

The aim of the article is to compare the production and distribution of theatre in the cities of Aarhus (Denmark), Debrecen (Hungary), Groningen (The Netherlands), Maribor (Slovenia) and Tartu (Estonia), and to discern whether the differences or similarities in theatre systems can be related to the differences and similarities in production (productions), distribution (performances) and consumption (visits). The findings are based on the analysis of the extensive data recorded by the *City Study* of the Project on European Theatre Systems (STEP).

All the public theatrical events of one season (between the years 2010–2011) of these five cities were collected and divided into seven types of theatre: Spoken Theatre, Dance, Musical Theatre, *Kleinkunst*, Puppet and Object Theatre, *Cirque Nouveau* and Show, and Physical Theatre. Spoken Theatre clearly dominates in the majority of the cities (competing often with Musical Theatre). In the article, we also discuss how the cultural traditions, the structure of the theatre system, the policy aspects of the theatre system and the economics of theatre production influence the production, distribution and consumption of theatre.

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## Keywords

theatre systems, distribution of theatre, production of theatre, supply, theatre types, genres, international comparative theatre survey, STEP

# Theatre Production and Distribution in Different European Cities

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## Introduction

This research about the theatre supply in different cities is based on five cities in five different European countries: Aarhus in Denmark, Debrecen in Hungary, Groningen in the Netherlands, Maribor in Slovenia and Tartu in Estonia. These cities have some common features: they are neither capital cities nor the theatre capitals of their countries. They are university cities and cultural centres of their regions, with their number of inhabitants varies from 240,000 to 100,000 (see Table 1). In addition, four of them – Maribor, Aarhus, Tartu and Debrecen – are all the second biggest cities in their countries. Groningen is the biggest city in the north of the Netherlands. To analyse the functioning of theatre systems in these cities, information about all public theatrical events (performances of professional and amateur theatre) from one season or one calendar year (depending on the city) during the period 2010–2011 were collected and entered into a spreadsheet.

The aim of this article is to compare the production and distribution of theatre in these cities and to discern whether the differences or similarities in theatre systems can be related to the differences and similarities in production (productions), distribution (performances) and consumption (visits). First, in Section 1, we describe the general statistical background of the cities and the production and distribution of theatre. In Section 2, we then discuss the methodology, terminology and problems of data collecting. The analysis and discussion of the data is divided into three sections: the division of productions (Section 3), performances (Section 4) and visits (Section 5) between different types of theatre.

The research for this article has been supported by the Estonian Research Council (grant “Emergent Stories: Storytelling and Joint Sense Making in Narrative Environments”; PUT 192), the Municipality of Groningen and Slovenian Research Agency (project No. P6-0376, Theatre and Transars Research programme).

The article is based on the data collected by the following researchers of the Project on European Theatre Systems (STEP) group: Magdolna Balkányi (Debrecen), Louise Ejgod Hansen (Aarhus), Andreas Kotte and Frank Gerber (Bern), Hans van Maanen (Groningen), Ksenija Repina Kramberger and Maja Šorli (Maribor) and Hedi-Liis Toome (Tartu).

## General theatrical background of the cities

The cities in Table 1 are presented in alphabetical order but, coincidentally, the population also decreases from left to right, presenting Aarhus as the biggest city and Tartu as the smallest. Unfortunately, the table does not give any information about the geographical location and cultural background of the cities. It is somewhat important to stress that Groningen is located in Western Europe, Aarhus in Northern Europe; Debrecen, Maribor and Tartu could perhaps be united under the notion of Eastern or Central Eastern Europe.<sup>1</sup>

Table 1. *Population, productions, performances and theatre visits in the cities of the STEP City Study*

City	Aarhus	Debrecen	Groningen	Maribor	Tartu
Population in the year of research	240,000	210,000	190,000	110,000	100,000
The year of the data gathering	Season 2010/2011	Season 2010/2011	Season 2010/2011	Season 2010/2011	Year 2010
Productions per year	171	275	489	138	160
Performances per year	1103	1014	979	678	680
Visits per year	226,866	203,544	203,808	170,064	156,916
Performances per production	6.5	3.7	2.0	4.9	4.3
Visits per production	1,327	741	417	1,232	980
Visits per performance	206	201	208	251	230
Visits per inhabitant	0.95	0.97	1.07	1.55	1.56

Notes. The data from Aarhus and Maribor include only professional supply.

When looking at the number of productions per year, it strikes the eye that there is a considerable number of different productions (489) available in Groningen. This number is mainly an outcome of the Dutch touring theatre system and the separation of the production and the distribution domains (see more about the Dutch theatre system in Van Maanen "The Dutch Theatre System" and Van Maanen "How Theatrical" and the comparison of theatre systems in the current issue). As one can also see, the average number of performances of a single

<sup>1</sup> The cultural and theatrical background of these countries is analysed more thoroughly in the article on theatre systems in the present volume but is also considered in Hansen, Lelkes, Saro "Introduction", Saro "The Interaction of Theatre and Society: the Example of Estonia", Sušec Michieli, Van Maanen "The Dutch theatre system: a world of independents", Van Maanen "How Theatrical Events Determine Theatre's Functioning in Society". Estonia is often considered a Baltic state, but in some classifications is considered Northern or Eastern Europe. Hungary is considered either Central or Eastern Europe, depending upon the classification system. And Slovenia is most often classified as Central Europe, but is sometimes considered South Eastern Europe. All three countries share a socialist or communist background, Estonia and Hungary influenced by the Soviet Union and Slovenia as part of the former Yugoslavia.

production in Groningen is 2.0 because most of the works shown there are so called guest performances; as such, most productions are usually performed only once in the city. At the same time, some groups function partly as city or city-region companies (Van Maanen, "How Theatrical" 490, 492), but they also tour a lot, performing in Groningen only for a few times.

Maribor and Tartu seem to have quite similar production and distribution domains because the number of inhabitants, productions, performances and visits is almost the same. (The amateur theatre in the data about Tartu does not influence the balance much.)

