

# INTRODUCTION TO SOCIOLOGY OF ART AND RESEARCH ON THE STATUS OF ARTISTS

Taija Roiha, PhD Student

Literature / cultural policy

Department of Music, Art and Cultural Studies

[taija.roiha@jyu.fi](mailto:taija.roiha@jyu.fi)

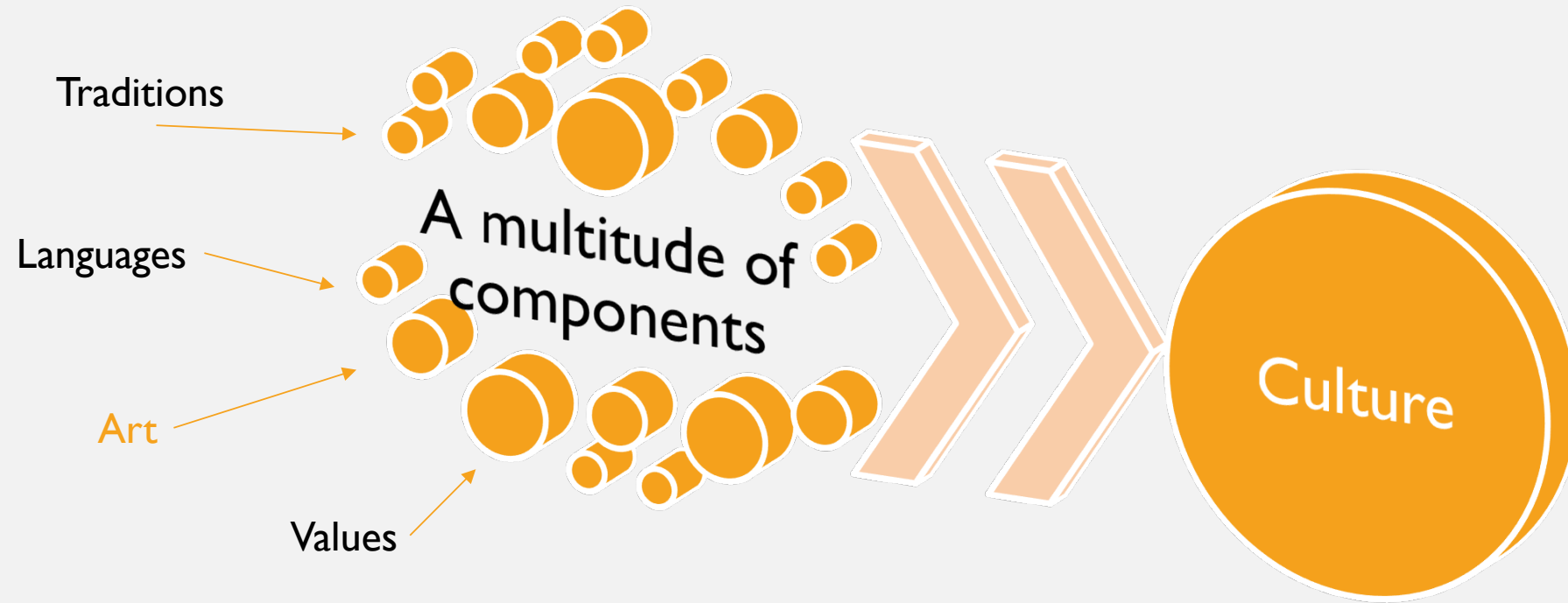
# WHO'S TALKING?

- Taija Roiha, MA, PhD Student at the University of Jyväskylä
- Literature / cultural policy
- Previously worked at Center for Cultural Policy Research (Cupore) and Arts Promotion Centre Finland (Taike) with topics such as:
  - Artistic education
  - Gender and the status of artists
  - Self employment in artistic fields
  - Art funding
  - Displaced / refugee artists in Finland
  - Intangible cultural heritage
- Special fields of interest: gender, social class, status of artists, social inequality, arts policy

