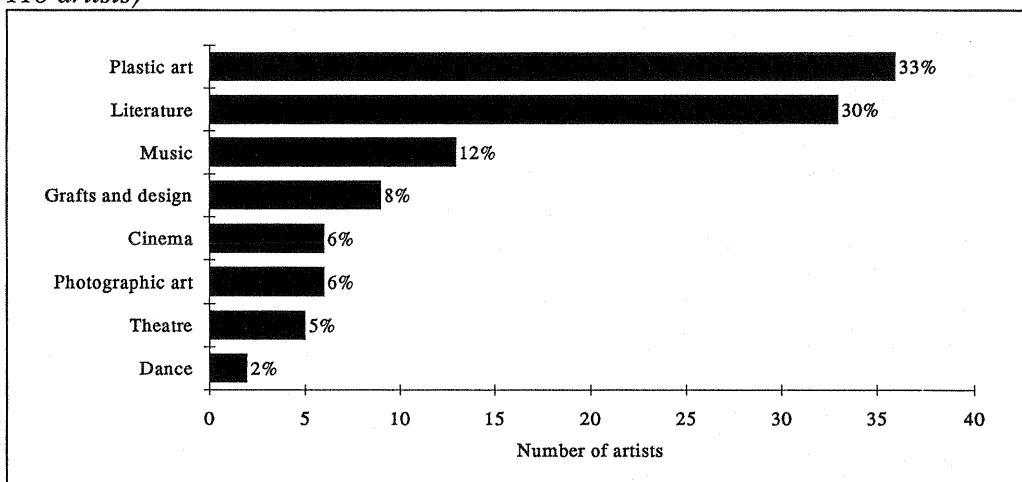
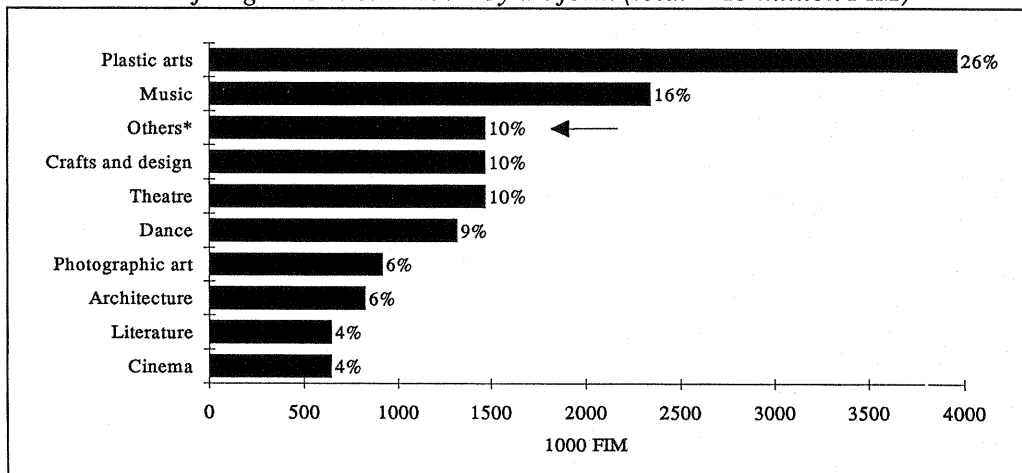


FIGURE 3. Number of artists receiving 15-year grants 1982– 1992 by art form (total = 110 artists)



Source: Karttunen 1991.

FIGURE 4. Project grants 1987– 1991 by art form (total = 15 million FIM)



Source: Karttunen 1991.

*"Others" is the classification used by arts administration for those applications, which cannot be included into the nine art forms which have their own national councils.

