

Pekka Oesch

Läänintaiteilija- järjestelmä 1972–2011

Toiminta ja järjestelmän
vaiheet



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The Finnish system of regional artists 1972–2011

English summary

Background and data

Finland has 13 regional arts councils that function as national expert bodies in the arts. The councils carry out their statutory mission of promoting the arts through a variety of means, including the employment of regional artists. The councils are allowed to employ up to 49 regional artists at a time. The councils employ regional artists in various artistic fields based on their own judgment and needs. The artists perform duties related to the development and planning of arts promotion and their specialist expertise in different artistic fields. The Finnish title of regional artists, *läänintaiteilija* (literally, provincial artist), dates back to the period when Finnish regional administration was structured around 11 provinces, each with its own arts council. A provincial reorganisation in 1998 involved the renaming of arts councils and the establishment of two new regional arts councils. Provinces as regional structures were finally abolished in 2010.

The year 2012 marks the 40th anniversary of the establishment of the regional artist system in Finland. However, to date, the system has been little investigated. The Arts Council of Finland has conducted the only statistical survey, focusing on the number of person-years worked by regional artists as distributed by gender, artistic field and region across the decades up until 2004 (Jämsén 2004).

The present study charts the early stages of the system and its subsequent development from 1972 onwards as well as related financial issues using data from the 2000s. Regional artists have also been surveyed through a questionnaire about their work experiences and views of the system and its development. Similarly to the previous research, the current study examines the person-years of regional art-

ists as distributed by gender, artistic field and region across various periods up until the end of 2011.

Key historical data for this study were the annual plans and reports of regional artists since 1972. Also documents extracted from the budgets of regional arts councils from 1968 to 1982 as well as documents of the Central Arts Council from 1968 onwards were consulted. The professional experiences and views of regional artists were collected through a questionnaire directed to former and present regional artists. Between 1972 and 2011, a total of 385 persons have been working as regional artists at the time of the survey. The overall survey response rate was 56%, with almost identical numbers of men and women responding. The responses corresponded closely to those of the survey population (Table 1).

Table 1. Survey population, loss and response rates by gender

	Men	Wo-	To-	Men	Wo-	Total	Men	Women	Total
	n	n	n	Loss rate %	Loss rate %	Loss rate %	Res- ponse rate %	Res- ponse rate %	Res- ponse rate %
Former regional artists	140	144	284	44.3	47.9	46.1	55.7	52.1	53.9
Current regional artists (2011)	12	23	35	25.0	30.4	28.6	75.0	69.6	71.4
Total	152	167	319	42.8	45.5	44.2	57.2	54.5	55.8

History

The rationale for establishing the system of regional artists stemmed from the ideas of the 1960s and 1970s concerning the democratisation and accessibility of culture and the arts as well as the employment of artists. The system was initially seen as a means of supplementing the system of public grants for artists with a regional system as well as reducing the predominance of Helsinki in the allocation of financial resources. The objective was to appoint qualified staff trained in the arts to positions related to supervising, organising and generating new ideas within the regional arts administration. The establishment of the system was probably also motivated by regional policy as well

as to some extent by various educational ideas of steering the public towards “real” art. An experimental period of the system soon demonstrated a need for the services provided by regional artists as supervisors, trainers, generators of ideas, organisers and implementers regardless of their artistic field, although, at the outset, arts councils, regional artists and their intended audience did not always share the same expectations and aspirations.

The emergence of the system also reflects the period’s belief in continuous economic growth and welfare, which translated in arts policy into a sense of optimism about the future and the related rapid increase in resources for arts administration. In Finland, arts administration was reorganised through the establishment of the Arts Council of Finland and 7 (later 9) national arts councils under the 1968 Promotion of the Arts Act. What is more, regional arts councils were established in Finnish provinces to support regional arts activities. The regional councils’ resources increased considerably in the early 1970s, even more than the appropriations of the national arts councils for arts promotion. However, at the time of its establishment in late 1971 and early 1972, the regional artist system was seen as only a starting point for consolidating the activities of regional theatres and orchestras, employing more staff in arts administration and, most importantly, introducing a pay scheme (“artist salary”) for artists, a project that never got off the ground.

There have been three periods in the system of regional artists. First, from 1972 to end of 1983, there was the experimental period of the system. From 1 January 1984, the Ministry of Education established positions for guiding regional artists. Until 1984, regional artists had their own period of creative work, but with this reform it was abolished. Because of the reorganisation of Finnish administrative districts in 1997, two new Regional Arts Councils were founded. Ever since 1 January 1998, the title of “guiding regional artists” changed back to “regional artists”.

The first regional artists began working in early 1972, and the experiment soon expanded to encompass other provinces. As early as 1974, the arts councils of all 11 Finnish provinces employed one or two regional artists in their respective regions. The early 1970s were a busy time for planning cultural activities and arts administration. Several committee reports and plans were prepared, and political groups began to take a keen interest in arts and cultural policy. The first minister of culture was appointed in 1970.

Although formally employed by regional arts councils, regional artists were also municipal employees. until the end of 1983. The system was financed, using a self-funding model in which the government usually paid for 50–70% of the regional artist’s salary, while the host municipality contributed towards the rest.

