

Cilj članka je predstaviti začetne rezultate prve faze raziskave ljubiteljskega gledališča, ki smo jo leta 2019 izvedli po vsej Estoniji, in jih primerjati s področjem profesionalnega gledališča. Članek je sestavljen iz štirih delov. Najprej predstavimo metodologijo raziskave. V drugem delu je podan statistični pregled estonskega ljubiteljskega gledališča. Sledi primerjava političnih strategij, ki se izvajajo na področju profesionalnega in ljubiteljskega gledališča. Na koncu so predstavljeni največji izzivi ljubiteljskih skupin in mogoče rešitve. Od približno 200 ljubiteljskih gledališč, v katerih delujejo odrasli, jih je naš vprašalnik izpolnilo 85 (43 %). Izkazalo se je, da je 39 % gledališč del večjih organizacij, običajno lokalnih kulturnih domov. Nekaj manj (29 %) jih deluje kot nevladne organizacije ali pravnega statusa nimajo (28 %). Redno je financiranih 65 % gledališč, vendar se mnoga izmed njih prijavljajo tudi za projektno financiranje, tako kot skoraj vsa preostala. Najpomembnejši vir financiranja so lokalne občine, ki podpirajo 79 % gledališč. Največ stroškov imajo s prevozi in delavnicami. Večino produkcije na estonski ljubiteljski gledališki sceni predstavlja govorjeno gledališče. Zelo pomembno vlogo na ljubiteljskem gledališkem področju igrajo festivali, ki se jih večina gledališč redno udeležuje. Trije največji izzivi amaterjev so povezani s člansko problematiko, repertoarjem in financiranjem.

Ključne besede: ljubiteljsko gledališče, estonsko gledališče, kulturna politika, izzivi amaterjev, STEP

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Izzivi polja ljubiteljskega gledališča v Estoniji¹

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Uvod

Leta 2018 je mednarodna raziskovalna skupina STEP (Projekt za raziskovanje evropskih gledaliških sistemov) pričela s primerjalnim raziskovalnim projektom na področju ljubiteljskega gledališča. Cilj članka je predstaviti začetne rezultate prve faze raziskave ljubiteljskega gledališča, ki je potekala po vsej Estoniji, in jih primerjati s področjem profesionalnega gledališča .

Estonija je majhna država v severni Evropi. Gledališče je že od nekdaj pomemben temelj nacionalne identitete, število obiskov gledališč pa je trenutno enako številu prebivalcev – 1,3 milijona. Estonija ima 50 institucij, v katerih gledališko produkcijo ustvarjajo profesionalci; od teh jih skoraj 30 prejema državno subvencijo. Tudi ljubiteljsko gledališko področje v Estoniji je zelo dejavno. Po podatkih Statističnega urada Estonije (Statistikaamet) je bilo leta 2018 v Estoniji 431 ljubiteljskih gledališč, od tega približno 200 skupin, v katerih delujejo odrasli, preostalo pa so šolska gledališča. Ljubiteljsko gledališče ima 150-letno tradicijo, večinoma na podeželju, ter že od nekdaj obstaja kot vzporedno vesolje profesionalnega gledališča, ki je večinoma prisotno na urbanih področjih. Estonsko profesionalno gledališče je precej dobro obdelano s statističnega in raziskovalnega vidika, ljubiteljsko pa je doslej večinoma ostajalo izven raziskovalnega dometa, saj je od profesionalnega gledališkega polja precej oddaljeno (s finančnega, političnega in estetskega vidika). Polje tukaj razumemo v bourdieuevskem smislu, kar pomeni »ločeno socialno vesolje, ki deluje po lastnih zakonitostih« (Bourdieu 162). Članek predstavlja prvi poskus celovitega pregleda delovanja estonskega amaterskega gledališkega področja.

Članek je sestavljen iz štirih delov. Najprej predstavimo metodologijo raziskave. V drugem delu je podan statistični pregled estonskega ljubiteljskega gledališča. Sledi primerjava političnih strategij, ki se izvajajo v poklicnem in ljubiteljskem gledališču. Na koncu so predstavljeni največji izzivi ljubiteljskih skupin in mogoče rešitve.

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1. Metodologija in vprašalnik

V mnogih evropskih državah se kvantitativni podatki o dejavnostih profesionalnih gledališč zbirajo letno in centralno, podatki o amaterjih pa so zelo splošni, naključni ali nepopolni. Zato smo se odločili, da bomo projekt pričeli z zbiranjem splošnih podatkov o ljubiteljskih gledališčih z enako metodologijo, kot jo je skupina uporabila v prejšnjih raziskavah (prim. Van Maanen idr. in *Amfiteater*). Vprašalnik smo sestavili skupaj; da bi naše ugotovitve lahko primerjali z obstoječimi podatki, smo se pri tem delno opirali na vprašalnike, ki jih že uporabljajo na Nizozemskem in v Švici.

V splošnem so vprašanja za vse države enaka, nekaj odstopanj v odgovorih pa bi lahko našli zaradi kulturnih razlik.² Poleg tega je bilo na koncu vprašalnika mogoče dodati tudi vprašanja, ki s primerjalnega vidika niso zanimiva, vendar imajo lokalno težo. Prvo različico vprašalnika smo sestavili v angleščini in ga nato prevedli v lokalne jezike. V Estoniji so vprašalnik nato pregledali odbor Združenja ljubiteljskih gledališč Estonije in drugi strokovnjaki. Po njihovih predlogih so bila dodana vprašanja o geografskem dosegu gledališč in sodelovanju na festivalih (pomen slednjih bomo obravnavali v nadaljevanju). Vprašalniki so bili poslani po vseh okrožjih, in sicer gledališčem z javnimi (vsem dostopnimi) predstavami, kar pomeni, da so bila iz raziskave izključena estonska šolska gledališča.

Vprašalnik je bil sestavljen iz treh delov:

- 1) Vprašanja o delovanju gledališča: ime, leto ustanovitve, naslov, pravni status, število članov in njihova struktura po spolu in starosti. Vprašali smo tudi, kako se je število članov spreminjalo v zadnjih letih, ali se igralci izobražujejo in kateri so največji izzivi, s katerimi se gledališče trenutno sooča.
- 2) Vprašanja o financiranju gledališča: kdo gledališče financira in kako, katere so največje stroškovne postavke in ocena trenutne gospodarske situacije.
- 3) Vprašanja o umetniških dejavnostih: število premier, lastnih predstav in gostujočih predstav v zadnjem letu; geografsko območje, na katerem se prirejajo predstave in s katerega prihajajo gostujoče predstave obiskov; vrste predstav; vrste besedil, ki se uporabljajo za predstave; uporabljeni jeziki (pa tudi narečja); ciljne skupine; nastopi na festivalih v Estoniji in tujini; morebitna sodelovanja s profesionalci in amaterji.

Raziskavo med estonskimi ljubiteljskimi gledališči smo izvedli spomladi 2019 z namenom, da podamo celovit pregled institucionalnega, gospodarskega in estetskega delovanja gledališč. Vprašalnik je Estonsko združenje ljubiteljskih gledališč razdelilo svojim članom (65 gledališč) in prek kontaktnih oseb v 14 estonskih okrožjih.

² Primer: Na Malti je bilo med viri financiranja mogoče izbrati tudi odgovor »cerkev«. V Estoniji te možnosti ni bilo, saj cerkve navadno ne podpirajo ljubiteljskih skupin.

Od približno 200 ljubiteljskih gledališč, v katerih delujejo odrasli, jih je na vprašalnik odgovorilo 85 (43 %). V nekaterih primerih sta na vprašalnik odgovorili dve osebi iz istega gledališča, njuni odgovori pa so bili različni. Vključili smo zadnje poslane odgovore. Vzorec torej ni bil povsem reprezentativen, zato odgovorov ni bilo mogoče posplošiti na ljubiteljsko gledališče kot celoto, vendar glede na raznolikost skupin, ki so izpolnjevale vprašalnik, nekatere tendence v tem polju vsekakor prevladujejo in so značilne zanj kot celoto.