3. GRANTS AS ECONOMIC SUPPORT

The number of artists in Finland has been growing considerably since the 70's. This growth presents itself in the census data, in the number of members of professional artists' organisations and also in the comparisons between the present and earlier studies on the status of artists. E.g. according to census data the number of artists grew by 52 percent from 1970 to 1985. One of the reasons for this growth can be found in the development of the system of professional training for artists. Many new vocational art schools have been established and the major art schools have gained university status in the 80's. New professional groups have also entered into the artistic field (e.g. video artists, multimedia artists, light and sound designers etc). In the end of 1980's the number of artists in Finland was about 11.000–15.000 depending on the definition. This was about 0,5 % of the whole work-force.

The project on the status of artists has used following criteria for the definition of artists: professional training, grants received, membership in artists' organizations, published works, inclusion in artists registers and definition by a panel of experts². In principle the term artist has been used in its classifying sense, but some of the selection criteria used, such as grants received, self-evidently describe artists also in an evaluatory sense, i.e., those defined as "good artists". The use of many different criteria very distinctively brought out the effect of different definitions of artist on the results. One must of course bear this in mind also in relation to the figures given below on the economic situation of different artist groups.

On the whole, the average income level of Finnish artists does not deviate strikingly from the average income of the whole work-force with the same level of education. (Table 1.) The earlier studies concerning artists have also indicated that the average income of artists is not so low as has been thought. The reason for this is usually the secondary occupation, not the good wages of the artist occupation (cf. Taylor 1987, p. 77).

However, the corps of artists is not a homogenous entity. The income level of artists differs widely between artist groups and also within them. There are certain groups whose income level is low and whose status is also low within the arts administration or in the market. For example only 3 % of photographic artists and none of dance artists earned in 1989 more than 250.000 FIM a year which is considered a high income. 11 % of musicians had more than 250.000 FIM taxable income. Among musicians the income differences are great. The group with the lowest income level is rock musicians, whereas composers have the highest incomes.

²The research populations included all artists selected according to the criteria in question, with the exception of musicians where a sample was used.

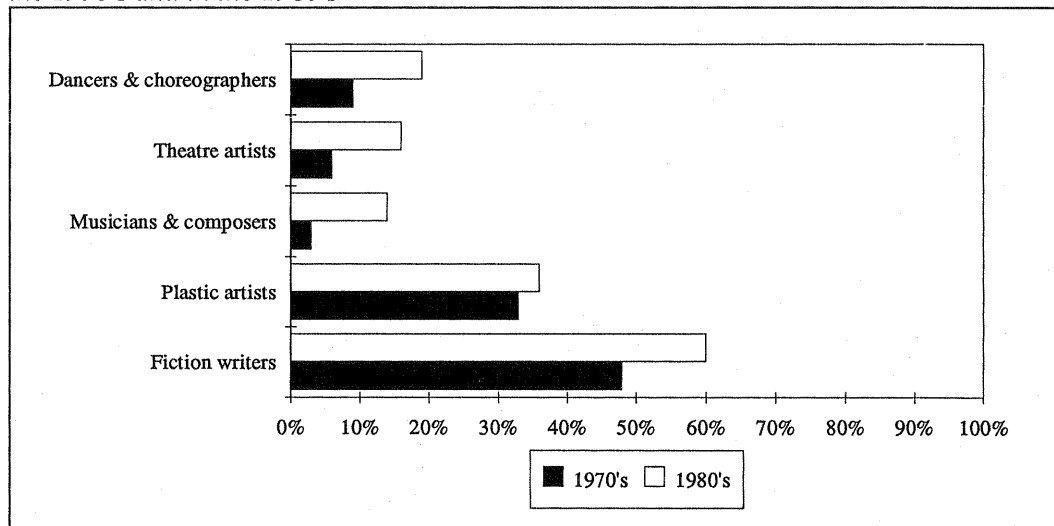
TABLE 1. The average taxable income of Finnish artists in 1989 (excluding tax-free grants) and of the whole work-force

ARTIST GROUP	ALL	MEN	WOMEN
<i>Musicians</i>	149.800	156.100	125.300
<i>Theatre artists</i>	137.800	146.100	126.700
<i>Dance artists</i>	79.900	101.700	74.900
<i>Photographic artists</i>	96.900	104.900	70.800
Whole work-force	90.000	111.000	80.000
Work-force with humanistic or aesthetic education	125.000	148.000	115.000