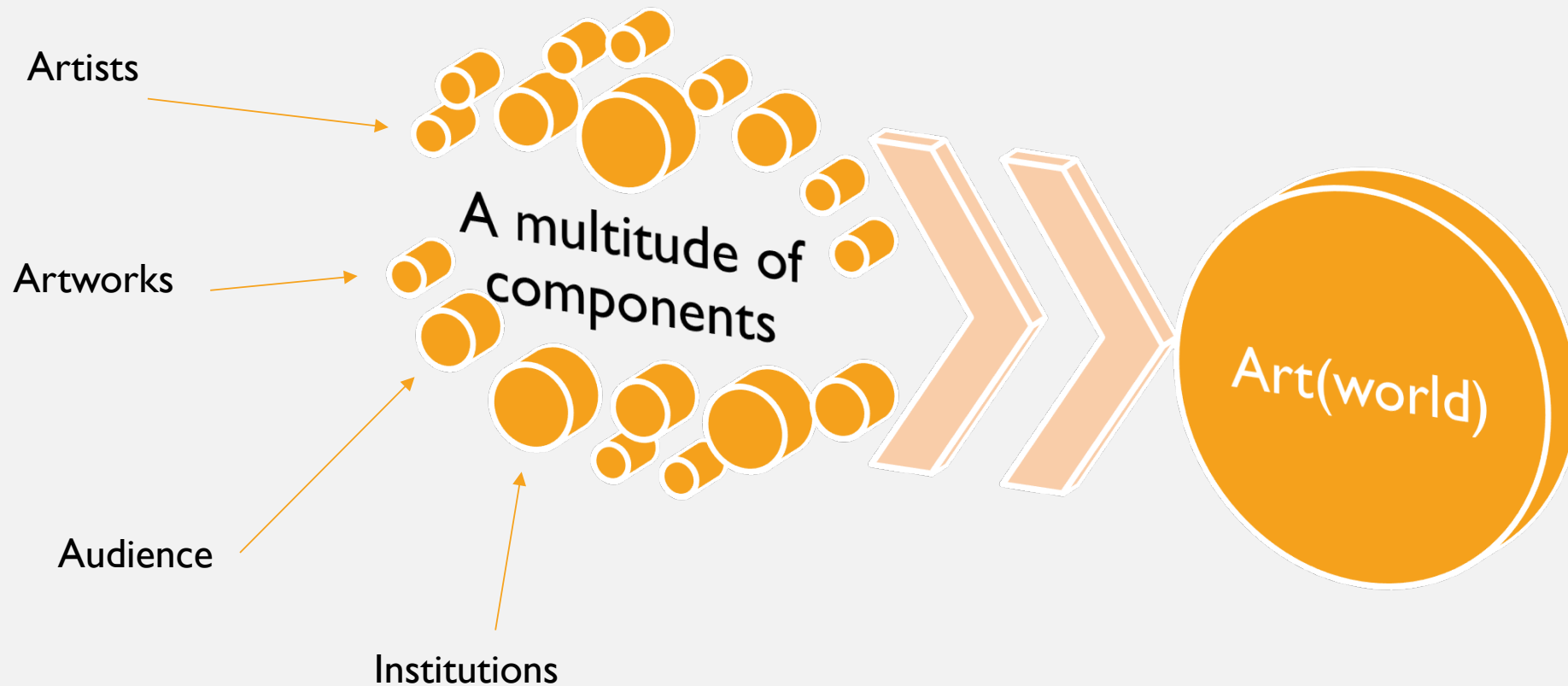
## MY PHD STUDY

- How are gender and social class experienced by contemporary Finnish literary authors in relation to their work as authors? How are these experiences narrated?
- Three different kinds of data-sets – mixed-methods
- Work started in January 2017

# THE CONSTITUTION OF CULTURAL POLICY



# THE CONSTITUTION OF ART WORLD



# HOWARD S. BECKER & THE ART WORLD

- "All artistic work, like all human activity, involves the joint activity of a number, often a large number, of people" (Becker 2008/1982, 1).
- The art world consists of different kinds of agencies, who work in collaboration
- Artworks are the result of collective activity
  - Core activity
  - Distribution
  - Conventions
  - Reception
- The artist as the *originator*