But data from Aarhus and Debrecen reveal an intriguing difference when compared to each other. Even though the population of the cities is similar (Aarhus having 14% more inhabitants), the number of productions in Debrecen, however, exceed those in Aarhus by 38%. From the perspective of a spectator, the people living in Debrecen and Groningen should appreciate the wide variety of works available in the theatres of their cities; looking from the economic perspective, however, one can detect a rather low exploitation of productions in Debrecen and especially in Groningen – every production is performed on average only 3–4 or 1–2 times, respectively, in contrast to 6–7 performances per production in Aarhus. Because of the limited number of the performances of a production, the audience numbers per production are also quite low in Groningen (421) and Debrecen (741) compared to the other cities where there are almost 1000 visits or more per production. There is a rather small difference between the average number of visits per performance in Debrecen, Aarhus and Groningen (201–208); Tartu with 231 and Maribor with 251 visits come forth. This difference can be explained by the size of venues and the policy of repertoire making (this will be discussed in the end of the article). But the reasons of the small number of performances per production in Debrecen lies probably in the limited number of potential audiences (see the article on theatre audiences in the current issue) and in the considerable amount of guest performances. The statement is also supported by the number of theatre visits per inhabitant that is the second lowest (0.97) in Debrecen. Statistically, people in Groningen are quite active theatre goers, visiting theatre once per year on the average. But even for them it is difficult to compete with Maribor and Tartu, where there are 1.6 theatre visits per inhabitant. A deeper insight into the statistics as well as an interpretation of the numbers is provided further in the article.

## Methodology

We collected the data about different public theatrical events<sup>2</sup> in each of the five cities and entered it into a spreadsheet. In the file, we entered the name of the production, the number of performances of a production, the number of theatre visits it attracted during the period under research, the type of production and, if necessary, also the genre of the production. Table 2 introduces the types and genres that were agreed upon by the research group after long discussions (one sees later in the article that not all the types and genres are present in all the five cities).

The consensus to use certain types and genres of theatre brings out the crucial observations of international comparative research – first, how to distinguish between different types and genres on the national and comparative levels; second, how to define the types and genres in the first place so that they are suitable for and representative of different countries; and third, how to be sure that the agreed and discussed genres are finally understood the same way by researchers from different countries with differently built theatre systems and with different cultural backgrounds. The STEP research group realised that every researcher came to the discussion about different types and genres based foremost on their own expert knowledge on their own local theatre system.

For example, there are some types and genres that are available for public in some cities and are therefore counted as public theatrical events and in some other cities the same type or genre is performed mostly for some local community. People learn about these events only when one is a member of the community or knows people belonging to the community and because of that researchers doing quantitative inquiry can hardly access and cover these performances. For instance, this is the case with Folk Dance in Hungary, where many semi-professional Folk Dance groups give public performances in the framework of theatre institutions or theatrical events. This is different from Estonia and Slovenia where Folk Dance is only performed by amateurs and is not considered part of the field of theatre.

Stand-up Comedy is another example of a genre on the borderline of the theatre system. Especially in highly subsidised theatre systems such as in Denmark, Stand-up Comedy is not regarded as “proper theatre” and is not included in the publicly subsidised part of the system, but is presented in the same commercial venues as other types of theatre. This becomes visible in the Danish data set: in

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<sup>2</sup> For example, the data about performances in schools or kindergartens were not collected, because these are closed events and not available in the public supply.

the Musikhuset Aarhus (a semi-commercial venue) 10 of 111 productions in the season 2010/2011 were Stand-up Comedy.<sup>3</sup> In the discussions within STEP about categories of theatre, we agreed that even though some of the forms of theatre that are so typical for one country do not appear in other countries, such forms have to be included in the research. To better understand the particularities of theatre in these five cities, the research group met annually in one of the researched cities and visited theatre performances and, as necessary, discussed the particular performances with the help of videos or other documentation.

Thus, we decided to use seven main types of theatre when categorising the productions and performances shown in the cities: 1) Spoken Theatre; 2) Musical Theatre; 3) Dance; 4) *Kleinkunst*<sup>4</sup>; 5) Puppet and Object Theatre; 6) *Cirque Nouveau* and Show; and 7) Physical Theatre. Three of these types – Musical Theatre, Dance and *Kleinkunst* – are also divided into genres.

Table 2. *Types and genres of theatre*

Types	Genres
1) Spoken Theatre	
2) Musical Theatre	- Opera/Operetta - Musical - Music Theatre - Theatre Concert
3) Dance	- Classical Ballet - Contemporary Dance - Folk Dance - Urban Dance
4) <i>Kleinkunst</i>	- Cabaret - Stand-up Comedy - Improvisational Theatre - Performance of a Singer/Songwriter
5) Puppet and Object Theatre	
6) <i>Cirque Nouveau</i> and Show	
7) Physical Theatre	

The decision not to use genres for Spoken Theatre (for example: Comedy, Drama, Tragedy or Performance-based versus Text-based, etc.) was a difficult choice but

<sup>3</sup> The fact that Stand-up is not a part of the established theatre distribution system in all cities makes it difficult to count it based on venues, since it also takes place in venues not otherwise used for theatre.

<sup>4</sup> The term *Kleinkunst* (used in both German and Dutch) was chosen because the term “Stand-up” was too narrow for describing the essence of this category and the Dutch word *cabaret* has a different specific meaning in Danish and Estonian.

it was agreed on that those genres were not relevant for this research.<sup>5</sup> Puppet and Object Theatre, *Cirque Nouveau* and Show, as well as Physical Theatre are types of theatre that are quite distinct and do not necessitate further categorisation into genres.

*Cirque Nouveau* and Show are combined into one category for type of theatre because both of these types use music and body movement yet differently from Musical Theatre or Dance. *Cirque Nouveau* is a type of circus that puts more emphasis on the storyline and aesthetics of the performance if compared to the traditional circus that is built on individual challenging acts and animal tricks that as a whole do not create a narrative. Show refers to performances that mix music, dance and drama that often have a high entertainment factor and are presented for huge audiences for commercial reasons. Physical Theatre is a type of theatre that uses aesthetics mainly based on physical means of expression such as hand gestures, body language and body movement, but is not considered exclusively dance (see Kennedy 462).

As mentioned, three types of theatre were broken down into genres. These are needed because hypothetically these genres should attract different kinds of audiences (for example, the audiences for Urban (Street) Dance and Ballet are not the same) compared to the other four types that each should attract more similar audiences (for example, people attending Puppet Theatre would also attend Object Theatre performances). Thus, further defining the genres was necessary for the types Musical Theatre, Dance and *Kleinkunst*.