As the duties of regional artists were loosely defined, the appointed artists had to develop their own job descriptions. In 1974 the Ministry of Education issued guidelines for engagement of regional artists on the basis of not only artistic qualifications, but also pedagogical and organisational skills as well as knowledge of the arts sector of the region. The actual content of the work was described only by stating that it included guiding activities, in addition to which the artists were entitled to concentrate solely on their creative work during a few months' period. Employment contracts were often used to define the artists' duties in more detail.

The experimental period was first extended until the end of 1978 and then annually until the system was finally established for good in 1984. Municipalities were exempted from contributing to the costs of the system. Moreover, regional artists lost the right to concentrate on their artistic work during a few months' period. In addition, regional arts councils were granted the right to employ at most three regional artists, one more than before. The duration of the appointment was defined more broadly as two to five years, and the title of regional artist was changed to "guiding regional artist". However, the only appointment criterion was a professional artistic qualification.

The system of regional artists was gradually institutionalised over the 1980s. Although both regional administration and arts administration were reorganised in various ways, none of the changes had direct consequences on the status and activities of guiding regional artists.

Since 1968, regional arts councils had operated within their regions independently, but under the auspices of the Ministry of Education. In 1988 the staff and offices of the councils were relocated to provincial state offices within the Ministry of the Interior and, in the following year, the accounting and payment transactions of the councils were also transferred to the fiscal department in provincial government. Consequently, the councils as the artists' employers represented government arts administration under the auspices of the Ministry of Education, the artists' immediate superior, the secretary general of each council, belonged to the staff of the provincial state office within the Ministry of the Interior.

At the beginning of the 1990s, the Finnish economy was sliding into a deep recession, which turned out to be the worst economic downturn of the post-war era. To balance the central government finances, funding for the arts and culture was considerably cut. The expenditure cuts also affected the appropriations for regional arts promotion, which were derived from lottery proceeds and included the salaries of regional artists. The need to reduce salary costs in the public sector led to the abolishment of two positions from the maximum number of regional artists in the budgets for 1992–1993.

Similarly to the previous decade, both regional administration and arts administration were reviewed in the 1990s in various assessments and reports. However, regional arts councils usually fell outside the scope of national and regional policy planning and development, and their activities remained largely the same in administrative terms. The connection to regional policy was evident only in the administrative link with provincial administration. Proposals were put forward on several occasions to retransfer the staff of regional arts councils to the administrative sector of the Ministry of Education and to simplify arts administration. Initial preparations began in the early 1990s, but it was not until 2008 that a legislative amendment was passed, resulting in the relocation of regional councils from provincial state offices to the Arts Council of Finland.

In 1994 the Ministry of Education adopted a system of management by results. The funding of regional arts councils and the guiding regional artists employed by arts councils were also included within the scope of this new system. The objective of performance guidance was to assess operational performance, most specifically productivity, cost-effectiveness and impact. To be effectively implemented, the system of performance guidance would have required that appropriations and staff fall under the scope of the same managing authorities, but at the time the Ministry of Education had no administrative decision-making power over the human resources of regional arts councils. Thus, the system of management by results could not be adapted in the regional according to objectives but ostensibly. Furthermore, the councils felt that the system of performance guidance failed to contribute anything new to their operations and that they could have continued to function largely as before even without the new administrative system. Moreover, the administrative disjointness of the arts councils hindered consistent development.

Several key strategy programmes on cultural policy highlighted the importance of clarifying the administrative status of regional arts councils. The programmes also encouraged paying more and better attention to the development of content issues. The system of regional artists was not touched in these programmes but by mentions of their being a major resource for regional arts councils in promoting the arts.

The overhaul of regional administration in 1997 also affected regional arts administration. At the same time, the Promotion of the Arts Act and the related Decree were amended. The purpose was to develop the regional system of arts promotion within the new five-province regional organisation. The mandates of regional arts councils were to be based on the mandates of one or more provincial federations within the new provinces. The previous 11 regional arts councils were supplemented by establishing councils for the Pirkanmaa and Satakunta

regions. The Finnish name of the councils was also changed (from provincial to regional) and the title of regional artists was renamed from guiding regional artists back to regional artists. At the beginning of 1998, a total of 13 regional arts councils became operational.

The Arts Council of Finland set up an ad hoc committee in 1997 to explore current circumstances, prepare a proposal for developing the system and review the guidelines for the establishment of regional artist positions and the terms of their employment. The committee proposed e.g., that decision-making should be situated as close as possible to actual operations. Artists' interest in the system should be supported by raising the salaries of regional artists, allocating sufficient resources and project appropriations for the operations and reinstating the period in which the artists could focus on their creative work. However, each council would be allowed to decide on the creative work period before the beginning of employment and in conjunction with annual performance negotiations.

In the mid-1990s, regional arts councils had also begun hiring regional artists under the title of producer to organise and implement various projects. Thus, the system originally intended to develop and secure the livelihood and regional work opportunities of artists also came to include persons educated more generally in the cultural sector. The producer/regional artists were not necessarily expected to hold a professional artistic qualification. As a case in point, the above mentioned ad hoc committee published a memorandum in which regional artists were defined as "specialists in their field", whereas previously they had been referred to "specialists in their artistic field".