2. Značilnosti polja ljubiteljskega gledališča v Estoniji

Splošni pregled rezultatov je razdeljen na tri dele: splošni organizacijski vidiki, financiranje in umetniške dejavnosti.

2.1. Organizacijski vidiki

Estonska ljubiteljska gledališča so navadno ustaljene organizacije – 80 % jih deluje redno. Največ gledališč (39 %) je del večjih organizacij, običajno lokalnih kulturnih domov (tabela 1). Nekaj manj (29 %) jih deluje kot NVO³ ali nimajo pravnega statusa (29 %). Slednja morda težje zaprosijo za projektno financiranje, saj zanj pogosto lahko kandidirajo le pravne osebe.

| Pravna oseba | Število gledališč | Odstotek |
|------------------------|-------------------|--------------|
| Del večje organizacije | 32 | 39 % |
| NVO | 25 | 29 % |
| Ni pravna oseba | 25 | 29 % |
| d. o. o. | 2 | 2 % |
| Drugo | 1 | 1 % |
| Skupaj | 85 | 100 % |

Tabela 1: Oblike pravnih oseb estonskih ljubiteljskih gledališč.

Čeprav je članska problematika med največjimi izzivi (prim. v nadaljevanju), 50 % gledališč navaja, da je število njihovih članov v zadnjih treh letih stabilno, v 28 % gledališč pa se je povečalo. Število članov se zmanjšalo v približno petini organizacij.

Estonska ljubiteljska gledališča imajo povprečno 14 članov (najmanj dva in največ 70). Zdi se, da podporni člani (ki nudijo finančno podporo ali brezplačne storitve) v Estoniji niso običajna praksa, saj 62 % gledališč trdi, da tako imenovanih pasivnih

³ NVO – nevladna organizacija.

članov nima. Kljub temu pa velja, da več (bodisi aktivnih ali pasivnih) članov kot gledališče ima, tesneje se lahko povezuje z lokalno skupnostjo in bolj se lahko poveča njegova pomembnost za družbo.

Po podatkih Statističnega urada Estonije (Statistikaamet) se ženske v različnih kulturnih dejavnostih udeležujejo dvakrat pogosteje od moških. Naša raziskava to potrjuje, saj je med člani ljubiteljskih gledališč 66 % žensk in 34 % moških. Podobno je s strukturo gledalcev v profesionalnih gledališčih, kjer je bilo leta 2017 med obiskovalci, starejšimi od 15 let, 62 % žensk in 38 % moških (Leinbock 388). Pri profesionalnih igralcih pa je struktura po spolih enakovrednejša: v Združenju poklicnih igralcev Estonije je 286 moških in 264 žensk (Sein).

Ker ima Estonija zelo živahno šolsko gledališko sceno, je le 11 % članov odraslih ljubiteljskih gledališč mlajših od 20 let. Največ članov (51 %) je starih 41–65 let, nato 21–40 let (30 % članov). Najmanj članov (8 %) je starejših od 65 let. Ljudje v štiridesetih in petdesetih imajo pogosto več časa za hobije, saj so manj zaposleni z varstvom otrok ali študijem. Poleg tega naj bi imeli tudi manj zdravstvenih težav od ljudi v šestdesetih in sedemdesetih.

2.2. Financiranje

Redno, torej mesečno, četrtno ali letno financiranje prejema 65 % gledališč. To kaže, da ima večina gledališč stalni dohodek, ki se med gledališči seveda razlikuje. Kljub temu se 65 % gledališč prijavlja za projektno financiranje, med njimi tudi 35 % gledališč s stalnim dohodkom, pa tudi druga, ki stalnega financiranja od lokalnih organizacij ali občin ne prejemajo. Podpora na lokalni ravni običajno pomeni brezplačne prostore za vaje, ki jih nudi lokalni kulturni dom, ali pa lokalna občina krije plačo umetniškega vodje ali direktorja. Druge stroške običajno krijejo člani ali se pokrivajo s projektним financiranjem.

Najpomembnejši vir financiranja so lokalne občine, ki podpirajo 79 % gledališč (tabela 2), in sicer zato, ker ljubiteljske dejavnosti in izobraževanja na ljubiteljski ravni financirajo lokalne občine. Članarino članom zaračunava ali od njih prejema storitve in blago 59 % gledališč. Država financira 39 % gledališč, in sicer je mogoče kandidirati za projektno financiranje Sklada za kulturne dotacije (ang. Estonian Cultural Endowment) in Centra za ljudsko kulturo (ang. Folk Culture Centre). Nekaj več kot tretjina gledališč ima tudi sponzorje, manj kot desetino pa podpirajo lokalne organizacije. Presenetljivo je, da je le eno gledališče prejelo podporo zasebnega sklada, nobeno pa prek množičnega financiranja (ang. crowdfunding). Amaterji prodajajo tudi vstopnice za svoje predstave.

| Vir financiranja | Število gledališč | Odstotek |
|---|-------------------|----------|
| Lokalna občina | 67 | 79 % |
| Članarine ter brezplačno blago in storitve članov | 50 | 59 % |
| Država | 33 | 39 % |
| Sponsorji (denar, blago, storitve) | 29 | 35 % |
| Regionalna organizacija | 6 | 7 % |
| Brez | 4 | 5 % |
| Zasebni sklad | 1 | 1 % |
| Množično financiranje (ang. crowdfunding) | 0 | 0 % |

Tabela 2: Glavni viri financiranja.

Skoraj polovica gledališč meni, da je njihovo finančno stanje zadovoljivo. Kot slabo ga ocenjuje 20 % in kot zaskrbljujoče 5 %. Le šest gledališč meni, da je njihovo finančno stanje dobro ali zelo dobro, vsa pa so del večjih organizacij ali delujejo kot nevladne organizacije. Le dve prejmeta redno financiranje, preostala štiri pa kombinacijo rednega in projektnega financiranja. Zato lahko sklepamo, da zadovoljstvo z gospodarskim stanjem ni povezano le s pravnim statusom ali s številom finančnih virov.

Ker se veliko gledališč nahaja v lokalnih kulturnih domovih (ali v drugih tovrstnih organizacijah), so najemnina in stroški minimalni. V primeru profesionalnih gledališč je ravno nasprotno, saj tovrstni izdatki zahtevajo velik del proračuna. Položaj je nekoliko bolj zapleten v primeru gledališč v mestih. Pogosto nimajo lastnih prostorov za vaje in jih morajo najemati, prav tako tudi oder za predstave, ki ga lahko uporabljajo le zadnjih nekaj vaj pred premiero.

Največji strošek predstavljajo prevozi in delavnice (za 87 % gledališč) (tabela 3). Stroški prevoza vključujejo potovanja na festivale in gostovanja. Festivali imajo pomembno vlogo, saj lahko sodelujoči predstave pokažejo širšemu občinstvu, se učijo drug od drugega, sklepajo nova poznanstva in s tem krepijo ljubiteljsko gledališko skupnost.

Drugi največji izdatek so scenografija in kostumi (73 %). Povsem jasno je, da se ljubiteljska gledališča ne želijo odreči umetniški kakovosti in uporabljati praznega

odra ali minimalne scenografije. Scenografija in kostumi, ki upodabljajo določene kraje ali like, lahko prispevajo h kakovosti predstave in uprizarjanja, saj za igralce ustvarijo določeno vzdušje.

Tretjič, 59 % gledališč sredstva porablja za avtorske honorarje (prim. tudi z največjimi izzivi ljubiteljskih gledališč v nadaljevanju), 53 % pa za oglaševanje. Manj kot polovica izpostavlja tudi plače tehničnega in kreativnega osebja, najemnino za prizorišča in izdatke za drame, besedila in druge podobne stroške. Glede na to, da skupine sestavljajo ljubiteljski igralci, skoraj nihče od njih ne prejema honorarja.

| Stroškovna postavka | Število gledališč | Odstotek |
|--|-------------------|----------|
| Prevozi in delavnice | 74 | 87 % |
| Scenografija, kostumi itd. | 62 | 73 % |
| Avtorski honorarji | 50 | 59 % |
| Oglaševanje | 45 | 53 % |
| Honorarji za direktorje | 38 | 45 % |
| Honorarji za tehnično ekipo (oblikovanje luči in zvoka itd.) | 31 | 36 % |
| Najem prizorišč za nastope | 23 | 27 % |
| Honorarji za kreativno ekipo (scenografi, avtorji glasbe itd.) | 20 | 24 % |
| Stroški za izvorno besedilo | 11 | 13 % |
| Igralski honorarji | 9 | 11 % |
| Najem prostorov za vaje | 7 | 8 % |

Tabela 3: Najvišje stroškovne postavke ljubiteljskih gledališč.

