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COLLABORATING IN NO MAN'S LAND

An enquiry towards creating an environment for 'equal' collaboration between international partners in an applied theatre project.

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A dissertation submitted in fulfillment of the requirements for the award of the degree of

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COMPULSORY DECLARATION

This work has not been previously submitted in whole, or in part, for the award of any degree. It is my own work. Each significant contribution to, and quotation in, this dissertation from the work, or works, of other people has been attributed, and has been cited and referenced.

Signature:

Date: 15-09-2009

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation is an enquiry towards creating an environment for 'equal' collaboration between international partners in an applied theatre project. As a direct case study, I used my master's fieldwork project, *No-man's land*, a theatre project involving performers from South Africa and The Netherlands.

The problematics of international exchanges in which people, resources and art works are brought together over long distances, generates issues around power, culture and the performing arts which demand attention from project partners. The term 'No Man's Land' is the metaphor developed throughout this dissertation in order to conceptualise the space of collaboration, as well as the mentality such a collaboration necessitates. The focus here is on international collaboration projects within the field of applied theatre that have the potential to unite artists from different backgrounds to explore issues of mutual interest through theatre processes and performances.

This dissertation breaks down the various phases in international collaborative projects, in order to clarify the roles and responsibilities of both the facilitator and the cast within the process. The focus on the facilitator examines her responsibility to steer the process, keep to time frames, achieve the aims, and manage logistics; but most of all, to set up a space, a framework, an approach in which all members of a diverse cast can collaborate fruitfully and learn in the process. The means and methods employed for constructing this 'levelled' space of collaboration is the major focus of this study. The approach to international exchange and collaborative projects draws on Freire's idea of cultural dialogue, and the notion that both the facilitator and participants should be in such a position that they can learn about each other and themselves throughout the exchange. Boal and Barba's approaches to working with diversity provide guiding ideas for this research, as do the Applied Theatre theories and practices of Prentki, Thompson and Yarrow amongst others.

The study explores how devised theatre techniques such as improvisation and dance allow participants to reflect on their own experiences of prejudice, and the provocation of conflicts, drawing on the case study experiences of *No-man's land* as a testing ground. Finally, the study interrogates how physical image theatre can be a useful means for breaking through language barriers and exploring multiple ways of interpreting themes.

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INTRODUCTION

This dissertation is an enquiry towards creating an environment for 'equal' collaboration between international partners in an applied theatre project. First I shall clarify how I shall be using the term No Man's Land.

No-man's land is the title of the play which we devised in the Netherlands in September 2008. Whereas, 'No Man's Land' is the metaphoric concept which I develop in this dissertation. On the other hand, no-man's land denotes the actual space in war and peace, a piece of land which, on the whole the parties concede, does not belong presently to anyone.

I will start this dissertation by introducing my fieldwork project *No-man's land,* which I conducted as part of my MA coursework. This project taught me a great deal about my role as a facilitator with applied theatre projects and how theatre can facilitate cultural dialogue. After the introduction to *No-man's land*, I will elaborate on some key issues that set the arena of my research; such as the terms *international collaboration*, *cultural dialogue* and *oppression*. In the last paragraph I will discuss my research question, the research design and structure.

1. Intro to case study

In September 2008 I devised the family theatre project *No-man's land.* In this dissertation I shall examine what elements of the project were successful and contributed towards the value of the exchange project; as well as the challenges we had throughout the process and possible learning points. I will, primarily, be looking at the theatre methods we used and the role of the facilitator in the project, towards fleshing out my conceptualisation of creating 'equal' collaborations

1.1 No-man's land

No-man's land was a theatrical exchange project between performers from Amsterdam and Cape Town. It was performed between the 13th and 28th of September 2008 as part of the festival *Amsterdam Stellingenmaand* at Fortress Diemerdam. It was also performed at Shipyard 't Kromhout, NoLimit in Amsterdam and at Theaterschip Drost van Salland in Deventer.

No-man's land was inspired by a remarkable incident in which British and German soldiers laid their weapons down during WWI to celebrate Christmas Eve together in no-man's land (the geographical territory). The Dutch and South African actors used this story to work around themes of prejudice, reasons for conflict and reconciliation, referencing elements of

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the WWI conflict that are still significant in contemporary culture, such as xenophobia and the balance of power. As it was intended to be a family show, the main object for the performers was to perform the subject matter with a sense of lightness and wittiness by exploring the borders between humans and animals, the roles of animals in war (such as mascots, companions, working forces and messengers), and the bestial circumstances in which conflict occurs. The performers were to bring their theatre traditions together in a cohesive and entertaining musical, visual and physical theatre piece.