On the whole, the income differences between artists were greater than among the whole population. In all of the art fields studied female artists earned less than male artists. The greatest difference between men and women was among the photographic artists, where the proportion of womens income from mens income was 72 %. This figure is about the same as the income difference among the whole work-force. One of the conclusions, which has been made also in other studies, is that professional training has not so great an impact on the income level of artists as it has among other wage-earners. What really matters is the experience as an artist (cf. Filer 1986, p. 70; Throsby 1986, pp. 24–25; Wassall & Alper 1992, pp. 195–196).

In spite of the considerable growth of the number of artists, the proportion of those artists who have received grants in a given year has been growing during the last twenty years, too. Figure 5 presents the development of the proportion of grant-receivers among different artist groups.

FIGURE 5. The proportion of artists receiving grants among different artist groups in the 1970's and in the 1980's



The relative importance of different sources of direct support in various fields of art is presented in Table 2. The share of public money of the support received by artists varies from nearly one hundred percent to two thirds. The most important supporters are the central authorities, i.e. the Arts Council of Finland, the National Arts Councils and the Ministry of Education. The Regional Arts Councils, also financed by the central authorities, play a minor role. Of municipalities only the larger cities grant considerable sums to professional artists. The role of private foundations remains distinctively weaker than that of the public authorities. Private sources play, however, a complementary role in the sense that they tend to support young artists and new areas more often than public authorities.

TABLE 2. The proportion of different sources of support from the total sum of grants (FIM) received by artists during one year

ART FORM	State*	Regional Arts Councils	Municipalities	Foundations	Total
	%	%	%	%	%
Literature	88	5	2	5	100
Fine arts	66	17	5	11	100
Theatre	61	6	5	28	100
Music	57	8	3	32	100
Dance	40	10	18	32	100
Photographic art	56	14	2	27	100

* Grants and prizes distributed by the Arts Council, National Arts Councils and the Ministry of Education.

The significance of grants as a source of income varies between different artist groups. With regard to e.g. performing artists (musicians and theatre artists) the share and importance of grants is not so great. In Finland the majority of the performing artists work on a permanent basis like other wage-earners except dancers, whose income is accordingly low compared to other performing artists.

For the group with the lowest net income level (photographic artists) the grants constitute a significant part of artists' net income (Table 3). The proportion of grants from the income of theatre artists, even among grant receivers, is again considerably low. The studies on writers and plastic artists indicate that public support is a necessary condition for full-time artistic work in these groups.

TABLE 3. The average net income of Finnish artists and the proportion of grants as a percentage of net income in 1989

ARTIST GROUP	Whole research population		Artists who have received grants	
	Average net income	Proportion of grants (%)	Average net income	Proportion of grants (%)
Musicians & composers	97.800	4	110.000	26
Theatre artists	92.600	3	116.700	16
Photographic artists	84.200	17	90.600	34
Dancers & choreographers	60.000	6	72.400	24

Net income = taxable income minus taxes + tax-free grants

On the whole, it can be estimated that public support is financially most important to those who work as self-employed (writers, plastic artists and photographic artists). Also for performing artists who work as freelancers grants constitute a more significant part of income than for the permanently engaged. The importance of grants for musicians varies according to occupational status.