There are four genres of Musical Theatre. Opera and Operetta are combined because both are usually based on classical music and this makes these two genres similar to each other and different from every other Musical Theatre genre. Even though Operetta could be considered more of an entertainment genre and therefore closer to Musicals, both Opera and Operetta need classically trained soloists and are mostly sung by opera singers. In addition, the audience research in Tartu shows that people who visit Opera also visit Operetta, as opposed to Musical audiences who do not visit Opera or Operetta (Toome 168). The genre Musical uses dramatic elements, music and dance in quite balanced proportions, but music nevertheless takes the leading role. Music Theatre is a rare genre, especially characteristic for the Netherlands; it uses music and text

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<sup>5</sup> Spoken Theatre is the term chosen by the STEP group. Since the term “drama” also has connotations of a genre and playwriting, we decided to avoid it. The classical division of Spoken Theatre into Tragedy, Comedy and Drama is not very effective nowadays because Tragedy is rarely fully present and the thin line between Drama and Comedy often depends on individual reception. Also questionable is what genres like these say about the style of performances. The division between Text-based and Performance-based does say more about the style of performance, but since most of the productions would be either Text-based or in-between these two categories, these terms were also abandoned.

to an equal degree, usually having a storyline with musical interludes (songs) added or with music supporting the full dramatic storyline. Theatre Concert is a particularly Danish genre, normally based on an existing oeuvre of a particular band that is reinterpreted in a non-traditional way and performed live on stage in a staging that creates a universe, but normally not a storyline.

Dance theatre is divided into four different genres: Classical Ballet, Contemporary Dance, Urban Dance and Folk Dance. The latter is largely a Hungarian genre of theatre.

*Kleinkunst*, finally, is divided into four genres: Stand-up, Cabaret, Improvisational Theatre and Performance of a Singer/Songwriter. *Kleinkunst* is a type of theatre that is often performed solo or in small groups (2–3 people) and mostly in smaller or non-traditional theatre venues. Stand-up is a genre where a comedian performs a grouping of humorous jokes and stories, often presenting one's personal experiences and speaking directly to spectators. Cabaret, a particularly popular genre in the Netherlands, is usually a mixture of (stand-up) comedy, theatre, and music that often includes social themes and political satire. A production is considered Improvisational Theatre when it consists of small, improvised sketches on themes that are often triggered by the audience. A Performance of a Singer/Songwriter, seen as *Kleinkunst* instead of as a musical genre, is a one-person concert where the breaks between songs are filled by small stories told by the singer.

## The division of productions

### Results

At first, we compared the cities on the level of available types (and genres, if needed) of theatre based on the number of productions. The supply of different types and genres in the locations varies considerably. The cities could be divided into three groups: Aarhus and Groningen with the widest variety of types and genres; Tartu and Maribor having the least variety; and finally, Debrecen, falling between these two groups.

The supply of different types of theatre is the most balanced in Aarhus and the least balanced in Tartu (see Figure 1) which means the people living in Aarhus have a wider choice of types and genres available when planning a night out at the theatre compared to the people living in Tartu.



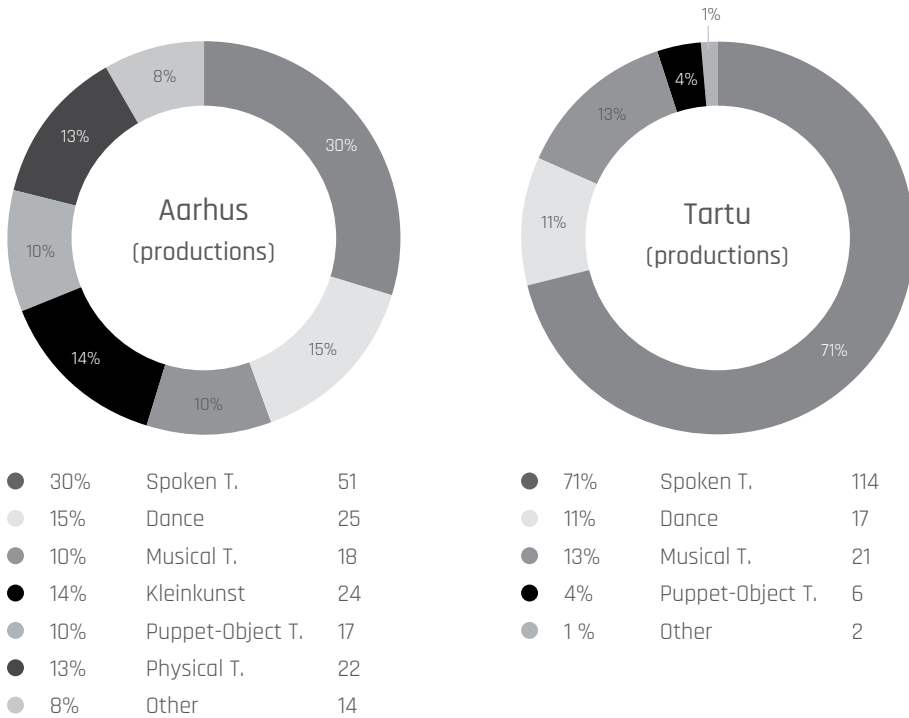


Figure 1. Different types of theatre productions available in Aarhus (Season 2010/2011) and in Tartu (year 2010).

Even though in Aarhus the number of Spoken Theatre productions in the supply is the biggest (almost one-third of the productions), the other types of theatre are quite visible as well. Only Groningen (see Appendix 1) offers the same variety of different types of theatre for the audiences as Aarhus. But whereas in Aarhus the division of types ranges from 10% of Puppet-Object Theatre to 30% of Spoken Theatre productions, in Groningen it ranges from 2% of Puppet-Object Theatre to 43% of Spoken Theatre. This means that both cities offer the widest variety of types but some of the types are less present in Groningen. Groningen differs from the other cities by the amount of *Kleinkunst* in the supply (24% of the performances). Aarhus comes in second with 14% of *Kleinkunst* performances (but that does not cover the whole supply of *Kleinkunst*, because lot of it takes place at venues that are not theatre venues and were subsequently left out of the research).