Če povzamemo, so največji stroški ljubiteljskih gledališč povezani z uprizoritvijo in samorazvojem, kar je drugače kot pri profesionalnih gledališčih, ki največ porabijo za osebje in komunalne stroške.

2.3. Dejavnosti na področju uprizarjanja

Na splošno gledališča v naši raziskavi vsako leto oziroma sezono izvedejo eno do tri premiere ter približno 11 predstav. Le 25 % gledališč izvede 20 ali več predstav letno.

Najbolj priljubljena oblika uprizarjanja je govorno gledališče (na tem področju ustvarja 91 % gledališč); sledijo pa različne vrste kratkih komičnih oblik (standup, skeči, kabaret itd.), ki jih ustvarja 29 % gledališč (tabela 4).

| Vrste gledališča | Število gledališč | Odstotek |
|-------------------------|-------------------|----------|
| Govorjeno gledališče | 77 | 91 % |
| Glasbeno gledališče | 9 | 11 % |
| Plesno gledališče | 3 | 4 % |
| Lutkovno gledališče | 2 | 2 % |
| Standup, skeči, kabaret | 25 | 29 % |
| Fizično gledališče | 7 | 8 % |

Tabela 4: Gledališka področja, na katerih ustvarjajo ljubiteljska gledališča.

Poleg tega amaterji ustvarjajo tudi zahtevnejšo produkcijo, kot je glasbeno, plesno, fizično in lutkovno gledališče. Nekaj gledališč se ukvarja tudi z improvizacijskim gledališčem in drugimi krajšimi zvrstmi. Razmerje med oblikami uprizarjanja je podobno tudi pri produkciji, ki jo ustvarjajo profesionalci.⁴ Tudi tu prevladuje govorno gledališče (63 % predstav v letu 2018), sledijo pa ples⁵ (11 % repertoarja) in glasbene predstave (8 %) (Sippol 382).

Obstoječe drame za predstave uporablja 87 % gledališč. Nekaj več kot polovica (53 %) izvaja besedila, ki jih zasnuje skupina ali napiše en njen član. Način za premagovanje ovir, kot so visoki avtorski honorarji ali izzivi pri iskanju primerne repertoarja, bi lahko bilo snovalno oziroma sodelovalno gledališče (ang. devising theatre) (prim. v nadaljevanju). Četrtnina gledališč uprizarja tudi priredbe filmov, romanov itd.

Predstave v estonskem jeziku izvaja 83 % gledališč, osem skupin uporablja tudi narečje (območja, kjer se nahajata mesti Tartu in Võru ter vas Mulgi, imajo svoja narečja, ki jih uvrščamo med južnoestonska, na dveh največjih otokih na zahodu države se govornita narečji v okrožjih Hiiu in Saare), dve skupini pa nastopata v ruščini.⁶ Ena improvizacijsko gledališče je nastopalo tudi v angleščini.

Večina gledališč (92 %) kot ciljno skupino opredeljuje starejše od 20 let. Družine je kot ciljno skupino navedlo 40 % gledališč, mlado občinstvo 24 %, otroke (mlajše od 12 let) pa 13 % gledališč. Kot ciljni skupini so gledališča izpostavila tudi starejše in učitelje. V profesionalnem gledališču je bilo v obdobju 2016–2018 71 % produkcij namenjenih odraslim, 21 % otrokom, 8 % pa najstnikom in mladini (12–20 let) (Besti Teatri Agentuur). Čeprav se metodologija zbiranja podatkov o profesionalnih gledališčih razlikuje od naše (prim. opombo 4), je mogoče sklepati, da se v primerjavi s

⁴ Čeprav Agencija za estonsko gledališče, ki je odgovorna za zbiranje podatkov o profesionalnem gledališču, šteje število produkcij, mi pa smo v svoji raziskavi šteli gledališča, bi lahko vzorce pri uprizoritvenih dejavnostih primerjali na tej podlagi.

⁵ Če bi kategoriji »plesno gledališče« in »fizično gledališče« v naši raziskavi združili v eno, bi bila lahko primerljiva s kategorijo »plesno gledališče« v podatkih Agencije za estonsko gledališče.

⁶ Glavno mesto Talin, ki leži na severni obali Estonije, je središče lokalnega priseljevanja. V Talinu oziroma okrožju Harju, ki ga obdaja, živi 583.000 ljudi, tj. 44 % estonskega prebivalstva. Najpogostejši manjšinski jezik v Estoniji je ruščina, ki jo dnevno uporablja 28 % prebivalstva (Statistikaamet).

profesionalnimi gledališči amaterji bolj osredotočajo na mlado občinstvo in najstnike. Žal statistika o profesionalnem gledališču kot posebne kategorije ne omenja produkcij za družine, vendar lahko sklepamo, da je veliko otroških in mladinskih predstav vseh tudi staršem in drugim odraslim spremljevalcem.

Ljubiteljska gledališča delujejo precej lokalno – 44 % predstav se izvede na domačih odrih, približno 25 % v okolici do 20 km, tretjina predstav pa več kot 20 km stran. Še bolj lokalno je občinstvo – 54 % ga po ocenah prihaja iz mesta ali vasi, kjer gledališče deluje, 24 % iz okolice do 20 km, 23 % pa od dlje. To pomeni, da gledališča raje obiskujejo svoje občinstvo kot obratno.

Za amaterje je zelo pomembno, da nastopajo na festivalih; tega ne počne le 13 % gledališč. Festivala v Estoniji se je udeležilo 72 % gledališč, 15 % pa jih je nastopilo tudi na festivalu v tujini. Scena estonskih festivalov za ljubiteljska gledališča je zelo živahna in ima dolgo zgodovino. Vsako leto se v vseh 14 okrožjih prirejajo regionalni in tudi nekateri specializirani festivali, posvečeni monodramam ali kratkim predstavam, določenemu avtorju ali improvizaciji. Združenje ljubiteljskih gledališč Estonije vsako leto organizira festival, ki je odprt za vse, vsako drugo leto pa nacionalni festival, kjer so prikazane le izbrane predstave, za katere velja, da so na visoki umetniški ravni ali prispevajo k raznovrstnosti področja.

Zanimalo nas je tudi, koliko ljubiteljska gledališča sodelujejo med seboj in s profesionalci. Nekaj več kot polovica gledališč (55 %) je sodelovala z drugimi ljubiteljskimi gledališči, več kot četrtnina (31 %) s profesionalnimi režiserji in koreografi, petina (20 %) s profesionalnimi igralci ali plesalci. Manj je bilo sodelovanja s profesionalnimi scenografi (13 %), dramatikami (11 %) ter profesionalnimi glasbeniki in pevci (8 %). Četrtnina gledališč ni sodelovala z nikomer.

| Sodelovanje | Število gledališč | Odstotek |
|---|-------------------|----------|
| Druga ljubiteljska gledališča | 49 | 55 % |
| Profesionalni režiserji in koreografi | 26 | 31 % |
| Profesionalni igralci in plesalci | 17 | 20 % |
| Profesionalni scenografi, oblikovalci luči, avtorji glasbe itd. | 11 | 13 % |
| Profesionalni dramatik | 9 | 11 % |
| Profesionalni glasbeniki in pevci | 6 | 8 % |
| Nihče | 24 | 28 % |

Table 5: Sodelovanje z drugimi osebami.

Pod možnostjo »Drugo« so gledališča označila tudi ljubiteljske glasbenike

pa tudi zборе in strokovnjake (na primer za lokalno kulturno zgodovino ali antropologijo). Omenjeno je bilo tudi, da amaterje sodelovanja zanimajo, tudi če trenutno ne sodelujejo z nikomer, vendar se »bojijo ponuditi« za skupne projekte.