The performances were well attended and the responses from both audiences as well as partner organisations were good. We had fifteen performances with an average of forty people per show – which totals approximately six hundred persons. There were also a number of workshops attended by about sixty children in all.

1.2 Partner organisations

No-man's land was in partnership with the organisations Stadsherstel Amsterdam, University of Cape Town (UCT) and Theatre Embassy from Amsterdam. It was also made possible by funding from the municipality of Diemen, Province North-Holland and Cultureel Erfgoed Noord Holland (CENH, Cultural Heritage North Holland).

No-man's land was part of my coursework for UCT and, therefore, I was provided with supervision and could access UCT's resources; such as the costumes and studio space for rehearsals with the South African contingent. Theatre Embassy is an organisation working in theatre for development. In 2004 I completed an internship within their program and in 2006 they liaised for me to work a seven-month programme in Cape Town for the former Arts and Media Access Centre (AMAC). Theatre Embassy contributed to *No-man's land* by means of financial support, expertise in cultural exchange projects and artistic supervision during the rehearsal period in Amsterdam. Stadsherstel Amsterdam is an organisation that restores monumental buildings in and around Amsterdam. They are owners of two of the performance sites of *No-man's land* (Shipyard 't Kromhout and Fortresss Diemerdam) and are host of the yearly festival *Amsterdam Stellingenmaand*. Stadsherstel managed the budget, liaised publicity, and was financially and legally liable for the cast members.

1.3 Cast and people involved

For the South African cast I selected two study colleagues and a former student of AMAC. For the Dutch cast I appointed one performer from Curacao living in The Netherlands and two Dutch performers. The cast members had different performance backgrounds, ranging from drama therapy to mime, drama and education and community theatre. I haven't used the names of cast members in this dissertation to respect their anonymity.

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No-man's land was a partly co-facilitated process; the Dutch (intended) facilitator and I worked together in drawing up the project plan and concept. We had decided to start the process apart and bring the work together in a montage within a two week period. Because the funding came through late, we only received project approval in June 2008. As a result, the Dutch facilitator was no longer able to participate because of prior academic commitments. Therefore we approached one of the performers, who is also a theatre maker, to take on the role of co-facilitator. He had been actively engaged in the preparation phase (and a previously-commissioned performance, *Het verhaal van Dieme*, for the same festival in 2007) and was enthusiastic about his potential involvement.

2. Process of setting up No-man's Land

The negotiations for *No-man's land* started in November 2007, after I had directed the family theatre production *Het verhaal van Dieme* for festival *Amsterdam Stellingenmaand*. Because of the latter's success, the organisation asked me to create a production for the following year. In relation to my research and study focus, I proposed a cultural exchange project between performers from South African and The Netherlands. This proposal was approved and Stadsherstel started looking for additional funders. In February 2007 I started the process by researching the theme of the next year's festival, *90 years after World War One* (WWI). In the preparation phase of the project, Stadsherstel had pointed out that 2008 was to be 90 years after WWI and that they were thinking of making this the general theme of *Amsterdam Stellingenmaand*. That idea was soon abandoned but I kept it as a starting point for working on *No-man's land*. To assume a better understanding of WWI, I met with historian Bill Nasson who wrote the book *Springboks on the Somme*. Part of this research on WWI included the story *The Christmas Truce* by Aaron Shepard in which British and German soldiers celebrated Christmas Eve together in no-man's land.

In *No-man's land*, the idea was to create a collaborative work of theatre by the South African and Dutch groups using devised theatre techniques. We had intended that both groups should have one month of rehearsals in which they could build on their interpretation of the concept and generate material. Via internet and video-streaming they could keep each other updated by sending character profiles which would help establish character relationships. In July 2007 I started the facilitation process in Cape Town but, because of the late access to funding and change in facilitator, the Dutch cast only started their rehearsals in mid August. This meant they only had about five rehearsals before the South African cast arrived.

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No-man's land was about different ways of seeing and living ones own reality. It was about the animal soldiers being ignorant of their immediate circumstances, the precipitating prejudices and the tranferral or projection of aggression onto each other when confronted by stress. In moments of solitude they reflected on what happened and realised they needed 'something' to bring them back together. This resulted in lies and manipulation of reality to create unity amongst them. In the production the dog was searching for a new master, he wanted to be told what to do and have a purpose. The goose found solice in issuing commands. All characters were seeking something to believe in, to unite them all. This resulted in them finding comfort in the fiction of simulated war-circumstance and the emotional turbulance of a state of emergency. It was this fear that created a homogeny of group identity and a sense of belonging within the group context.