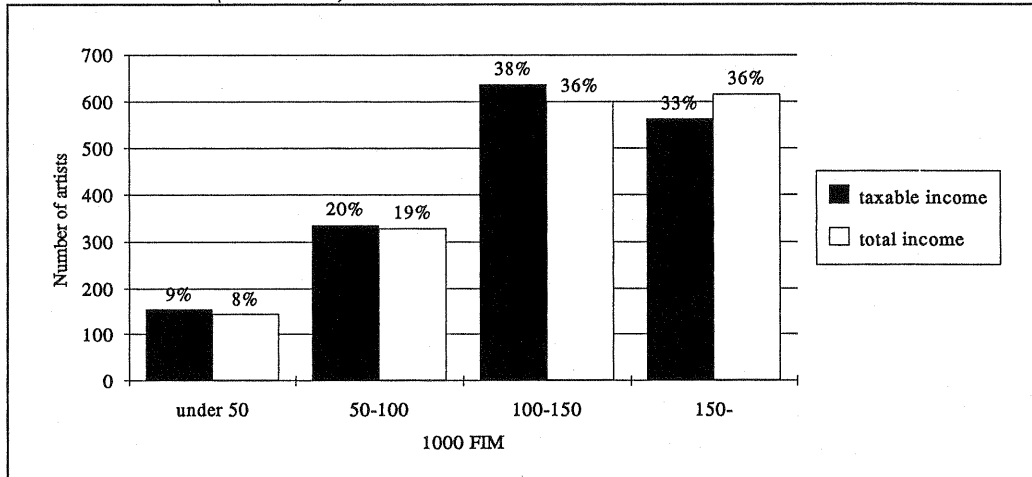
Figures 6–8 show the income level of Finnish artists by income classes before and after adding grants. The research populations are divided to income classes both according to their taxable income and total income, which includes tax-free grants³. The figures show the overall effect of grants on the income structure of artists. With regard to performing artists (musicians and theatre artists) the difference between taxable income and total income is very small, while the difference among photographic artists is remarkable. In the field of performing arts most of the artists are located in average or high income classes, while the situation of photographic artists is vice versa concerning taxable income.

These figures also indicate the correspondence between the modes of employment on one hand and income or effects of grants on the other hand. Most of the theatre artists worked in 1989 on a permanent basis in theatres, and the share of freelancers was about a quarter. The same holds true for (classical) musicians who worked permanently in orchestras. On the other hand photographic artists work mostly as self-employed. The importance of grants depends thus both on the art field in question and on the employment status of the artist.

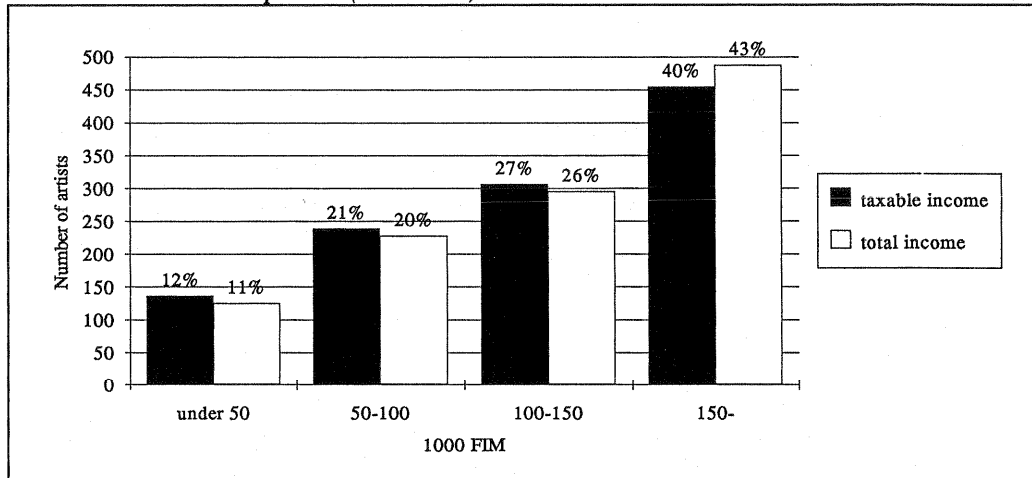
³To make it possible to compare the income of artists with the income of other occupations we have constructed the concept of *total income*. This concept has been constructed on the basis of taxable income and tax-free grants. The concept of total income tells us how much an artist should have earned to achieve the same income level if the tax free grants were normal taxable income.