3. Funkcije profesionalnega in ljubiteljskega gledališča v estonski kulturni politiki

Za razumevanje funkcij in vrednosti ljubiteljskega gledališča v Estoniji ga je smiselno primerjati s profesionalnim. V ta namen smo uporabili šest strateških dilem kulturne politike, ki sta jih predstavila François Matarasso in Charles Landry (1999) v delu *Balancing Act: Twenty-one Strategic Dilemmas in Cultural Policy*. Te dileme so bile uporabljene tudi v raziskavi »Glavno izrazje in težnje v estonski kulturni politiki« (Aadamsoo idr.), kjer so strokovnjaki iz različnih polj umetnosti primerjali, katere dileme se pojavljajo v politiki in praksi različnih polj

1. Kultura kot različne umetnosti ali kultura kot način življenja. Ljubiteljska kultura se v Estoniji ne glede na vsebino umešča pod krovni izraz »ljudska kultura« in velja za področje, ki je ločeno od profesionalnih umetnosti; drugače povedano, ljubiteljska kultura v gledališko politiko ni vključena. Strokovnjaki za ljudske kulture so dilemo obravnavali kot opozicijo med poklicno in ljubiteljsko kulturo v Estoniji (Aadamsoo idr. 6, 8).

2. Kulturna demokracija ali demokratizacija kulture. Kadar kulturna demokracija daje prednost kulturi (potrošnji) med različnimi družbenimi skupinami, demokratizacija kulture želi povečati dostop do sredstev kulturne produkcije (Matarasso, Landry 13–14). Zaradi razkoraka med poklicno in ljubiteljsko umetnostjo kot ločenih sistemov financiranja in upravljanja kulturna demokracija prevladuje na področju profesionalne umetnosti, demokratizacija kulture pa na področju ljubiteljske kulture (Aadamsoo idr. 6, 10). Državne subvencije se profesionalnemu gledališču dodeljujejo na podlagi števila obiskovalcev in umetniške kakovosti. Načela in vrednote podpornih sistemov za ljubiteljska gledališča pa so raznolika in kličejo po nadaljnjih raziskavah, vendar na podlagi omejenega empiričnega gradiva domnevamo, da se podpira tako sodelovanje na splošno (z brezplačnim dostopom do kulturnih domov) kot tudi raznolikost kulturne produkcije (npr. manjšinski jeziki in kulture).

3. Dediščina ali sodobnost. Izraz »ljudska kultura« že sam po sebi nakazuje nagnjenost k tradicionalnim vrednotam in estetiki. V estonskem poklicnem gledališču so novosti bolj cenjene, čeprav je njegova izrecna naloga ohranjanje estonskega jezika in kulturne dediščine.

4. Potrošnja ali produkcija. Subvencije za profesionalna gledališča so večinoma odvisne od potrošnje, subvencije za ljubiteljska gledališča pa od sodelovanja, tj. produkcije (glej tudi dilemo 2).

5. Centralizacija ali decentralizacija. V estonski državni kulturni politiki prevladuje centralizacija, saj profesionalno umetnost večinoma subvencionira in ureja ministrstvo za kulturo.

Skupne občinske subvencije profesionalnim gledališčem so v povprečju znašale 3 % proračuna gledališč (Sippol 385). Politika ljubiteljske kulture (vključno z gledališčem) in finančna podpora za tovrstno kulturo pa je decentralizirana in večinoma odvisna od lokalnih občin. V Estoniji je 79 občin (15 mest in 64 župnij), zato so politike in sistemi dodeljevanja podpore precej raznoliki. Kljub temu lokalna raven države podpira več kot 80 % gledališč, pogosto pa so subvencije zelo nizke zaradi precej omejenega proračuna majhnih občin (majhno število prebivalcev). Zato pri amaterjih igrata veliko vlogo tudi državno in projektno financiranje.

6. Infrastruktura ali dejavnost. Država podpira tako infrastrukturo kot dejavnost profesionalnih gledališč, lokalne občine pa ljubiteljskim pogosto nudijo le infrastrukturo (prostor za vaje in predstave) (Aadamsoo idr. 44–47). Tako je 39 % ljubiteljskih gledališč del večjih organizacij (navadno lokalnih kulturnih domov) in le 8 % anketirancev je navedlo, da morajo prostor za vaje plačevati. Kljub temu nekatere občine dejavnosti ljubiteljskih gledališč sploh ne podpirajo oziroma podpirajo le mladino in upokojece.

Če povzamemo, sta profesionalno in ljubiteljsko gledališče v Estoniji ločeni s pravnega, gospodarskega in estetskega vidika. Estonska kulturna politika se osredotoča predvsem na profesionalno in institucionalno kulturo, odgovornost za sodelovanje v amaterski kulturi pa prepušča lokalnim občinam (Aadamsoo idr. 6). Občine pogosto nimajo dovolj človeških in finančnih virov za podporo in razvoj področja ljubiteljske kulture ter lokalne oziroma državne kulturne politike.

4. Kateri so trenutno največji izzivi estonskega ljubiteljskega gledališča?

Gledališča smo prosili, da označijo dva največja izziva (tabela 6). Trije največji so povezani s člansko problematiko, repertoarjem in financiranjem. Anketiranci so k izzivom lahko dodali tudi komentarje; z odlomki iz njih bomo podrobneje osvetlili navedene izzive.

| Največji izzivi | Število gledališč | Odstotek |
|---|-------------------|----------|
| Članska problematika | 41 | 48 % |
| Repertoar | 32 | 37 % |
| Financiranje | 31 | 36 % |
| Publiciteta in opaznost v medijih | 19 | 22 % |
| Kreativna ekipa (pomanjkanje, stalnost) | 19 | 22 % |
| Prostor (za vaje in predstave) | 14 | 16 % |
| Material za scenografijo | 14 | 16 % |
| Umetniško upravljanje | 11 | 13 % |
| Prostovoljci (pomanjkanje, stalnost) | 3 | 4 % |
| Sodelovanje z drugimi organizacijami | 3 | 4 % |
| Odbor in njegovi člani | 2 | 2 % |
| Zakoni in drugi predpisi | 0 | 0 % |
| Drugo | 9 | 10 % |

Tabela 6: Največji izzivi ljubiteljskih gledališč (možnost izbire dveh največjih).

Članska problematika, ki jo je označilo 48 % anketirancev, za estonska ljubiteljska gledališča predstavlja največji izziv. Težava je močno povezana z družbeno-političnimi razmerami na podeželju – urbanizacijo. Prebivalstvo v majhnih mestih in vaseh se stara, mladi pa običajno odhajajo ali jih sodelovanje ne zanima. Precej ljudi se tudi vozi na delo, posledice pa so nazorno opisane v naslednjem odlomku: »Delovna mesta so daleč od doma, ljudje se vračajo pozno. Konec tedna zato nameniš družini in počitku. Ni dovolj časa za vaje, čeprav ljudi sodelovanje zanima.«

Kadar ima organizacija tudi druge kulturne obveznosti, je tudi težko najti primerne termine za vaje: »Naša NVO organizira tudi druge dogodke, člani pa sodelujejo tudi v drugih organizacijah. Zato je včasih te dejavnosti treba odložiti, da se lahko sestanejo vsaj enkrat na teden. In kadar kdo manjka, mora na istem prizoru dvakrat delati celotna skupina.«

Gledališče kot organizacija ni odvisno le od igralcev, temveč tudi od ljudi z različnimi profili, znanji in spretnostmi. Ljubiteljsko gledališče je pogosto organizacija, ki

ima le »igrance«, ki hkrati iščejo ali izdelujejo kostume, iščejo ali izdelujejo scenografijo in rekvizite, oblikujejo ali tiskajo gradivo (programe, plakate), obveščajo javnost in oglašujejo, oblikujejo ozvočenje, prodajajo vstopnice na spletu in na lokaciji, organizirajo prevoz, prodajajo predstave in komunicirajo z možnimi prizorišči za gostovanje, vodijo dnevnik, nekdo je ‚specialist za človeške vire‘ in se ukvarja z vsemi možnimi administrativnimi vprašanji, nekdo išče besedila za uprizoritve in jih pripravlja za vaje, nekdo poleg igranja še režira.