# PIERRE BOURDIEU & THE FIELD OF ART

- Society consists of different kinds of *fields*, such as the cultural field, economic field etc.
- Each field have their own sets of rules, values and power structures (although also something in common), which define the working of that field.
- Economic, cultural and social capital
  - The cultural field as the upside-down version of economic sphere → cultural (and social) capital are given more importance than the economic
  - “In the artistic field, it is not money or status that is being reached, but artistic recognition and prestige” (Piispa 2015, translated by TR)
  - BUT: It is common that high amounts of different kinds of capitals goes hand in hand (accumulation). Does this kind of thinking offer us too naïve view of the veiled importance of the economic capital in the artistic field?

# RESEARCH ON (THE STATUS OF) ARTISTS

- Four different traditions (based on classification by Elina Jokinen 2010):
  1. The humanistic tradition
  2. Art sociological tradition
  3. Administrative tradition
  4. Critical tradition



# THE HUMANISTIC TRADITION

- Research that uses (auto)biographies, artists interviews and archived data such as letters, diaries and photographs as its main research material
- Aims at for example to constitute narratives of the genesis of authorship / becoming an artists
- Problematic baggage: historically this kind of research has been connected to romantic and nationalistic ideas and biographistic models of interpretation
  - E.g. in the field of literature to interpret the content of a text based on authors biography
  - The used research material has been considered as reflecting the "objective truth"
- More recent developments → personal materials can be used in research, but they shouldn't be understood as reflectors of the so called objective truth → focus on narratives and discourses

# THE ART SOCIOLOGICAL TRADITION

- Focuses on the societal relations and networks of relations which affect in the background of art(works)
- Has increased knowledge about how different systems work in the art field
  - E.g. in literature: what is the role of the publisher and how does it effect on the production process of a book
  - Many of these analysis are based on the theories of Pierre Bourdieu and Howard S. Becker
- Has been criticized for its lack of interest in the ways which the individual experiences the system and its tendency to reject the idea of an individual genius

# THE ADMINISTRATIVE TRADITION

- Subjects of interest: the status of artists, the income of artists, the instruments for implementing public arts policy, the functioning of the grant system etc.
- Often implemented by public agencies, such as the Arts Promotion Centre in Finland, Konstnärsnämnden in Sweden or the Arts Council England
- Examples on research in the Finnish context in English:  
<http://www.taike.fi/en/statistics>
- In Finland this kind of research is also implemented by the Center for Cultural Policy Research Cupore

# THE CRITICAL TRADITION

- Research which aims to dismantle the myths related to artistic work, such as the idea of the artists as an individual genius or the idea of the “art world” being separated from the rest of the society
- Is not necessarily separate or unconnected to the before mentioned traditions, but aims to explore the topics more critically than those presented before
- Is interested in the connections that artistic work have to other areas of work instead of considering it a field completely separated from the society

# MY OWN PHD RESEARCH

- Gendered and class-related experiences of artistic work in the Finnish literature field in the 21<sup>st</sup> century
- How are gender and social class experienced by contemporary Finnish literary authors in relation to their work as authors? How are these experiences narrated?
- My research is influenced more or less by *all of the traditions* described earlier:
  - It uses authors' archived interview data & other material collected from authors themselves (the humanistic tradition), but...
  - ...it approaches them with a critical stance that considers this material as individual yet shared narratives instead of evidences of "objective truth (the critical tradition).
  - Narratives are seen as rooted with material base that includes things such as a person's economic and class status (the administrative tradition).
  - It locates itself to the context of the artistic field (the art sociological tradition)

## WHY DO I STUDY THIS?

- The notion that regardless of the rigorous amount of research done on the topic of the status of artists in Finland, there seems to be almost no interest addressed on issues of social class or the intersections of class and gender in the recent study
- At the same time we live in a society where income and wealth differences have been growing
  - If we understand art not as separate from the rest of the society, this should affect on the artistic field as well.