For their part, regional artists continued to emphasise the artistic nature of their position. For example, a statement prepared at the 2007 seminar for regional artists declared that "regional artists must represent the highest level of qualification in their artistic field." In 2009 the Arts Council of Finland also re-raised the issue of taking an artist-focused approach to hiring regional artists. According to the Council, the intellectual climate and expertise contributed by artists as well as their competence in promoting the arts must be supported despite the changed job description. Regional artists were also deemed important in strengthening the role of regional arts councils in regional development, as the artists implement many of the councils' pilot projects and engage in practical collaboration with various organisations, individual artists and the representatives of municipal cultural services.

To harmonise the terms of employment of regional artists and clarify related contractual practices, general recommendations were issued in early 2011 concerning working hours, job supervision, annual leave, occupational health services, labour protection, the termination of employment as well as project funding, travel and other issues. Regional arts councils can still define the job description of

regional artists as necessary. Generally, regional artists perform duties related to the development and planning of arts promotion as well as the provision of specialist expertise in their artistic field(s). The recommendations state that regional artists must have applicable training in the arts and cultural sector as well as work experience. Regional arts councils determine the artists' salary, but it should be at least EUR 2,600 per month.

The Ministry of Education and Culture (as it has been known since 2010) commissioned a report in 2010 on municipal policies and actions concerning cultural services. According to the report, the only issue that needs addressing in the regional artist system is the continuity of the projects. The system was otherwise considered as highly effective and only needs further strengthening.

In February 2012, the Ministry of Education and Culture published a draft act on the transformation of the Arts Council of Finland into the Arts Promotion Centre which would operate as a government agency steered by the Ministry. Regional arts councils would become regional units more closely steered by the Arts Promotion Centre. The national and regional artistic and cultural development duties proposed for the agency would be performed by arts coordinators, which would require specifying the current job description of regional artists. However, the final legislative proposal took into account the feedback received during a round of consultations on the draft act. The title of regional artist will continue to be used, and the artists' basic duties or job description will not change. Likewise, the number and duties of regional arts councils will remain the same. The Act on the Arts Promotion Centre is expected to enter into force at the beginning of 2013.

Costs of the system of regional artists

Key requirements for achieving the objectives set for arts promotion include sufficient financial and human resources. The salary and other costs of regional artists have been covered with the annual appropriation provided to regional arts councils for promoting the arts. The appropriation is also used to pay for the arts councils' other grants, subsidies and awards, while the councils' operational and administrative expenses have been covered with budgetary appropriations. In addition, the councils have implemented EU-funded projects in the 2000s and 2010s.

After the experimental period of the regional artist system was launched in the 1970s, the appropriation for arts promotion increased rapidly. During the first year (1972), three regional artists worked in three provinces, whereas by the mid-70s, a total of 32 regional artists

worked in 11 provinces. The increase in appropriations was not, however, entirely due to the increased costs of the regional artist system, for the appropriation allocated to regional arts promotion was also used to cover the costs of grants, subsidies and awards provided by regional arts councils.

The nominal growth of the appropriation continued to accelerate substantially after the 1970s (e.g., as a result of the establishment of new regional artist positions), but its real value in 2000 almost equalled the one in 1975. In conjunction with the provincial reorganisation in 1998, new arts councils were established in the Pirkanmaa and Satakunta regions, but the increase in the number of councils did not translate to a similar increase in the amount of the appropriation. The share of funding received by the regional arts councils remained fairly insignificant, as funding within the system of arts councils was mainly channelled to the Arts Council of Finland and the national arts councils. The regional arts councils' share of the lottery revenue also decreased proportionately over the decades.

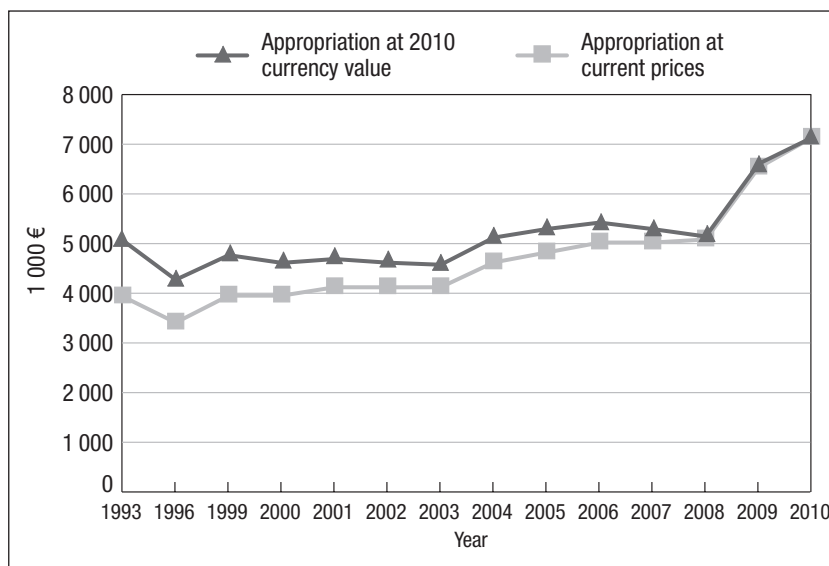
The appropriation for regional arts promotion remained at a fairly steady level for several years at the turn of the millennium. After 2003, the appropriation has somewhat increased each year, but from 2006 to 2008, it remained the same, leading to a six per cent cut in its real value. In 2008 regional arts councils were transferred to the auspices of the Arts Council of Finland, after which the appropriation has increased significantly. At the end of the decade, its real value was close to 60% higher than in 2003. However, the establishment of two new regional arts councils in conjunction with the 1998 provincial reorganisation would have required a considerably higher increase in the amount of the appropriation. Consequently, the higher number of councils led to a decrease in the real value of the average appropriation for arts promotion. (Figure 1)