Tartu presents the opposite to the variety of theatre types. In this city, 71% of all the productions shown during the year 2010 were Spoken Theatre productions and this type appears 1.5 times more than in any other city. In addition, there are no *Kleinkunst*, Physical Theatre, *Cirque Nouveau*, Show or Dance theatre

genres like Urban Dance or Folk Dance in the theatre supply of Tartu. Maribor (see Appendix 1) resembles Tartu, having no *Kleinkunst*, Physical Theatre, *Cirque Nouveau*, Show, Urban Dance or Folk Dance during the 2010/11 season. But Maribor differs from all the other cities because it has no professional Musicals in the supply, only amateur,<sup>6</sup> yet its Opera productions balance the deficit. At the same time, Maribor has considerably more Puppet-Object Theatre (30% of all the productions) than the other four cities. This can be explained by the fact that one of the two puppet theatres of Slovenia is situated in Maribor and is one of the three theatres in the city.

While other cities show quite a similar ratio (10–15%) of Dance and Musical Theatre productions in the whole supply, Debrecen (see Appendix 1) has 9% of Musical Theatre and 27% of Dance productions.<sup>7</sup> Despite the fact that Hungary has a vivid tradition of Dance theatre, the presence of Dance is over-represented in this data when compared to the average supply of productions during other seasons because of two theatre festivals that brought 23 different Contemporary Dance productions to the city, all the productions were performed only once. These exceptional events overshadowed 6 Folk Dance productions with 24 performances.

## Discussion

The differences in the supply of productions in these five cities can possibly be explained by the following aspects:

*The cultural and historical backgrounds.* The Soviet backgrounds of Hungary and Estonia and also to a certain extent the socialist background of Slovenia have secured the importance of Spoken Theatre as a culturally and socially prestigious art form in these countries. The aesthetics and theatre education has been strongly based on Stanislavski (psychological acting) and somewhat less on Brecht (theatre as a social forum). In addition, genres like Western Musical or Contemporary Dance were ostracised in the Soviet Union, thus, also in Estonia, until the end of the 1980s. Contemporary Dance in Maribor and Debrecen was also not very present in the 1980s or earlier because a supporting educational and institutional framework was missing (in Maribor it was possible only when choreographers had a chance to work with Spoken Theatre directors, which did not happen often). The collapse of the Soviet Union and the disintegration

<sup>6</sup> There is no data collected about amateur theatre in Maribor.

<sup>7</sup> When considering only the professional productions in Debrecen, the percentage of Dance productions is smaller and thus more similar to the other cities.

of Yugoslavia opened borders for the theatre makers and only since then, have some of the previously underrepresented types and genres of theatre started to appear more in the supply of these three countries.<sup>8</sup> At the same time, there are also some new types and genres that have started to emerge only in the last years. The latter is the case for Stand-up Comedy in Tartu and Maribor.<sup>9</sup> Western Europe has had a more liberal cultural background and the audiences are more familiar with different types and genres of theatre. The local particularities of theatre – like Folk Dance in Hungary, *Kleinkunst* in the Netherlands and in Denmark – also leave a strong imprint on the theatre supply.

*The presence of a company of specific type.* Both Maribor and Debrecen have a puppet theatre with its own venue and company in the city and therefore they are able to keep many different productions in their programme all through the season compared to the cities that have Puppet and Object Theatre productions usually only as guest performances. It also seems that there is no particular reason for the puppet theatres to be located in these cities except that they are the cultural centres of the region.

*The availability of venues for different types and genres.* Some types of theatre need certain kind of venues and the lack of suitable stages could be the reason why some genres are not part of the supply in some of these cities. For example, there is only one small venue for Puppet Theatre in Tartu and one good venue for Contemporary Dance. The lack of appropriate venues can create a circle in which performances of a certain type or genre are not present for the audiences and thus, there are no audiences for these genres, especially when performed rarely.

*The availability of educational input for different types and genres of theatre.* There is a lack of some genres because no professional educational input is provided not only in the cities, but also in the countries in general. For example, in Slovenia, Contemporary Dance is only taught in one secondary school. In Estonia, Urban Dance as well as *Cirque Nouveau* are only taught as recreational activities in hobby schools for children and youth. In the Netherlands, the *Academie voor Kleinkunst* in Amsterdam teaches *Kleinkunst*, which directly affects the number of this type of performances in Groningen and in the Netherlands in general. Thus, the availability of different theatre genres depends on the following aspects of

8 For example, in Estonia, only the last decade has seen the introduction of the term “performing arts” next to the theatre art not only in theatre criticism but also in theatre politics. The idea of what is considered to be theatre has been more conservative in the Eastern bloc compared to, for example, the Netherlands or Denmark, where the blurring of borders between theatre and other art forms has had a longer tradition.

9 Nevertheless, there is quite a strict line between professional actors who perform in theatre venues (usually the actors are not authors of the texts they are presenting and the so-called mono performances are also staged by professional directors) and amateur stand-up artists who perform in pubs and alternative venues and are responsible for the texts they are presenting.

theatre education: the presence of a theatre school in the city or in the country, the kinds of approaches to theatre or acting taught in theatre schools, the presence of any special schools or training for musical actors, ballet dancers, performers of contemporary dance or *Cirque Nouveau*, etc. Nevertheless, despite the lack of special educational input for Puppet Theatre in Estonia, Hungary and Slovenia, there are Puppet Theatres in these countries and most puppeteers mostly just have an educational background in acting or they have studied puppetry abroad.

*The size of the city and country.* Finally, it should be remembered that of the cities in this research, Maribor and Tartu have half the population of the other cities, and the countries of these two cities, Slovenia and Estonia, are also the smallest countries in the study. The number of inhabitants correlates at least partly to the number of theatre makers and the smaller the theatrical supply, the less diversity that supply is able to provide.

## The division of performances

### Results

The division of productions by types enables us to understand the variety of theatre that is produced and hosted by institutions and from which a spectator can choose. But the division of performances might give a clearer and better understanding about the level of availability of the types and what types of theatre audiences actually visit (the latter will be discussed in more detail later on). Thus, the analysis of the supply of performances is a twofold issue: it sheds light upon the principles of production and programming but also upon the reception of theatre in general. The difference between supply and reception becomes evident through the differential between the proportion of productions and performances.

The most conspicuous characteristic here is the difference between productions and performances of Spoken Theatre and based on that, the supply of theatre in the cities can be divided into three groups: 1) the percentage of Spoken Theatre performances exceeds the percentage of Spoken Theatre productions, 2) the numbers are more or less equal or 3) the percentage of Spoken Theatre productions exceeds the percentage of Spoken Theatre performances.