FIGURES 6.- 8. The distribution of artists by income classes according to taxable income and total income

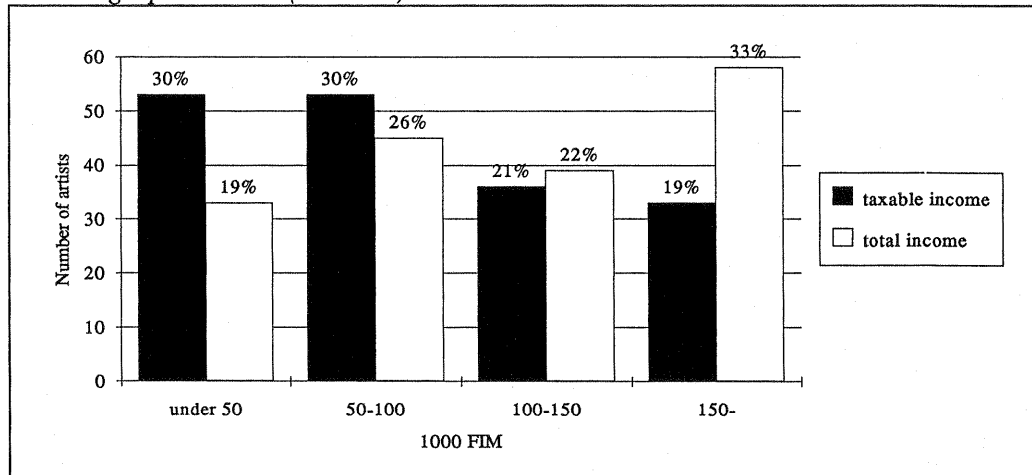
6. Theatre artists (N = 1686)



7. Musicians and composers (n = 1134)



8. Photographic artists (N = 175)



4. *DISCUSSION*

In Finland public authorities play an important role as supporters of art. This goes back to the development of the welfare state, and the role of the state pertaining to this concept. The concept and practice of the welfare state have been widely accepted and supported. Unlike in some other countries, there has been hardly any dispute over the principle of direct support for arts and artists as such, until the recently accelerating crises of the welfare state in Finland.

Government's role as a supporter of arts and culture has been strengthened by the fact that Finland as a linguistic area is small. The state has considered it important to support culture and art as components of Finnish national identity. The fact that the commercial market for art is small and that private enterprises have had relatively little interest in supporting art has further increased the role of the state as a supporter of art. In practice this means that public support often determines who can function as an artist in Finland. For example, there are only a few Finnish writers who can be full-time authors without state support. Without public support many of the traditional art fields would cease to exist or at least continue their existence in a very modified way.

It is easy to see that both the guiding principles behind art policies and administrative practices as well as the structure of the administrative organization produce certain ways of defining an artist. The support granted by National Arts Councils presupposes that the recipient can be defined as an artist in the sense of both classification and evaluation. In relation to the arts administration, there are also those fields and groups of artists which can be classified as outsiders, peripheral, marginal, or those that fall between two chairs within the administrative structure.

As the traditional subdivisions of art are becoming more blurred, the number of these areas is increasing. On the other hand, the system of arts councils, each representing a certain art form and its respective institutions and organizations, is characterized by an inbuilt inclination to maintain the existing subdivision of arts. The detailed system of legislative and administrative regulations and quotas has the same effect of preserving the status quo in the relative status of different art fields, and making it difficult to allocate support to new areas. For the arts administration, supporting new areas and innovations is not purely a problem of attitude or policy but of structure as well.

The explicit focus of the support system for artists has been on providing (economic) security for individual artists. As the figures above indicate, the overall economic importance of grants in relation to artists' income is relatively modest. However well-functioning this kind of system is, it is not possible to think of it as the solution to the economic problems of artistic professions. There are numerous other public measures which are or could be much more important in improving the possibilities of surviving and earning a living by artistic work, e.g. social security, taxation policies, copyright system, employment opportunities.