Kritično število članov je ključnega pomena, ker so vse navedene dejavnosti pomembne v produkcijskem in uprizoritvenem procesu. Včasih je za vse te naloge odgovorna peščica ljudi. Zagotovo je to utrujajoče: »Vse moramo narediti sami, biti tako rekoč univerzalni. Le dve taki osebi imamo. Zelo sta obremenjeni. Nujno potrebujemo pomočnike.« Med člani zlahka pride do napetosti, saj ne morejo vsi le nastopati, temveč mora nekdo prevzeti odgovornost tudi za druge naloge. Zaradi članske problematike lahko pride do upada umetniške kakovosti, tudi kadar ta predstavlja glavno prioriteto ljubiteljskih gledališč.

Številni izpostavljajo tudi pomanjkanje ljudi, ki bi jih zanimale tehnične zadolžitve: »Pomanjkanje lučkarjev je največja težava, saj v majhnih podeželskih krajih zelo težko najdeš ljudi, ki jih to zanima.«

Že prej smo omenili, da ljubiteljska gledališča k sodelovanju privabljajo več žensk kot moških, zato težavo za mnoga gledališča predstavlja tudi pomanjkanje moških. Ker ljubiteljska gledališča k sodelovanju privabljajo več ljudi srednjih let, lahko prevladovanje žensk srednjih let v ansamblu povzroči težave pri iskanju primerne repertoarja – drugi največji izziv, na katerega je opozorilo 37 % gledališč: »Več kot polovica naših članov je starih 60 let ali več, zato je težko najti ustrezen repertoar zanje.« Poleg tega navadno vsi želijo tudi nastopati: »Pred izbiro repertoarja moraš oceniti, kdo lahko nastopa v zasedbi. Da bi obdržali skupino, morajo vsi dobiti vloge. Če nekoga ne zasedeš, se naslednjo sezono ne bo vrnil.«

Z uprizarjanjem dram, scenarijev ali glasbenih del so povezani tudi avtorski honorarji, ki predstavljajo tretjo največjo stroškovno postavko (prim. tabelo 3). Čeprav 53 % gledališč odrska besedila ustvarja sama, jih 87 % uporablja tudi obstoječe drame, s čimer se stroški lahko zvišajo. Dražje so zlasti sodobne drame, zato se nekatera gledališča raje odločajo za starejše. V skladu z Zakonom o avtorskih pravicah je treba avtorski honorar plačevati živečim avtorjem in 70 let po avtorjevi smrti (Autoriōiguse). Vendar se gledališča pogosto najraje odločajo za klasične predstave z začetka prejšnjega stoletja, ne le iz finančnih razlogov, temveč tudi zato, ker so v teh dramah liki dokaj številni in lahko nastopa veliko ljudi.

Tretji največji izziv (36 % anketirancev) je financiranje. Redno financiranje prejema 65 % ljubiteljskih gledališč, vendar to ni trajnostno, saj se jih tri četrtine prijavlja tudi za projektno. Prostore za vaje in predstave pogosto zagotavljajo lokalni kulturni domovi, vendar jih morajo gledališča pogosto deliti z drugimi ljubiteljskimi skupinami (amaterji pa aktivnosti večinoma želijo izvajati v večernih urah), prostori pa tudi niso vedno primerni za gledališko dejavnost. Včasih lokalni kulturni domovi kreativnemu vodji gledališča izplačujejo tudi manjšo plačo, vendar ta lahko znaša le 60 evrov mesečno. Številni anketiranci poudarjajo, da si ne morejo privoščiti gostovanj, gostovanja in festivali pa so pomembni za amaterje.

Čeprav več kot polovica gledališč namenja sredstva tudi za oglaševanje, zaradi pomanjkanja trajnostnega financiranja ne morejo organizirati strateških marketinških kampanj.

Predlagamo tri rešitve za navedene izzive. Prvič, kulturne prioritete in sistemi dodeljevanja subvencij s strani lokalnih občin bi morali biti preglednejši, kar bi ljubiteljskim gledališčem omogočilo boljše načrtovanje dejavnosti (financiranje) ter spodbudilo sedanje ali potencialne člane ljubiteljskih gledališč k vlaganju časa v gledališče (članstvo).

Drugič, estonsko ljubiteljsko gledališče temelji predvsem na vnaprej napisanih besedilih, kar je drago ter določa število in spol likov (članstvo). Režiserje in dramaturge, ki sodelujejo z amaterji, je treba naučiti tehnike snovalnega oziroma sodelovalnega gledališča in gledališča skupnosti (angl. community theatre). S tovrstnimi oblikami gledališkega ustvarjanja je mogoče zmanjšati izzive na področju repertoarja, članstva in financiranja.

Tretjič, prestiž in vrednost ljubiteljskega gledališča bi se lahko povečala tako, da bi se del simboličnega kapitala estonskega profesionalnega gledališča z različnimi načini sodelovanja prenesel na področje ljubiteljskega gledališča. Treba je organizirati posebna državna sredstva za podporo profesionalnim gledališčnikom, ki sodelujejo z amaterji. Vrednost ljubiteljskega gledališča se povečuje tudi z raziskavami na tem področju.

Zaključne opombe

V tem članku je bilo estonsko ljubiteljsko gledališče analizirano kot konsistentno in strukturirano polje (v bourdieuevskem smislu), kot je to običajno pri profesionalnem gledališču določene države. Na podlagi poglobljenih statističnih podatkov smo prišli do zaključka, da bi bila analiza ljubiteljskega gledališča – neurejenih in raznorodnih pojavov – lahko plodnejša, če ga ne bi raziskovali skozi lečo polja, temveč pokrajine, kot v zadnjem času v britanskih gledaliških študijah. Ekološki pristop h gledališču se

ne osredotoča na rezultate (predstave), temveč na procese, prakse, deljenje znanja in odnose; na načine, kako gledališče oblikuje človeška življenja, skupnosti in kraje (Nicholson idr. 6, 12). To pomeni, da bi bilo treba prakse različnih ljubiteljskih gledališč; odnose med člani skupin ter med skupino in skupnostjo; razloge, vrednote in vplive ljubiteljskega gledališča itd. raziskati v naslednji fazi.

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The article aims to present the first results of the first phase of the amateur theatre study conducted throughout Estonia in 2019 and to compare the results with the field of professional theatre. The article is divided into four parts. First, the authors introduce the methodology of the research. In the second part, they give a statistical overview of Estonian amateur theatre. After that, they compare the political strategies implemented in professional and amateur theatres. Finally, they introduce the biggest challenges of amateur groups and potential solutions.

Out of approximately 200 adult amateur theatres, 85 (43%) answered the questionnaire. Of those Estonian amateur theatres responding, 39% is a part of a larger organisation, usually a local cultural house. A few (29%) operate as NGOs, or they have no legal status (28%). 65% of the theatres receive regular funding, but many of them and almost all the others apply for project-based funding also. The most important funding body is local municipalities, which support 79% of the theatres. The highest cost items are transport and workshops. Estonian amateur theatres produce mostly spoken theatre. Festivals play a crucial role in the amateur theatre field, and most of the theatres attend festivals regularly. The three most significant challenges of amateurs are related to membership issues, repertoire and funding.

Keywords: amateur theatre, Estonian theatre, cultural policy, challenges of amateurs, STEP

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The Challenges of the Estonian Amateur Theatre Field¹

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Introduction

In 2018, the international working group STEP (Project on European Theatre Systems) started a comparative research project on the amateur theatre field. This article aims to present the first results of the first phase of the amateur theatre study conducted throughout Estonia and to compare the results with the field of professional theatre.