## THE SOCIAL BACKGROUND OF FINNISH AUTHORS IN THE 1980'S (HEIKKINEN 1989)

Father's position	Whole population, %	Father's position	Authors, %
Higher professional & managerial positions	5	Upper class, upper middle class	38
Entrepreneurs	8		
Lower clerical workers	11	Lower middle class	23
Farmers	40	Farmers	17
Working class	36	Working class	22
	100		100
n	3 209		881

## THE SOCIAL BACKGROUND OF CCI'S IN THE UK (O'BRIEN ET AL. 2016)

Origins in creative industries compared with population as a whole. O'Brien ym. 2016, s. 122.

	NS-SEC 1 Origins	NS-SEC 2 Origins	NS-SEC 3–5 Origins	NS-SEC 6–8 Origins
Creative industries as a whole	26,1 %	23,9 %	32,0 %	18,0 %
NS-SEC 1	26,4 %	20,6 %	33,5 %	19,5 %
NS-SEC 2	18,3 %	20,2 %	35,9 %	25,7 %
Population as a whole	14,1 %	15,0 %	36,2 %	34,7 %

NS-SEC 1: Higher professional and managerial positions

NS-SEC 2: Lower professional and managerial positions

NS-SEC 3, 4, 5: Intermediate occupations or self-employed

NS-SEC 6, 7, 8: Semi-routine, routine occupations, or unemployed



## SOCIAL CLASS AND ARTISTIC WORK

“Certainly the middle and upper class dominate the arts as they dominate all areas of society; that’s why they’re called middle and upper.” – Tim Lott, The Guardian 7.6.2015

## GENDER AND SOCIAL CLASS

- Intersectionality (Crenshaw): different forms of oppression are cumulated
- Finland, 1980's: Female authors come more frequently from privileged (from a higher social class, from academic families, from artistic families) backgrounds compared to their male colleagues (Heikkinen 1989)
- Sweden, 2011: female artists had greater positive net assets compared to male artists.
  - The median of male artists' net assets was 73 percent of female artists' net assets
  - Still the *income* levels of women artists were lower compared to their male colleagues
  - Female artists "need to be better equipped in their positions than their male colleagues". (Flisbäck 2011, 51– 54.)

# THE EGALITARIAN ART WORLD?

- The idea that artistic field is distinctive compared to other fields of life in capitalistic society
  - The upside-down version of economic sphere (Bourdieu)
  - The exceptional economics of the art (Abbing)
  - Yes, the artistic field definitely has its own unique features compared to many other fields of the society, but is it possible that by emphasizing these differences a little too much leads to the difficulty to notice the commonly shared features and problems, such as inequality?
- Despite its competitive nature, the cultural and creative industries has been described as surrounded by the ethos of openness, egalitarianism & meritocracy – but at the same time growing inequalities in relation to gender, class and race (Gill 2002; Gill 2014)
  - Hypothesis: this ethos defines the working practices in the Finnish literary and artistic field as well, making it hard to articulate the inequalities taking place in the field.

# HOW DO I STUDY THIS?

- "The master's tools will never dismantle the master's house" –Audre Lorde, 1984
  - Trying to look behind the numbers: how are class and gender lived through?
  - Multiple data-sets, mixed methods
1. A sample from an archive data consisting of Finnish authors interviews.  
Aim: To increase my understanding as a researcher of the discourses used by authors when describing their experiences related to gender and social class.
  2. A survey addressed to authors including both structured questions about their income level, class background & open questions about experiences.  
Aim: To collect larger data in order to make conclusions about the issue on a more general scale and to map out interviewees / group discussants for the next part.
  3. Group discussions generated with methods drawn from the feminist tradition of collective memory-work.  
Aim: To make it possible for the authors themselves to reflect the questions and participate to the research.

## SOME HYPOTHESIS BASED ON THE FIRST PART OF THE STUDY

- Experiences related to social class are not in a general level recognized or expressed explicitly in the same ways as experiences related to gender are
  - The feelings of (not) belonging
  - Knowing the rules of the game
- Issues related to gender are experienced differently by different genders
  - Themes (family, having children, publicity & press etc.)
  - Times / phases (childhood, present)
- The intersections of class and gender?