At the beginning of the experimental period of the regional artist system in 1972, regional artists received a monthly grant of some FIM 1,000, partly paid by the host municipality. The Finnish Central Tax Board decided on 16 March 1972 that this grant constituted taxable wage income. The Ministry of Education then proposed raising the amount to FIM 1,511. In 1983 the pay grade of regional artists was about FIM 4,870/ EUR 819). Their salaries were not revised again until 1990.

Regional arts councils were concerned about salaries lagging behind and the period of creative work being abolished. The councils felt that this reduced interest in regional artist positions, particularly in artistic fields in which professionals earned considerably higher salaries in both the private and public sectors (e.g., architecture). Applicants increasingly came from art education backgrounds and, as a result, the activities of regional artists focused less on the promotion

of professional arts and more on the training and supervision of amateur artists.

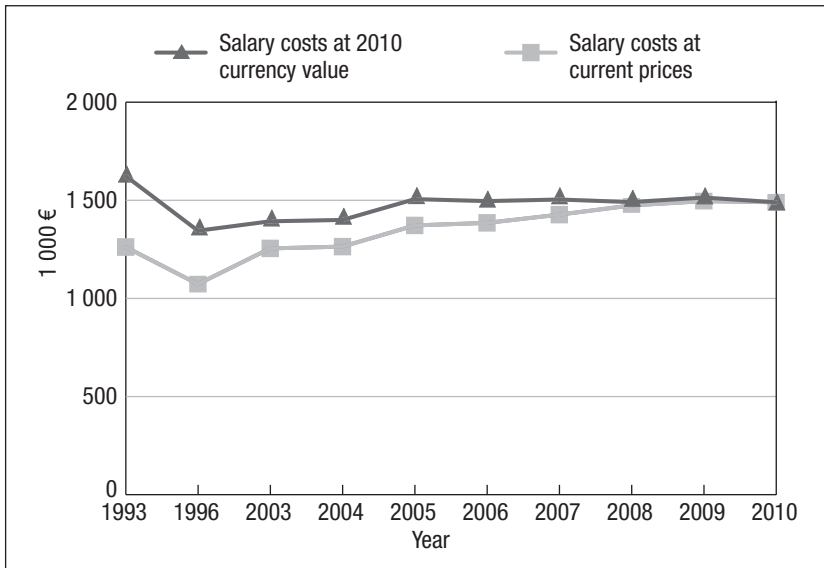
Figure 1. The appropriation for regional arts promotion in 1993, 1996 and 1999–2010 (2010=100)



The artists' pay grade remained the same until 2003 despite proposals from regional artists, regional arts councils and the Arts Council of Finland. In 2003 the central government replaced pay grades with a salary system based on job demands and personal performance. However, as the new system was found ill-suited to the fixed-term employment of regional artists, their basic salary became supplemented with three seniority allowances. Regional arts councils could also more freely determine the salaries of regional artists based on the funds available for arts promotion.

With the introduction of the new salary system, the monthly salary increased to about EUR 2,100. This was a major pay rise, for the basic wage had been EUR 1,604. Meanwhile the basic wage for regional artists had remained almost the same. At the beginning of the millennium, salary costs accounted for about one-third of the appropriation for regional arts promotion, while the share in 2010 was only 25%. At the time, the salaries of regional artists totalled some EUR 1.5 million. Five years earlier, the total sum was the same in real value. While the real growth of salary costs from 2003 to 2010 was about seven per cent, the costs remained steady over the last three years of that period (Figure 2).

Figure 2. Salary costs of regional artists in 1993, 1996 and 2003–2010



When deciding on the amount of the appropriation for regional arts promotion, the annual increase in cost levels has not been automatically taken into account, but rather the arts councils have had to finance the increases through savings in other areas, such as grants, subsidies and project costs. Several proposals for raising the basic wage have been put forward over the decades, both by regional artists and by working groups considering the development of the system.