Estonia is a small country in Northern Europe. Theatre has always been an essential cornerstone of national identity here, and the number of theatre visits currently equals the number of inhabitants – 1.3 million. There are approximately 50 institutions that produce theatre with professionals, and almost 30 of them receive state subsidy. The Estonian amateur theatre field is also very active. According to Statistics Estonia (Statistikaamet), there were 431 amateur theatres in Estonia in 2018, approximately 200 of them are adult groups, and the rest are school theatres. The 150-year-long tradition of amateur theatres, mostly in rural areas, has always existed as if in a parallel universe to the mostly urban located professional theatres. Although Estonian professional theatre is quite well-covered by statistics and research, the amateur theatre has thus far been primarily outside the researcher's scope because of its relative distance (financially, politically and aesthetically) from the professional theatre field. The field is understood here in the Bourdieusian sense, meaning “a separate social universe having its own laws of functioning” (Bourdieu 162). Thus, this article is the first attempt to map the Estonian amateur theatre field.

The article is divided into four parts. First, we introduce the methodology of the research. In the second part, we give a statistical overview of Estonian amateur theatre. After that, we compare the political strategies implemented in the professional and amateur theatres. Finally, we introduce the biggest challenges of amateur groups and potential solutions.

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1. Methodology and questionnaire

In many European countries, quantitative data about the activities of professional theatres is gathered annually and centrally. On the contrary, the data about amateur theatres is either very general, random or incomplete. Therefore, we decided to start our project by collecting general data about amateur theatres following the same methodology that the STEP group used in its earlier research (See Van Maanen, Kotte, Saro and *Amfiteater*). The collectively-developed questionnaire relied partly on examples already in use in the Netherlands and in Switzerland to make our findings comparable with existing data.

In general, the questions are the same for each country; some varieties might be found in the answers because of cultural differences.² It was also possible to add questions, which are not of interest from the comparative perspective but have local importance, to the end of the questionnaire. The first version of the questionnaire was developed in English and then translated into local languages. In Estonia, the questionnaire was then reviewed by the board of the Estonian Amateur Theatre Association and by other experts. Following their suggestions, questions were added about the geographical reach of theatres and about the participation in festivals (the importance of festivals will be discussed later). In each county, the questionnaire was sent to the theatres giving public performances (accessible to everybody), which means that in Estonia, the school theatres were left out from the research.

The questionnaire consisted of three parts:

- 1) Questions concerning the functioning of the theatre: name, founding year, address, legal status, number and division of members according to age and gender. We also asked how the number of members has changed during recent years, whether actors receive training and which are the two biggest challenges the theatre is facing right now.
- 2) Questions concerning the funding of the theatre: who is funding and how, what are the highest cost items and the evaluation of the current economic situation.
- 3) Questions about the artistic activities: number of premières, performances and visits during the last year; the geographical range of giving performances and receiving visits; the types of performances; the types of texts used for performances; the languages used (as well as dialects); the target groups; performing in festivals in Estonia and abroad; possible collaborations with professionals and amateurs.

² For example, in Malta "church" was listed as one of the options to the list of funding bodies. In Estonia, this was not the case, as churches generally do not support amateur groups.

We conducted the research among the Estonian amateur theatres in spring 2019 with the aim of mapping the institutional, economic and aesthetic functioning of the theatres. With the help of the Estonian Amateur Theatre Association, the questionnaire was distributed among its members (65 theatres) and through its contact persons in 14 Estonian counties.

Out of approximately 200 adult amateur theatres, 85 (43%) answered the questionnaire. In some cases, there were two different people from the same theatre answering the questionnaire, and their responses were different. We included the responses that were posted last. The sample was not entirely representative. Thus, the responses could not be generalised to the whole amateur theatre field. Still, considering the variety of groups answering the questionnaire, some tendencies are predominant and characterise the field in general.

2. What characterises the Estonian amateur theatre field?

The general overview of the results is divided into three parts: general organisational aspects, the funding and artistic activities.

2.1. Organisational aspects

The Estonian amateur theatres are generally steady organisations – 80% of them are regularly operating. The highest number of theatres (39%) are part of a larger organisation, usually a local cultural house (Table 1). Fewer theatres (29%) operate as NGOs³, or they have no legal status (29%). The latter theatres might find it difficult to apply for project-based funding because often only a legal body can apply for this type of funding.

| Legal body | Number of theatres | Per cent |
|-------------------------------|--------------------|-------------|
| Part of a larger organisation | 32 | 39% |
| NGO | 25 | 29% |
| No legal body | 25 | 29% |
| Private limited company | 2 | 2% |
| Other | 1 | 1% |
| Total | 85 | 100% |

Table 1. The legal bodies of Estonian amateur theatres.

³ NGO – non-governmental organisation.

Even though the challenges related to membership issues are among the biggest (see below), 50% of the theatres state that the number of their members has been stable for the last three years; in 28% of the theatres, the number has risen. Approximately one-fifth of the organisations have experienced a decrease of members.

On average, there are 14 members in an Estonian amateur theatre (minimum of 2 and maximum of 70). Having supporting members (who either support financially or offer services for free) seems not to be a common practice in Estonia since 62% of the theatres claim to have no so-called passive members. However, the more members – either active or passive – a theatre has, the stronger the connections it can form with the local community and the more it can increase its social relevance.

According to the data by Statistics Estonia (Statistikaamet), women take part in different cultural activities twice as often as men. Our research confirms this statistic since 66% of the members of the amateur theatres are female, and 34% are male. This ratio is similar to the division of spectators in professional theatre, for which, among the theatre-goers older than 15 years, 62% were women, and 38% were men in 2017 (Leinbock 388). At the same time, the gender division of professional actors is more equitable: there are 286 male and 264 female members in the Association of Professional Actors of Estonia (Sein).

As Estonia has a very lively school theatre scene, only 11% of the members of the adult amateur theatres are younger than 20 years. The largest number of members (51%) are 41–65 years old, followed by 21–40 years old (30% of the members). The smallest number of members (8%) are older than 65 years. People in their 40s and 50s often have more time for hobbies, as less time is needed for childcare or studies. Likewise, they should have fewer health problems than people in their 60s and 70s.

2.2. Funding

Of those responding, 65% of the theatres have regular, i.e., monthly, quarterly or annual funding. This percentage shows that the majority of theatres have a stable income, but of course, it varies among theatres. Despite this, 65% of the theatres apply for project-based funding, among them, also 35% of the theatres with a stable income, as well as others, which do not have stable funding from some local organisation or municipality. The support on the local level usually means free access to rehearsal rooms provided by the local cultural house or that the local municipality is paying the salary of the artistic leader or director. Other costs are usually covered either by members or by project-based funding.

The most significant funding body is local municipalities, which support 79% of the theatres (Table 2). This is because the local amateur activities and hobby education are funded by local municipalities. 59% of the theatres also collect fees from their members or receive services and goods from them. 39% of the theatres are funded by the state by applying for project-based funding from the Estonian Cultural Endowment and the Folk Culture Centre. A little bit more than one third also have sponsors, less than one-tenth are supported by local organisations. It is striking that only one of the theatres has gotten support from a private fund and none through crowdfunding. Amateur theatres also sell tickets to their performances.

| Funding body | Number of theatres | Per cent |
|--|--------------------|----------|
| Local municipality | 67 | 79% |
| Membership fees and free services and goods from members | 50 | 59% |
| State | 33 | 39% |
| Sponsors (money, services, goods) | 29 | 35% |
| Regional organisation | 6 | 7% |
| None | 4 | 5% |
| Private fund | 1 | 1% |
| Crowdfunding | 0 | 0% |

Table 2. Main funding bodies.

Almost half of the theatres consider their financial status satisfactory; 20% rate it as poor and 5% alarming. Only six theatres find their financial status good or very good, and all these are a part of a larger organisation or operate as NGOs. Only two of those are funded regularly, and the other four combine regular and project-based funding. Thus, it can be concluded that economic satisfaction is not only connected to a legal body or to the number of funding bodies.

As many of the theatres are situated in local cultural houses (or in other organisations of the same type), costs on rent and utilities are minimal. This is in contrast to

professional theatres, in which these types of expenses form a big part of the budget. This situation is somewhat more complicated for the theatres operating in cities. They often do not have their own rehearsal spaces and must rent rehearsal rooms and a stage for performances and can use the stage only during the last few stage rehearsals before the première.

The highest cost items are transport and workshops (for 87% of the theatres) (Table 3). The transport costs include travelling to festivals and guest performances. Festivals are a crucial means for showing performances to wider audiences, learning from each other, making new acquaintances and therefore strengthening the amateur theatre community.