The focus of the public support for artists has been the artist. It aims at improving the (economic) status of artists as such, not as the creative link in the whole chain of production and distribution characteristic to some special field of art, and necessary for the work of art to reach its audience. Within cultural

policies, the measures for supporting the structures of producing and distributing works of art often have or could have a much more profound effect on the economic conditions of individual artists than grants. A good example of this is the wide network of theatres in Finland, which are financed by public money.

The administrative structure and system of support as far as artist grants are concerned is the same for all art fields, but there is wide variation in the relative importance of the support – as well as its absolute amount – between different artist groups. For some areas (e.g. photographic artists or full-time authors) the grants provide an opportunity to give up secondary, non-artistic work in favour of artistic work. In other cases the financial role of the grant is relatively non-relevant, and the importance of the grant is connected to its high prestige value.

The fact that the legislation lays down certain quality criteria for state artist grants has emphasized their role as a means of prizing excellence. Because of this role these grants also have a high prestige value, compared to e.g. artists pension or library grants where such criteria are not defined in the normative regulations. This fact further increases their power as a means of defining "an artist" and more specifically "a good artist".

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DIRECT PUBLIC SUPPORT FOR ARTISTS AT THE NATIONAL LEVEL IN FINLAND⁴

The distribution of *artist grants* is as follows: 112 one-year grants, 41 three-year grants, 22 five-year grants and 10 fifteen-year grants are awarded annually. One-year grants can also be distributed as half-year grants. The artist grants are tax-free. The amount of the grant is 66.672 FIM per year in 1993. The number of artists receiving an artist grant was 483 in 1992. One-, three- and five-year grants have quotas according to art forms. Architecture, cinema, crafts and design, dance, literature (writers and translators), music (composers and performers), photographic art, plastic arts, theatre, and critics each has its own quota of short-term grants defined in the Act on artist grants.

A sum equivalent to 50 artist grants is annually allocated as *project grants* (for materials, equipment, study trips, training courses, gallery and studio rents etc.). In 1992 a sum of 3,33 million FIM was allocated for 217 projects. These grants have no quotas according to art forms, and can be granted to individual artists or working-groups.

The *artist professorships* are granted to outstanding artists and as a rule they can be held for a period of 5 years. In 1992 there were 12 artist professors with a salary of approximately 12.000 FIM per month taxable income. No quotas according to art form, but according to the law different fields of art are to be represented as far as possible.

In 1992 a sum of 729.000 FIM was allocated as *state prizes* for artists. In 1992 200.000 FIM was allocated as travel grants for artists and experts in different art fields in 1992.

Project grants and state prizes for artists working in the field of *children's culture* are awarded to promote artists working in this field. In 1992 570.000 FIM was awarded to 40 projects and in addition 100.000 FIM was allocated as prizes. No quotas according to art form, can be granted to working groups as well.

Until the beginning of 1993 the sum equivalent to 65 full *supplementary artists pensions* was annually distributed to artists. The full pension was 3.400 FIM per month in 1992 and it is taxable income. In 1991 altogether 900 artists received supplementary pensions. Pensions are granted as honoraries for artistic achievements, but the economic situation of the receiver is taken into consideration when the monthly sum of pension is decided.

⁴ The system of artists' pensions and the system of state prizes have been recently reformed. The changes came into force from the beginning of 1993 and are not described below.

Support for dramatists is allocated to dramatists whose plays had a premier during the previous year. In 1992 some 1,0 million FIM was granted for this purpose.

The so called *library compensations* or grants for writers and translators are not proper compensations. Library compensation is based on the public lending right but is in fact a system of grants with no relation to actual book lendings. The appropriation is annually ten per cent of the amount used for book purchases by public libraries. This sum is distributed as grants to writers and translators of fiction (90 %) and non-fiction (10 %). In 1990 the sum was 17.4 million FIM. Altogether 723 grants were awarded that year to writers and translators. Recently, the appropriation for this purpose has been decreasing (the approximation for the year 1993 was about 14 million FIM).

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