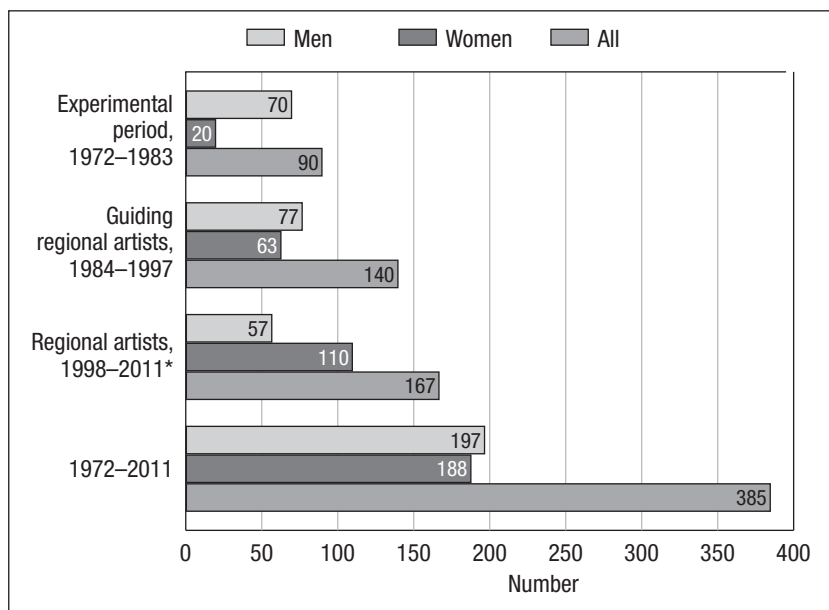
Regional artists have advocated the separation of salary costs from the arts promotion appropriation as well as the adoption of the recommendation on a minimum wage for specialist positions in the arts and cultural sectors. This would mean that everyone receives the same basic wage, and the overall salary would be based on the job demands. After a recommendation on employment policies concerning regional artists was issued in 2011, regional arts councils began paying the artists the proposed EUR 2,600 monthly wage.

Statistics on regional artists

By the end of 2011, a total of 385 persons had worked as regional artists. Similarly to the arts in general, the system of regional artists has become increasingly female-dominated. During the experimental period of the system (1972–1983), most of the artists were men, but by the period of guiding regional artists (1984–1997), almost half were women. Since then, the ratio of women has increased, and only one-third of the artists during the period 1998–2011 were men. Overall,

women and men had worked as regional artists in almost equal numbers by the end of 2011 (Figure 3).

Figure 3. Number of regional artists by gender from 1972 to 2011



The age distribution of regional artists has been broad, and their mean age has risen. During the experimental period, the average age of male artists was 36 years, and of women, 37 years. Since 1997, the men's average age has risen to 39 years and the women's one year higher. The youngest regional artist was 22 years of age when appointed, while the eldest was 64. Usually, regional artists have taken up their position at approximately 30 years of age.

Until 1983, the maximum duration of the regional artists' term of office was three years. Since then, employment contracts have been concluded for two to five years at a time. If necessary, appointments have been extended for a further term, either in full or as decided by the council. A little more than one-half (53 %), of regional artists have stayed in their position for more than three years. The average term of office has been 3.3 years (three and a half years for men and three years for women).

The gender distribution per person-years worked by regional artists has levelled out, especially after 1998. Of the total person-years between 1972 and 2011, men accounted for 55%. Of the artistic fields, the highest number of person-years during that period was recorded in theatre, literature, fine art and music.

When examined by artistic field, most regional artists taking up their positions between 1972 and 2011 worked for one to five years, with the exception of regional artists in cinema, of whom almost one-third worked for less than one year. Regional artists in architecture, dance and the combined term of visual arts¹ as well as producers worked more often for one to three years than those in the other artistic fields. Regional artists particularly in literature, theatre and music, but also in photography worked for at least five years.

Similarly, the term of office of most regional artists between 1972 and 2011 was from one to five years. Terms shorter than one year were clearly more common in the arts councils of Varsinais-Suomi and Kaakkois-Suomi than elsewhere. Close to one-third of the regional artists employed by the arts councils of the Häme region and Keski-Suomi worked for at least five years, as did two-thirds of the artists in the Uusimaa region. Moreover, the number of terms exceeding ten years was exceptionally high in the Keski-Suomi arts council.

The person-years worked by male regional artists were mostly in such traditional artistic fields as fine art, music and literature. Men also accounted for most of the person-years in cinema, photography and architecture. Women were particularly well represented among producer/regional artists and regional artists in the visual arts, two fields that became more common from the 1990s onwards. Other female-dominated fields were dance, theatre and crafts and design as well as the 'Other' category, which included new, often multidisciplinary artistic fields (Figure 4).

The experimental period of the regional artist system (1972–1983) was dominated by regional artists in fine art, theatre and music. During the period of guiding regional artists (1984–1997), the share of fine art and music decreased, while the share of dance and crafts and design increased. Regional artist positions were also established in architecture and, from the mid-1990s onwards, in various production-related roles. From 1998 onwards, the focus has been on production-related positions as well as the 'other' category, which includes new artistic fields and activities. In addition, the new title of regional artist in the combined visual arts has been created. Almost two-fifths of the regional artists who took up positions between 1998 and 2011 belonged to one of the following categories: the visual arts, producers and the 'Other' category. Meanwhile, the share of regional artists in photography and cinema decreased (Table 2).