The second-biggest expenditures are made on set design and costumes (73%). It is quite clear that amateur theatres do not want to skimp on artistic qualities and use an empty stage or minimal set design. Set design and costumes that depict specific places or characters can improve the quality of the production and the actors' performance by creating a particular atmosphere for them.

Thirdly, 59% of the theatres spend money on authorship fees (see also the biggest challenges for amateur theatres henceforth) and 53% on advertising. Less than half also point out salaries of technical and creative staff, rent of performing venues and expenditure on plays, texts and other similar costs. Considering that the groups consist of amateur actors, hardly any of them get any fee.

| Cost item | Number of theatres | Per cent |
|--|--------------------|----------|
| Transport and workshops | 74 | 87% |
| Set design, costumes, etc. | 62 | 73% |
| Authorship fees | 50 | 59% |
| Advertising | 45 | 53% |
| Fees for directors | 38 | 45% |
| Fees for the technical team (light and sound design, etc.) | 31 | 36% |
| Rent of performing spaces | 23 | 27% |
| Fees for the creative team (set design, composer, etc.) | 20 | 24% |
| Expenditure on the source text | 11 | 13% |
| Fees for actors | 9 | 11% |
| Rent of rehearsal rooms | 7 | 8% |

Table 3. The highest cost items for amateur theatres.

In conclusion, the highest costs of amateur theatres are related to performing and self-development (workshops), in contrast to professional theatres, which spend the most on personnel and utility costs.

2.3. Performing activities

In general, the theatres in our survey prepare a première one to three times a year and give around 11 performances during a year or a season. Only 25% of the theatres give 20 or more performances during a year.

The most popular type of theatre is spoken (produced by 91% of the theatres), followed by 29% of different types of *Kleinkunst* or comic short forms (stand-up, skits, cabaret, etc.) (Table 4).

| Type of theatre | Number of theatres | Per cent |
|--------------------------|--------------------|----------|
| Spoken theatre | 77 | 91% |
| Music theatre | 9 | 11% |
| Dance theatre | 3 | 4% |
| Puppet theatre | 2 | 2% |
| Stand-up, skits, cabaret | 25 | 29% |
| Physical theatre | 7 | 8% |

Table 4. Types of theatre produced by amateur theatres.

Amateurs also make more demanding types of productions such as music, dance, physical and puppet theatre. Under the category “Other”, few theatres mentioned also Playback Theatre or improvisational theatre. This division is quite similar to the division of types of theatre produced by professionals.⁴ Likewise, professionals produce spoken theatre the most (63% of performances in 2018), followed by dance⁵ (11% of the repertoire) and music performances (8%) (Sippol 382).

87% of the theatres use existing plays for their productions. A little more than half (53%) perform texts devised by the group or written by a single member of the company. Devised theatre could be a way to overcome such obstacles as expensive authorship fees or challenges of finding suitable repertoire (see below). A quarter of

⁴Even though the Estonian Theatre Agency, which is responsible for collecting data about professional theatre, counts the number of productions and we counted the number of theatres in our survey, the patterns of performing activities can be compared on these bases.

⁵The totals of the categories “dance theatre” and “physical theatre” in our survey should be summed to make them comparable with the category “dance theatre” in the data of the Estonian Theatre Agency.

the theatres also stage adaptations of movies, novels, etc.

Eighty-three theatres give performances in Estonian; eight additional groups also use a dialect (Tartu, Võru and Mulgi are Southern Estonian dialects, Hiiu and Saare dialects are spoken on the two biggest islands in the West of the country); and two groups perform in Russian.⁶ One improvisational theatre has also performed in English.

The main target group for the majority (92%) of theatres are people over 20 years old. Families are seen as a target group by 40% of the theatres, young audiences by 24% and children (younger than 12) by 13%. Additionally, elderly people and teachers were pointed out as target groups. In professional theatre in the period of 2016–2018, 71% of the productions are made for adults, 21% for children, 8% for teenagers and young people (people between 12–20 years old) (Eesti Teatri Agentuur). Even though the methodology to collect data about professional theatres differs from ours (see footnote 4), we can conclude that amateur theatres are more focused on young audiences and teenagers compared to professional theatres. Unfortunately, the statistics about professional theatre do not distinguish productions targeted for families, but it can be assumed that many of the children and youth performances are also enjoyable for parents and other accompanying adults.

Amateur theatres are quite local in their activities: 44% of performances are given on their home stages; about 25% in the area of 20 km; and 33% of performances further than 20 km. The audience is even more local: 54% of them are assumed to come from the city or village where the theatre operates; 24% is from the area of 20 km; and 23% come from further away. This means that theatres go to their audiences instead of the other way around.

It is vital for amateur theatres to perform at festivals, and only 13% of the theatres have not done that. 72% of the theatres have attended a festival in Estonia and 15%, in addition, have performed at a foreign festival. Estonian amateur theatre festivals make a lively scene with a long history. Each year there are regional festivals in all 14 counties as well as some dedicated festivals, specialising in mono or short performances, an author or improvisation. The Estonian Amateur Theatre Association organises an annual festival that is open for everybody and, in every second year, a national festival that presents only preselected performances considered to be at a high artistic level or demonstrate the diversity of the field.

We were also interested in how much amateur theatres collaborate with each other and with professionals. A little bit more than a half of the theatres (55%) have collaborated with other amateur theatres, more than a quarter (31%) with

⁶The capital city Tallinn, located at the Northern coast of Estonia is the centre of local immigration. 583,000 people, i.e., 44% of the Estonian population, live in Tallinn or in the surrounding Harju county. Russian is the biggest minority language in Estonia with 28% of the population using it daily. (Statistikaamet)

professional directors and choreographers, one-fifth (20%) with professional actors or dancers. There has been less collaboration with professional set designers (13%), playwrights (11%) and professional musicians and singers (8%). A quarter of the theatres have not collaborated with anyone.

| Collaboration | Number of theatres | Per cent |
|--|--------------------|----------|
| Other amateur theatres | 49 | 55 % |
| Professional directors and choreographers | 26 | 31 % |
| Professional actors and dancers | 17 | 20 % |
| Professional set designers, light designers, composers, etc. | 11 | 13 % |
| Professional playwrights | 9 | 11 % |
| Professional musicians and singers | 6 | 8 % |
| No one | 24 | 28 % |

Table 5. Collaboration with other bodies.

Under the option “other”, theatres also marked amateur musicians and choirs and experts (for example, in local cultural history or anthropology) during the rehearsal process. It was also mentioned that even if there is no collaboration at the moment, amateurs are interested, but “afraid to offer themselves” for collaborative projects.

3. What kind of functions do the professional theatre and the amateur theatre have in Estonian cultural policy?

To understand the functions and value of the amateur theatre in Estonia, it is reasonable to compare it to professional theatre. For that, we use six strategic dilemmas of cultural policy as presented by François Matarasso and Charles Landry (1999) in their work *Balancing Act: Twenty-one Strategic Dilemmas in Cultural Policy*. These dilemmas have also been used in the study *The main terms and tendencies in Estonian cultural policy* (Aadamsoo et al.), in which experts of different arts compared how the dilemmas appear in the policy and in the practice of different fields.

1. Culture as the arts or Culture as a way of life. Amateur culture, despite its content, is gathered under the umbrella term “folk culture” in Estonia and is considered to be a separate field next to other professional arts, i.e., theatre policies do not embrace the amateur culture. The experts of folk culture considered the dilemma as an opposition between professional and amateur culture in Estonia (Aadamsoo et al. 6, 8).

2. Cultural democracy or Democratisation of culture. When cultural democracy prioritises access to culture (consumption) among different social groups, then the democratisation of culture aims to increase access to the means of cultural production (Matarasso, Landry 13–14). Emanating from the breach between professional and amateur arts as separated systems of funding and governance, cultural democracy dominates in the field of professional art and the democratisation of culture in the field of amateur culture (Aadamsoo et al. 6, 10). State subsidies to the professional theatre are allocated based on audience numbers and artistic quality. The principles and values of the support systems of amateur theatres vary and need further investigation. Based on limited empirical material, we assume that either participation in general (through free access to cultural houses) and diversity of cultural production (minority languages and cultures, for example) are supported.