In Aarhus, the amount of productions and performances in the whole supply changes quite radically (see Figure 2). Spoken Theatre productions made up “only” 30% of the total productions in the supply, yet 54% of the supply of

Spoken Theatre performances. Overall, it is the Dance theatre that “loses” half of its supply – from 15% of productions to 7% of performances. Also, there are fewer Physical Theatre and Puppet-Object Theatre performances in the supply compared to the number of productions.

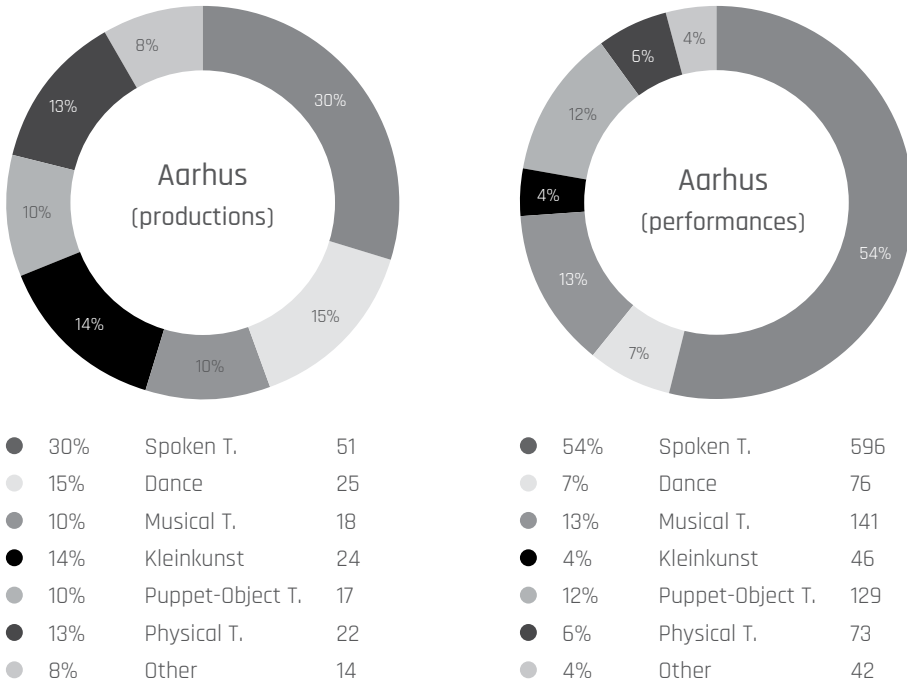


Figure 2. The proportion of different types of productions and performances in the supply of Aarhus (Season 2010/2011).

In Groningen, the number of Spoken Theatre, Dance and Music Theatre performances rises only a little compared to the numbers of productions. *Kleinkunst* makes the biggest drop from 24% of productions to 17% of the performances. But in general, Groningen (as well as Tartu) has the least changes compared to the proportion of the productions and of the performances. In Tartu (see Appendix 1), the amount of Spoken Theatre performances stays the same as the number of productions (even rises from 71% to 72%), the number of Dance performances decreases from 11% to 8% and the ratio of musical theatre increases from 13% to 19%.

In Maribor, there are slightly fewer Spoken Theatre, Dance and Musical Theatre performances in the supply compared to the number of productions of these three types, but a lot more Puppet-Object Theatre (the rise from 30% of productions

to 43% of the performances in the supply). This makes Maribor quite unique in the sense that Spoken Theatre and Puppet-Object Theatre are equally present in the supply of performances (43% of Puppet-Object and 42% of Spoken Theatre).

Debrecen is in some sense the opposite of Aarhus (see Figure 3), because here the proportion of Spoken Theatre performances in the supply drops from 44% of the productions to 36% of the performances. The amount of Dance performances makes a similar decrease from 27% to only 11%. It is the Puppet-Object Theatre that offers 30% of the performances in the supply compared to 12% of productions of the supply of Debrecen.

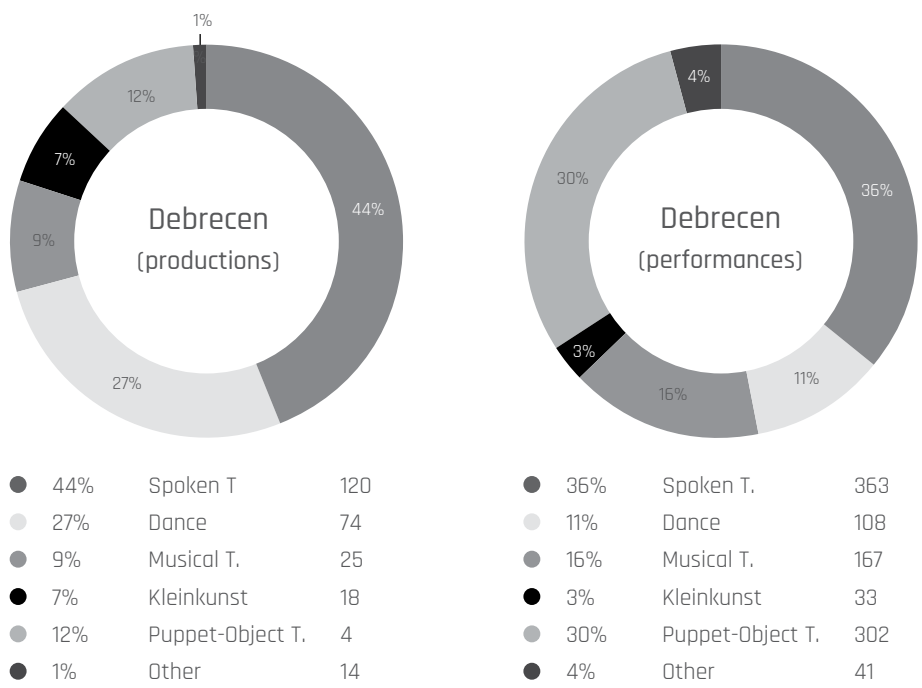


Figure 3. The proportion of different types of productions and performances in the supply of Debrecen (Season 2010/2011).