1 Including e.g., fine arts, performances, photography.

Figure 4. Regional artist years by gender and artistic field from 1972 to 2011

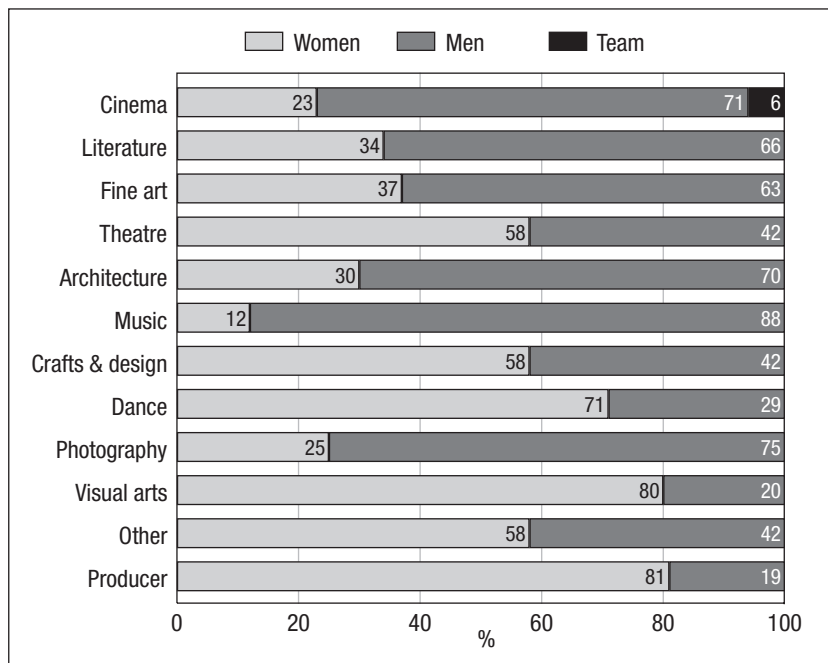


Table 2. Distribution (%) of regional artist positions by artistic field 1972 to 2011

Period	N	Cinema	Literature	Fine art	Theatre	Architecture	Music	Crafts & design	Dance	Photography	Visual arts	Other*	Producer	Total %
1972–1983	93	8.6	12.9	25.8	19.4	–	16.1	4.3	2.2	8.6	–	2.2	–	100.0
1984–1997	155	9.7	13.5	7.1	10.3	9.0	7.7	12.3	14.2	4.5	–	9.0	2.6	100.0
1998–2011	177	2.8	9.1	9.1	10.8	5.1	10.8	5.7	8.5	1.7	9.7	15.3	11.9	100.0
Yht. %	425	6.6	11.6	12.0	12.5	5.4	10.8	7.8	9.2	4.2	4.0	10.1	5.9	100.0

*) Includes the following fields and job titles: children's culture, environmental art, art of recitation, comics, international affairs, information officer/project secretary, cultural activities in hospitals and similar settings, circus, conservati-
on, information officer, Sami art, performance and multiculturalism.

The artistic fields of fine art, music and theatre as well as literature accounted for the largest share of person-years. Men dominated all these fields, with the exception of theatre. In addition, a higher number of regional artists in literature, theatre and music than in other fields worked for at least five years.

All regional arts councils have been provided the opportunity to establish the same number of regional artist positions: three positions from 1972 to 1983 and four positions from 1984 onwards. As most have also used this opportunity, the person-years are distributed equally among the regions. The number of regional artists taking up positions since 1997 has increased, for example, as a result of the establishment of arts councils in Pirkanmaa and Satakunta. During the same period, the number of person-years worked by regional artists has decreased, and average terms of office have become shorter. Similar changes have been recorded in all regional arts councils. The average terms of office have not become longer within the mandate of any arts council. The increase in the number of regional artists employed has not, however, translated into a similar increase in the number of person-years worked. The length of the term of office seems to have been more significant in this respect.

The data for regional arts councils show some differences in the allocation of person-years to various artistic fields. Many arts councils have also had specific focus areas: for example, Sami art has played an important role in Lappi, photography and dance in the Pohjois-Savo arts council, and cinema in the Keski-Suomi arts council.

Regional artists' perspective – survey results

Respondents had various reasons for applying for the position of regional artist – most had wanted to promote arts in general or their own field in particular. An almost equal number of artists had been motivated by the new challenges and interesting duties of the position. The third most common reason was the respondent's personal financial situation and the opportunity to concentrate on one's own artistic work on a monthly salary. Almost a fifth of the respondents had no intention of applying for the position until they were asked or encouraged to apply, and some had even been invited to the position. Most often, the request had come from an arts council. The opportunity to realise one's own ideas and advance one's own artistic career was almost as often the motivation for applying as was the opportunity to undergo a personal change in life or return to work in one's home region. Other individual motives included experience in teaching, activities in art organisations and knowledge of the arts sector.

Table 3. Motivations for applying for the position of regional artist (n=177)

Motivation	%
Promotion of the arts/own field of art	45
New challenges/interesting and challenging job	42
Personal financial situation/opportunity to concentrate on one's own artistic work on a monthly salary	28
Was requested to apply	18
Opportunity to realise own ideas	17
Advancement of own artistic career/work	16
Need for a personal change in life/opportunity to return to one's home region	15
Prestige attached to the job and title	6
Other individual reasons*	11

*) Such as experience of teaching, activities in art organisations, thorough familiarity with the arts sector, the position felt right and worth trying. The sum does not add up to 100% due to overlapping cases.