3. Heritage or Contemporary. The term “folk culture” already in itself indicates an inclination towards traditional values and aesthetics. In Estonian professional theatre, novelty is more valued, despite the implicit task to preserve Estonian language and cultural heritage.

4. Consumption or Production. Subsidies to professional theatres depend mostly on consumption and subsidies to amateur theatres on participation, i.e., on production. (See also Dilemma 2.)

5. Centralisation or Decentralisation. In Estonian state cultural policy, centralisation dominates, since professional arts are subsidised and governed predominantly by the Ministry of Culture. All municipal subsidies to professional theatres were on average 3% of theatres’ budgets (Sippol 385). Politics and financial support of amateur culture (incl. theatre) is decentralised and depends mostly on local municipalities. There are 79 municipalities (15 cities and 64 parishes) in Estonia; thus, the diversity of different politics and support allocation systems is considerable. Nevertheless, local governments support more than 80% of the theatres, often the subsidies are very low because of the scarce budget of small (low number of inhabitants) municipalities. Because of that, state and project-based funding are also crucial to amateurs.

6. Infrastructure or Activity. When both infrastructure and activity of professional theatres are supported by the state, then often only infrastructure (a space for rehearsals and performances) is provided for amateurs by local municipalities (Aadamsoo et al. 44–47). 39% of the amateur theatres are part of a larger organisation (usually a local cultural house), and only 8% of respondents stated that they have to pay for rehearsal rooms. Nevertheless, some municipalities do not support activities of amateur theatres at all or support only youngsters and retired people.

In conclusion, the professional theatre and the amateur theatre in Estonia are separated from each other legally, economically and aesthetically. Estonian cultural policy is mainly focused on professional and institutional culture, leaving the responsibility for participation in culture to local municipalities (Aadamsoo et al. 6). Municipalities often lack human and financial resources to support and develop the amateur culture field and local or state cultural policy.

4. What are currently the biggest challenges of Estonian amateur theatre?

We asked theatres to mark two of their biggest challenges (Table 6). The three biggest are connected to membership issues, repertoire and funding. The respondents also had a chance to comment on these challenges, and extracts of the comments will be used to illustrate the challenges more thoroughly.

| Biggest challenges | Number of theatres | Per cent |
|--|--------------------|----------|
| Membership issues | 41 | 48% |
| Repertoire | 32 | 37% |
| Funding | 31 | 36% |
| Publicity and visibility in media | 19 | 22% |
| The creative team (lack of it, maintaining it) | 19 | 22% |
| Space (rehearsal and performance) | 14 | 16% |
| Set design materials | 14 | 16% |
| Artistic management | 11 | 13% |
| Volunteers (lack, maintaining them) | 3 | 4% |
| Cooperation with other organisations | 3 | 4% |
| Board and board members | 2 | 2% |
| Laws and regulations | 0 | 0% |
| Other | 9 | 10% |

Table 6. The biggest challenges of amateur theatres (possibility to choose the two biggest).

Membership issues, marked by 48% of the respondents, makes it the biggest challenge for Estonian amateur theatres. The problem is strongly connected to the socio-political situation in rural areas and urbanisation. The population in small towns and villages is ageing; young people tend to leave or are not interested in participating. A considerable amount of people also commute because of work, which leads to a situation best characterised like this: "Workplaces are far away from home, people arrive late. Weekends are dedicated to families and taking time off. There is not enough time for rehearsals even though people are interested in participating."

It is also hard to find suitable rehearsal times when the organisation also has other cultural obligations: "Our NGO also organises other events, the members are also participating in other organisations. Therefore, these activities sometimes have to be put off to meet at least once a week. And when someone is missing, the whole group has to work with the same scene twice."

Theatre as an organisation depends not only on actors but also on people with different profiles, knowledge and skills. An amateur theatre is often an organisation that has "actors", who are at the same time looking for or making costumes, looking for or making set design and props, designing or printing (programmes, posters), doing publicity and advertising, inventing sound systems, selling tickets online and on the location, organising transport, selling performances and communicating with possible guest venues, keeping the chronicle, someone is the "HR specialist" and dealing with all kinds of administrative issues someone is looking for texts to stage and also preparing them for rehearsals, someone is also directing in addition to acting.

A critical amount of members is crucial because all the activities mentioned above are relevant in production and performing processes. Sometimes all these tasks are the responsibility of a few people. Surely, this is tiring: "We have to do all by ourselves, to be, so to say, universal. We have only two such persons. They are carrying a hard burden. We urgently need helpers." Tensions between members rise easily since not all members can only act onstage, but some should also take responsibility for other tasks. Because of the membership issues, artistic quality may suffer a decline, even when high quality is a top priority of amateur theatres.

Many point out the lack of people who would be interested in technical tasks: "The lack of lighting technicians is the biggest problem because in small rural areas it is very difficult to find people interested in this."

As previously mentioned, amateur theatres attract more female than male participants, and the lack of men is also a problem for many. As amateur theatres also attract more middle-aged people, the situation in which many members are middle-aged women can raise problems in finding suitable repertoire; this is the second-biggest challenge,

pointed out by 37% of the theatres: “As more than a half of our members are 60 years old or older, it is quite hard to find suitable repertoire for them.” Besides, usually, all members want to be onstage: “You have to choose the repertoire by evaluating who can be in the cast. To retain the group, everybody has to get a part. If you leave someone out, they will not return the next season.”

Staging plays, scenarios or music works also implies authorship fees, which are marked as the third-highest cost item (see Table 3). Even though 53% of the theatres stage texts created by themselves, 87% use also existing plays that could raise the costs. Especially contemporary plays are more expensive, which makes some of the theatres prefer older ones. According to the Copyright Law, one has to pay authorship fees to living authors and for 70 years after his or her death (Autoriõiguse). The theatres often prefer classical plays from the beginning of the 20th century not only because of financial reasons but also because the many characters in these plays allow for many persons to be onstage.

Funding is the third-biggest challenge (36% of respondents). 65% of amateur theatres are funded regularly, but this is not sustainable, as 65% also apply for project-based money. Rooms for rehearsals and performing are often provided by local cultural houses. Yet, often, a theatre has to share it with other hobby groups (amateurs mostly want to practise their hobbies in the evening hours) or the rooms are not suitable for making theatre. Sometimes local cultural houses also pay a small salary to the creative head of theatre, but it could be as little as 60 euros per month. Many of the respondents point out that they cannot afford to give guest performances, yet touring and festivals are essential for amateurs.

Even though more than half of the theatres spend money on publicity, the lack of sustainable funding prevents the possibilities of strategic publicity campaigns.

We propose three solutions to the challenges.

First, cultural priorities and subsidy allocation systems of local municipalities should be more transparent, enabling amateur theatres to plan their activities better (funding) and encouraging current or potential members of amateur theatres to invest their time in theatre (membership).

Second, Estonian amateur theatre is based predominantly on pre-written texts, which is costly and which determines the number and gender of characters (membership). Directors and dramaturgs working with amateurs should learn techniques such as rewriting, devised theatre and community theatre. These forms of theatre-making diminish the challenges with repertoire, membership and funding.

Third, transferring some of the symbolic capital of Estonian professional theatre to

the field of amateur theatre through different forms of collaboration could raise the prestige and value of amateur theatre. Special state funds should be established that support theatre professionals who work with amateurs. Research on amateur theatre also raises the value of the field.

Concluding remarks

In this article, we analysed Estonian amateur theatre as a consistent and structured field (in the Bourdieusian sense), as is usually done with the professional theatre of a country. When delving into the statistical data, we concluded that the analysis of amateur theatre – unregulated and heterogeneous phenomena – might be more fruitful when investigated not through the lens of a field but of a landscape, as is done in recent British theatre scholarship. An ecological approach to theatre focuses not on outcomes (performances) but on processes, practices, shared knowledge and relations, on the ways theatre models human lives, communities and places (Nicholson et al. 6, 12). It means that the next phase should investigate practices of different amateur theatres; relationships between members of a group and between a group and a community; and the reasons, values and influences of amateur theatre, etc.

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