Looking at the number of Spoken Theatre performances, one notices the dominance of Spoken Theatre in the supply of Tartu (72%) as well as in Aarhus (54%) and Groningen (48%). Thus the wide variety of types and genres of theatre in Aarhus and Groningen that was acclaimed earlier is not so visible in the supply of performances. At the same time, Maribor and Debrecen have two dominating types of theatre in offer: Spoken Theatre and Puppet-Object Theatre. There are 42% of Spoken Theatre and 43% of Puppet-Object Theatre

performances in Maribor and 36% of Spoken Theatre and 30% of Puppet-Object Theatre performances in Debrecen.

Here, we can briefly mention something about the data about different types and genres of performances that was collected also in Bern, Switzerland, but was not included in the overall analysis in this article.<sup>10</sup> The amount of public theatrical events in this city is striking: a total of 3,075 performances took place in Bern in 2011. The huge amount of performances (three times more than in Aarhus, that offers the biggest amount among the five cities in the research) is the reason why other kinds of data like the number of productions and visits were not collected in Bern. But even without any other data, Bern is worth comparing to the other cities, because in the supply, 51% of performances represented Spoken Theatre, 15% Musical Theatre, 13% *Kleinkunst*, 11% of Dance, 5% Puppet-Object Theatre and 5% Other types of theatre. Thus despite the impressive amount of performances, the general division between different types of theatre in Bern closely resembles the situation in Aarhus and Groningen.

According to these five cities researched, it is possible to conclude that there are always more Dance productions in the supply compared to the proportion of performances. And in general (with the exclusion of Maribor) there are always more Musical Theatre performances in the supply compared to the proportion of productions. This means that that the audience prefers Musical Theatre to Dance theatre and that one Musical Theatre production can have more performances than a Dance production.

## Discussion

The relationship between the ratio of productions and of performances in the whole supply and the increase or decrease of this can indicate many different things.

*The presence of a company of a specific type (puppetry, for example) that produces on its home stage(s) and can therefore give many performances of one production which results in a rise of one type of theatre.* For this reason, the presence of the Maribor Puppet Theatre in Maribor and the Votijna Puppet Theatre in Debrecen not only influences the supply of productions in these two cities, but also has an impact on the supply of performances. Also, Puppet Theatre as well as children's theatre performances in general are usually quite short and are sometimes performed twice in one day.

<sup>10</sup> Bern's supply data could only be collected for six months; to ensure its comparability with the data from other cities, we have extrapolated Bern's data mathematically to account for a full twelve months.

*The availability of venues for different types and genres.* The more alternative types of performances (like Physical Theatre or *Cirque Nouveau*) are often produced by companies without their own venue, which tends to lead to a limited number of performances. Or companies with a rather small venue like it is typical for Puppet and Object Theatre can give more performances with one production because the audience of one performance is quite limited. Therefore, it is not possible for companies without a venue or with a small venue to compete with the companies who have capacious houses and halls and who can attract bigger audiences. The latter might lead to the production of more traditional (like Spoken Theatre) or popular forms (like Comedy and Musical) of theatre in order to fill the seats. In many theatres, big halls are considered to be a problem because directors with artistic ambitions are not often interested in working on these stages and taking a risk in filling the auditorium.

*The number of audiences available for (a certain type of) theatre.* This has to do with audience expectations and the experience of different types of theatre (see article on experiences of theatre in this issue). For example, the lower number of Dance performances in all the cities compared to the proportion of productions might be explained first of all by the higher level of abstractness of Dance and because of that also by a smaller number of spectators. Whether Classical Ballet (the dominant Dance genre in Tartu and Maribor) or Contemporary Dance (the dominant Dance genre in Groningen and Aarhus), Dance is a type of theatre that often needs more imagination and an ability to read movement or appreciate (contemporary) classical music. By contrast, the increase in the proportion of Musical Theatre performances in the supply compared to the proportion of productions is explained by the bigger entertainment factor connected to Musical Theatre (Musicals, Music Theatre and Theatre Concerts) in most of the cities. In Groningen and Tartu, there are more Musicals, Music Theatre or Theatre Concerts in the supply of performances compared to Opera, a more serious and demanding genre of Musical Theatre.

*The cost of productions and performances.* For example, costly Musical Theatre, especially Musicals, are ordinarily produced in big halls to attract as many spectators as possible and to earn as high revenues as possible with one performance. The aim is to cover as many of the production costs as possible with every performance and the performing cycle in general. Thus, the cost has a bi-directional influence on the number of performances: it might limit it or, the other way around, exceed it.

*Cultural policy in programming that values certain types of theatre or certain productions more than others and because of that these highly valued works are*



kept in repertoire even in the case of mediocre audience interest. This is often the case with Opera and Spoken Theatre classics. The availability of certain types and genres is also connected to the different theatre systems. Repertoire theatres can run the same production for several seasons with up to ten performances per year (as in Tartu) or only for one or sometimes two seasons with ten performances per year (as in Debrecen). Likewise, a production can be shown many times in a short period of time (*en suite*, as in Aarhus), or a production can be shown only during a tour (as in Groningen).

## The division of audiences

### Results

The last piece missing in the puzzle of the numbers of the supply is audiences – the percentage of visitors by type. In all the cities, when we look at the proportion of audiences between the different types in comparison to the proportions of productions and performances in the supply, we see that Musical Theatre attracts the most visitors (see Figure 4). It is especially evident in Aarhus where only 13% of the performances offered are Musical Theatre performances, but they collect 38% of the visits.