Expectations about the duties involved in the position of regional artist turned out to be even more manifold than the motivations for applying for the position. The most common expectations among respondents had to do with the opportunity to promote one's own artistic field and arts in general and to increase cooperation between various players in the field, and finally, to establish new contacts. Moreover, the respondents had expectations concerning the implementation of their own projects as well as the diverse challenges of the job, which, in addition to the responsibilities involved, would offer the freedom to carry out long-term projects independently.

The clear majority of the respondents, 88% (176 respondents in all) and almost all of the regional artists holding a position in 2011, said that the job had met their expectations. The arts council was considered to be a good employer and cooperation partner. Collaboration with the secretary general and other arts council officers was smooth and founded on a broad insight into the promotion of the arts. The activities were well managed in all respects and the atmosphere was open to ideas. The artists found the work interesting and collaboration with various partners interesting. During their terms, the artists had been allowed to work freely according to their own schedules, implement projects of personal importance and also engage in their own art. Almost all former and present regional artists, a total of 93%, reported that their projects had been carried out as planned.

Promoting the arts in practice, in other words, implementing projects and seeing the results of one's work, was the most reward-

ing aspect in the work of a regional artist, without forgetting various forms of cooperation with the arts council and all other players in the arts and culture sector. Besides receiving feedback and appreciation for one's work, new work-related contacts and the opportunity to work independently were deemed important. The rewarding aspects of the work reported in individual survey responses included a pleasant working community, monthly salary as well as working with children and adolescents.

Over a tenth of the respondents had experiences to the contrary. In practice, the work of a regional artist may turn out to be everyday toil with financial details and work-related problems. The most frequent practical problems hampering the work of a regional artist involved the scarcity or total lack of funding for the implementation of projects and plans, and also, the actions – or lack of action – by the arts council or its secretary general. Bureaucracy and inflexibility, obscure job description and management relationships as well as insufficient supervision were mentioned almost as often in the responses. Many wished for more precision in the definition of duties or objectives, and generally more efficient supervision.

The work of a regional artist involves supervising, training and teaching various partners and audiences related to the artist's own field of art. This kind of activity was most frequently mentioned by the respondents. Organising, implementing and coordinating projects was another distinct work form for regional artists. The promotion of the arts done by regional artists also includes a variety of lobbying activities among the decision-makers in the cultural and artistic life of the region. This lobbying meant appearances in the media, participation in seminars and sitting in meetings. Moreover, regional artists increasingly cooperate with the various forces of their region, including the business sector. Almost as commonly, regional artists offer expert and consulting services to both amateur and professional artists.

During the experimental period of the regional artist system between 1972 and 1983, the position included a period of some months for the artist's personal art projects. With the formal establishment of the regional artist system, however, this period reserved for personal creative work was abolished. Nevertheless, most respondents (76%) were of the opinion that their term as regional artist also supported and promoted their own artistic work, even if they had no opportunity to engage in it while they held the position. The position offered new inspiration, ideas and perspectives for their own artistic work and triggered a new creative period during or after their term as regional artist.

The work of regional artist involves contacts and cooperation with various partners in the field of the arts and culture in both the private and public sectors. The position has offered opportunities to gain ex-

perience of teaching and supervision, grants and arts administration in general, and in some cases, the business world, which has proved useful for an artist's career and employment after the term as regional artist. With this experience and new contacts, artists have found new models of operation and some even a new profession.

Table 4. Most common forms of activities of regional artists (n=172)

<i>Form of activity</i>	<i>%</i>
Consulting/training/teaching/lectures	56
Implementation/coordination/organisation	30
Various forms of lobbying	19
Cooperation with various parties	19
Provision of expertise/consulting	18
Planning/generation of ideas	16
Producer/production	8
Own/art council's projects	8
Personal artistic/creative work	3
Other activities	5

The sum does not add up to 100% due to overlapping cases.

The respondents had found their most important cooperation partners not only from among the culture and art associations of their region, but also from among the municipal departments of culture and education and related institutes in their region. Natural cooperation partners included the regional artist's own arts council and its other regional artists, and when necessary, the arts councils and regional artists from other regions. Cooperation across regional borders has grown especially in connection with larger projects, and artists have engaged in diverse and visible collaboration with libraries, schools and other educational institutes in particular. Other cooperation partners mentioned included the media, event organisers and so on.

The regional artists had engaged in some business cooperation, especially in connection with services, materials or facilities that the companies provided either at a low cost or for free for the implementation of projects. In return, the companies received publicity and visibility as well as involvement in customer and staff events. So far, direct financial support has been unusual, but apparently is gaining ground. Cooperation with businesses is most clearly evident in the job descriptions of producer/regional artists, whose numbers grew in the 1990s. Otherwise, opportunities for joint ventures with the busi-

ness sector have depended on the artistic field and job description of individual regional artists.

Regional artists were also requested to put forward suggestions for the development of the system. The respondents felt that cooperation should be increased between regional artists, regional arts councils, national arts councils and international partners. They also stressed the importance of clarifying the job description and general guidelines for regional artists, which would mean specific definitions for the artists' own artistic work and for producers' duties, transparency in budgets and responsibilities, and, in general, consistent policies for all regional arts councils.