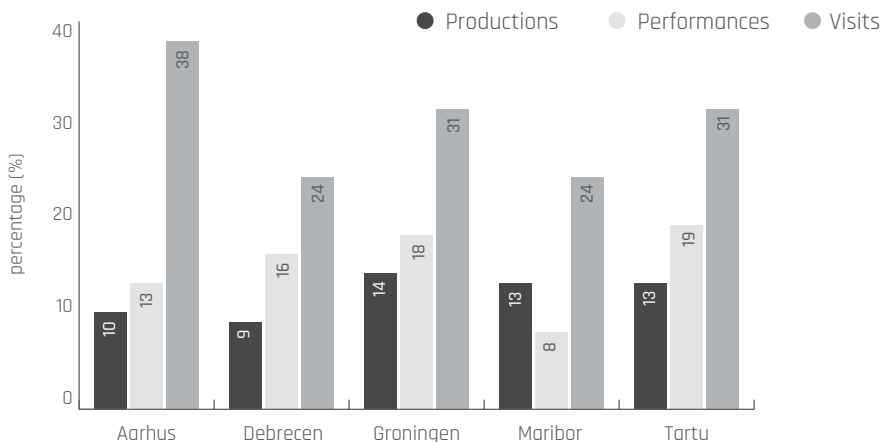
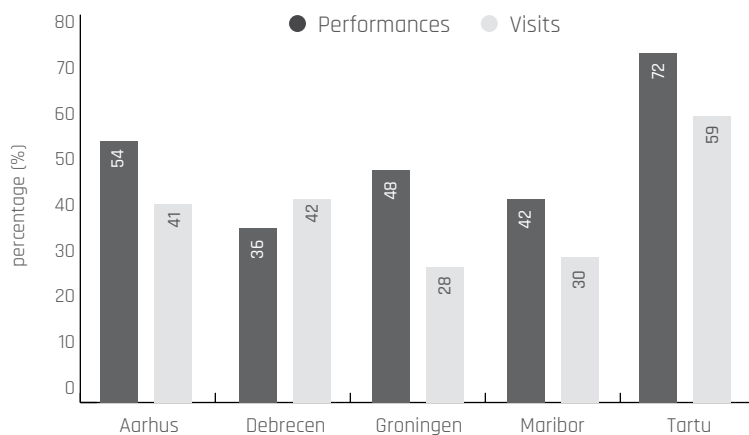


Figure 4. The ratio between the productions, performances and visits of Musical Theatre in the supply.

In all the cities except Debrecen, the audience numbers of Spoken Theatre compared to the proportion of Spoken Theatre performances in the supply drop: 20% in Groningen, 13% in Aarhus, 13% in Tartu and 12% in Maribor (Figure 5). But in Debrecen the visits to Spoken Theatre productions rise 6%.



**Figure 5.** *The ration between performances of and visits to Spoken Theatre in the supply.*

Regardless of these drops, in Tartu, Spoken Theatre still attracts the biggest audience – 59% of all the visits to theatre are to Spoken Theatre productions (Figure 5). Spoken Theatre is also the most visited type by the audience numbers in Maribor and Debrecen (respectively collecting 30% and 42% of the visits).

In Maribor, however, Puppet-Object Theatre is almost as popular among audiences, collecting 27% of all the visits. But in Debrecen, where Puppet-Object Theatre is the second most present type of theatre, the visits to Puppet-Object Theatre drop compared to the percentage of the performances (from 30% of the performances to 16% of the audiences). It is similar to the situation in Maribor where 43% of Puppet-Object Theatre collects 27% of the visits.

Whereas in Tartu, Maribor, Debrecen and Aarhus, Spoken Theatre collects most of the audiences, in Groningen, the Musical Theatre performances are the most visited (even though they exceed Spoken Theatre only by 3%). Aarhus also emerges from the other cities by the low number (only 3%) of visits to Dance theatre.

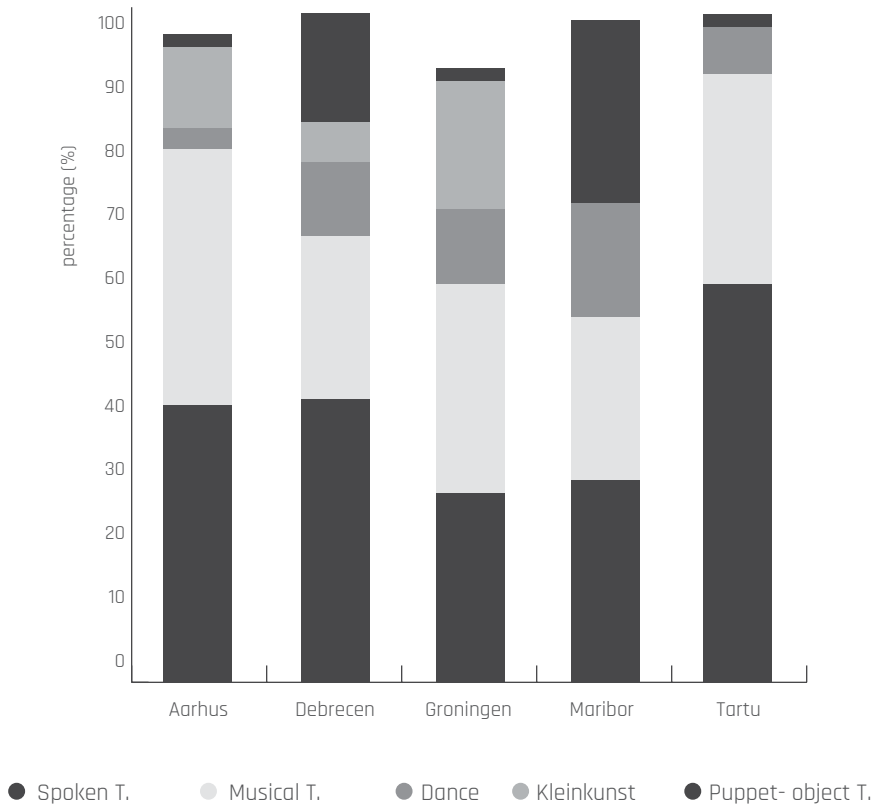


Figure 6. The division of audiences between different types of theatre in the supply (in percentages).<sup>11</sup>

## Discussion

The visits to different types in different cities could indicate the following aspects:

*The habits of audiences to visit certain types of theatre.* Spoken and Musical Theatre are the most familiar and approachable types of theatre. In the countries with socialist backgrounds, theatre and especially Spoken Theatre has played a very important role in identity building throughout the history because the local language has been the most essential marker of national identity (see Lelkes, Saro “The Interaction”, Sušec Michieli). The habit of visiting Spoken Theatre productions has survived through social and cultural changes in Estonia, Hungary and Slovenia. In addition to Spoken Theatre, Folk Dance also

<sup>11</sup> The visits to Physical Theatre, *Cirque Nouveau* and Show and other genres are left out because their relative numbers are less than 2%.

represented a national, “folky” identity and offered light entertainment at the same time (Lelkes 97). The popularity of Musical Theatre is mostly related to its high entertainment value. Also *Kleinkunst* has usually a high entertainment value, but only in Groningen is the general audience familiar enough with it because of the longer and wider tradition of this genre in the Netherlands.