Table 5. Suggestions by regional artists for the development of the system (n=148)

<i>Area of development</i>	<i>%</i>
Increased cooperation between arts councils/regional artists/international partners	32
Clarification of job description/guidelines	26
Improvement of working conditions	23
Period of artistic work	16
Positions for artists only	14
Clarification of the roles of the arts council and its secretary general	11
The length and continuity of the term of office	11
Increased dissemination of information about regional artists and the system	8

The sum does not add up to 100% due to overlapping cases.

Regional artists also saw room for improvement in their working conditions. Orientation and job supervision must be improved, and there is great need for separate staff who would focus on the acquisition of external funding, marketing and communication so that the artists could concentrate on the duties of their position. In addition, they considered that the term of employment should last at least three years. According to them, during a shorter appointment there is not enough time to complete projects and other activities. Employment contracts for only one year at a time complicate the planning and implementation of activities and are demotivating. A number of regional artists would also like to see the period of their own artistic work reinstated in some form. They suggested that 20–30% of the total working hours be reserved for personal artistic work. Regional artists also

raised issues such as concern over the loss of artistic identity and the employment of non-artists in the position of regional artist.

Since the early days of the system, regional artists have been able to freely define the content and methods of their work. Securing this advantage and the continuity of activities despite shorter terms of employment has often received little attention. In the last ten years, activities have become increasingly project-focused. Short-term employment contracts and projects can, however, be seen as strengths in the system of regional artists as they have enabled the introduction of new models of operation when necessary and increased flexibility in the services provided by regional artists. The general recommendations for the terms of employment of regional artists urge at least three years to secure optimal results and long-term impact. There is firm belief that this would guarantee the continuity of activities and increase the attractiveness of the position.

Conclusions

The system of regional artists has largely achieved the objectives set at the beginning of the 1970s. The flexible nature of the system has enabled effective performance although insufficient financial resources have also prevented full use of the potential offered by regional artists. In spite of various problems related to the artists' work and working conditions, the arts councils have succeeded in recruiting motivated and committed professionals as regional artists.

The system has functioned as a fairly low-cost instrument within government arts administration for employing artists and making the expertise of artists available to Finnish regions. Compared to the total number of artists, the annual fixed-term employment of 33–49 regional artists has had little direct impact on the overall employment of artists. However, the positions and their holders have had a considerable impact on new artistic fields as well as fields with few artists, both for practising art and for raising the profile of the fields. Dance is a good example: the activities of regional artists in dance have increased amateur participation and expanded the audience for dance, thereby strengthening the status of dance.

The action plans and reports submitted by regional artists demonstrate how activities have developed and plans have been implemented despite limited financial resources as well as administrative and personal problems. The artists' reports contain numerous descriptions of regional arts and cultural activities which the artists initiated, but which then became permanent and assumed an important regional – and in some cases national – role.

The artists have been capable of adapting to changes and coping with such features as long and irregular working hours with almost no financial compensation, inadequate working conditions, small appropriations, little leisure time and increased office work. Problems and conflicts have also occurred with employers (i.e., the arts councils) and immediate superiors (i.e., council's secretary general).

The survey on regional artists indicates that they have generally had similar professional experiences and hold similar views regardless of when they held their position. The heavy workload, scarce and uncertain funding, small salary and often inconvenient working hours have not changed. Despite the small appropriations, several locally and regionally significant projects have been implemented, demonstrating that even small financial contributions are sufficient to enhance access to and availability of the arts and culture. Most regional artists look back on their term of office as a successful, productive experience which reinforced their artistic identity. For many, the appointment created new opportunities as artists or in other professions related to the arts and culture.

Over the decades, the system of regional artists has been adapted and, where necessary, revamped. The system of regional artists has proved its usefulness, flexibility, efficiency and inexpensiveness.

The demand for guidance and other services provided by regional artists has not declined in any artistic field, including such traditional fields as literature, fine art, theatre and music, in which regional artists have the longest history. The first steps towards international activities were taken at the end of the 1980s when Finnish regional artists visited Sweden to introduce the system there and to develop activities among the Sweden Finns. In last decade, international activities have included various collaborative projects in which both regional artists in various fields and producer/regional artists have worked in Finland's neighbouring areas and beyond.

The improvement of regional artists' working conditions and the overall development of the system have been neglected during the reorganisation of Finnish arts and regional administration. In spite of that, the artists have remained an important and inexpensive instrument within the system of regional arts councils, particularly in the arts promotion activities based on the current funding model. However, their first-hand knowledge of the needs of the cultural and arts sectors could be used more effectively in both regional and national arts administration, also after their term of office.

In conjunction with drafting the Act on the Arts Promotion Centre in 2009, the Arts Council of Finland stated that the intellectual climate and expertise contributed by artists as well as their competence in promoting the arts must be supported despite the changed job description of regional artists. A report commissioned by the Ministry of

Education and Culture in 2011 found the system of regional artists to be highly effective and stressed the need to further strengthen it. The Act on the Arts Promotion Centre has been submitted to the Finnish Parliament in spring 2012. It seems unlikely to bring about the direct and necessary improvements proposed in the activities and working conditions of regional artists, but their duties and job title will remain the same.