*The presence of a company of a specific type.* The productions of the Maribor Puppet Theatre and the Votijna Puppet Theatre in Debrecen attract a lot of spectators and thus visiting these theatres has become a habit of many inhabitants of these cities. Even though Opera productions at the Vanemuine Theatre in Tartu do not attract a lot of audiences compared to Musicals or Spoken Theatre performances, the existing audiences very highly value the possibility to see Opera outside of Tallinn, the capital city, (Toome, “Ooperi- ja muusikalilavastuste”) and therefore the theatre always has a certain amount of audiences available for this genre. The lack of or a limited amount of a certain type or genre of theatre (like Contemporary Dance in Tartu or Maribor) reduces the possibilities to attract wider or new audiences with these genres because making productions in types, genres and styles that are not so familiar to spectators means taking bigger financial risks for companies.

*Limited capacity of performance venues.* The smaller stages for Puppet and Object Theatre performances in Maribor and Debrecen allow producing different kinds of theatre for certain target groups (compared to Musicals that are usually targeted for all age groups) yet they also only fit a smaller number of audiences.

*The cost of productions and performances forces companies to attract more audiences.* Musical Theatre performances (especially Musicals) are usually commercial theatre productions, which means that the producing companies aim for big audiences and have money to spend on marketing. Costly musicals are mostly staged in the biggest halls of the city, enabling companies to attract many spectators already with a few performances and to collect a considerable amount of revenue.

## General conclusions

The following four aspects influence the production, distribution and consumption of theatre in the cities under the research the most: 1) the influence of cultural traditions on the production and consumption of theatre; 2) the structure of the theatre system; 3) the policy aspects of the theatre system; and 4) the economics of theatre production.

The first aspect that became apparent when conducting the research was the influence of cultural traditions on the production and consumption of theatre. Cultural traditions determine what types and genres of theatre are produced and made use of by audiences, that is, they determine the habits of theatre makers and audiences. The influence of cultural traditions and history came to the fore especially when Western European (the Netherlands) and the Nordic countries (Denmark) were compared to Central and Eastern European countries (Estonia, Hungary, Slovenia). According to the analysis of the productions, the theatre supply is much more diverse in Groningen and Aarhus than in Tartu, Debrecen and Maribor, where some new types and genres of theatre are just emerging. In the western cities, the variety of the supply of theatre is larger because the diversity of arts has been an important cultural political aim for a long time. The democratisation and decentralisation of the theatre systems in the end of the 1960s and in the 1970s caused a breakdown of the traditional structures and helped to raise a lot of new and small initiatives at the expense of the big subsidised institutions. Also the rise of the market-oriented theatre productions (mostly Musicals and *Kleinkunst*) from the 1980s onwards have influenced the variety of the supply.

But despite the seemingly heterogeneous supply, when considering the number of performances and visits, Spoken Theatre clearly dominates in the majority of the cities (competing often with Musical Theatre). Thus the dominance of Spoken and Musical Theatre can also be explained by the habits of theatre makers and audiences because the types are the most familiar (also historically) and approachable.

The next two factors influencing the production, distribution and consumption of theatre are the structural characteristics and the policy aspects of the theatre system. As has come to the fore in this article, the presence of a company of a specific type, the availability of venues for different types and genres and the availability of theatre education play an important role in theatre systems. Certainly these aspects are partly also the outcome of the cultural history and certain habits, but at the same time they are also under constant negotiation. The influence of the cultural policy in programming was mentioned earlier, but the impact of policy is not limited to cultural policy; it is of course a much wider issue that also covers the amount of subsidies to different institutions, the use of venues, the educational priorities, the election of artistic directors to theatres, etc. Nevertheless, the influence of individual artistic directors also cannot be underestimated as a force of artistic change.

Despite the differences in supply caused by different cultural histories, the structural characteristics and the policy aspects of theatre system, one has also to acknowledge some universal traits. For example, the cost of productions of certain types or genres sets some limits both for subsidised and commercial theatres forcing them to attract wide audiences and make particular artistic decisions because of that. Thus also the economics of theatre production cannot be overlooked.

Our research also pointed out that there is no congruity between the production, distribution (performances) and consumption (visits) domains of theatre but the production domain seems to be the most balanced between different types and offers more diversity than others. Thus, the consumption of different types and genres of theatres could be also encouraged, at least in these five cities.

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Appendix 1. The Distribution of Productions and Performances in cities by Theatre Type.

Type of theatre	Aarhus* season 2010/2011			Debreccen season 2010/2011			Groningen season 2010/2011			Maribor* season 2010/2011			Tartu year 2010		
	Prod.	Perf.	Visits	Prod.	Perf.	Visits	Prod.	Perf.	Visits	Prod.	Perf.	Visits	Prod.	Perf.	Visits
Spoken Theatre	51 30%	596 54%	92767 41%	120 4.4%	363 36%	85628 42%	210 4.3%	474 48%	56834 28%	62 45%	286 42%	51992 30%	114 71%	488 72%	95705 59%
Dance Theatre	25 15%	76 7%	7272 3%	74 2.7%	108 11%	21991 11%	60 12%	95 9%	22342 11%	12 9%	39 5%	29748 17%	17 11%	56 8%	10793 7%
Musical Theatre	18 10%	141 13%	86832 38%	25 9%	167 16%	49259 24%	70 14%	180 18%	63881 31%	18 13%	57 8%	40725 24%	21 13%	127 19%	49952 31%
Kleinkunst	24 14%	46 4%	26658 12%	18 7%	33 3%	11967 5%	117 24%	163 17%	39242 21%						
Puppet- Object Theatre	17 10%	129 12%	4983 2%	34 12%	302 30%	33567 16%	8 2%	13 1%	3181 2%	41 30%	290 43%	47222 27%	6 4%	7 1%	388 2%
Physical Theatre	22 13%	73 6%	5679 3%												
Cirque Nouveau and Show							8 2%	27 3%	15252 7%						
Other	14 8%	42 4%	2675 1%	4 1%	41 4%	1132 1%	16 3%	27 3%	3076 1%	5 3%	6 1%	377 2%	2 1%	2 1%	80 1%
All together	171 100%	1103 100%	225666 100%	275 100%	1014 100%	203544 100%	489 100%	979 100%	203808 100%	138 100%	678 100%	170064 100%	160 100%	680 100%	155916 100%

Notes. Prod. = productions, Perf. = performances. \*The data from Aarhus and Maribor include only professional supply.