3. Motivation for international collaboration

I believe international collaborative projects are relevant in a culturally diverse society such as South Africa and my home country, The Netherlands. My interest came from a young age, having been brought up by an English mother and Dutch father. I am used to living in a culturally diverse environment and it has generated within me a great interest in travelling and exploring new places and cultures. The experiences and personal growth I've gained by broadening my horizons and generating awareness of the world around me, has made me realise that I want to pursue international collaboration further in the context of performing arts and engage in these explorations with my peers and my audiences. I have developed my understanding of such projects by working in cultural exchange or collaborative projects and experiencing the difficulties and discussions which are often linked to such initiatives such as issues of power and setting up agreements. It is these issues which have motivated this study.

During my previous study of Art and Media Management in Utrecht (HKU) I worked on two cultural exchange projects. In 2004 on *Outside Voices* (an exchange between a theatre director from The Netherlands and a theatre group from South Africa), and in 2005 on *El Color Rojo* which was a international exchange between dancers from Cuba and choreographers from The Netherlands (the names of the productions have been changed for the privacy of the casts involved). Within this dissertation I shall use examples from these experiences because they inspired me to pursue this field of research and particularly to gain insight into the facilitation process. I had found the intensity of such projects most valuable, by having the cast live and work in a 'foreign' environment. By physically engaging with each other and collaborating for a considerable amount of time, there is learning involved on various levels, on personal levels as well as on theatrical levels.

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I was able to develop in this field by working with my fellow students at the UCT and other theatre organisations in Cape Town who work in cultural exchange such as Project Phakama. In 2008 I assisted the director for the Drama Department, UCT production based on *Twilight: Los Angeles, 1992* written by Anna Deavere Smith and gained insight into the role of facilitator in a devised theatre process. This project was especially valuable because of the subject matter: the historical event of the 1992 Los Angeles riots was told from multiple points of view.

The greatest lesson in facilitating came from working with the cast of *No-man's land,* which generated insight into the application of cultural exchange projects, and the use of theatre to foster cultural dialogue. I've learned a great deal about my role as a facilitator, about the struggles of positioning myself within the group and attempting to establish a 'levelled' working environment when at times it felt like a war zone. I've also attempted to gain understanding of how participants position themselves in the exchange process and what they expect from me as a facilitator. I feel I have learned significantly from this practical process and reflective dissertation in coming to an understanding of the dynamics within collaborative space of creating a theatre production.

4. Conceptual framework

My focus within this field has been on international collaboration within the applied theatre context and this will be the arena of my dissertation. One of the characteristics of applied theatre is its 'educational' purposes, which implies that these projects use performing arts to discuss social issues and for educational purposes. (The term 'applied theatre' will be further elaborated on in chapter one.) I refer to education in the broad sense of the word; sharing of knowledge and learning through various channels, one of which is the performing arts.

4.1 Cultural dialogue

Within an applied theatre process the relationship between participants, facilitator and all people involved can de described as Freire's 'educational relationship'. ´For Freire, an educational relationship must be based on dialogue among subjects´ (Coutinho and Nogueira, 2009: 173). It is not depositing information, in which the learner becomes the container for knowledge, but engaging in an exchange of knowledge and dialogue around the subject. ´For Freire, the dialogical investigation of reality aims at developing a critical perception of reality. (Coutinho and Nogueira 2009: 173) By engaging in dialogue people can re-examine their perceived reality and ways of being. This can contribute to creating an awareness of possible change. Paolo Freire's description of dialogue is 'the encounter between men, mediated by the word, in order to name the world.' (1972: 61) Unlike the

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monologue, dialogue is a conversation. For a dialogue to happen participants both share as well as listen, it is about giving and receiving – about hearing and listening. In this dissertation the focus is on establishing cultural dialogue within a cultural exchange project. Between culturally diverse groups and partners from different countries performing arts can be used as a common language to engage in cultural dialogue. This language should allow space to explore different perspectives and different truths.

4.2 Oppression

The purpose of cultural dialogue is to open up issues of oppression and perceive change not only on a personal level but also more broadly. I refer here specifically to the field of international collaborations and tackling issues of oppression specific to this field such as misconceptions, misunderstandings, cultural differences and prejudice between cultures. With the term 'oppressed' I refer to what Boal describes as she or he who has lost the right to express his/her will and needs, and is reduced to the condition of obedient listener to a monologue. Augusto Boal developed the Theatre of the Oppressed, 'a system of physical exercises, aesthetic games, image techniques and special improvisations whose goal is to safeguard, develop and reshape this human vocation, by turning the practice of theatre into an effective tool for the comprehension of social and personal problems and the search for their solutions.' (Boal, 2005: 14-15) For an oppressed person an approach of interactive and embodied action is more likely to lead to change than talking about change. By having the oppressed creating their own change, they are more likely to be successful and maintain the liberated state. The oppressed take responsibility over the oppression and through that, re-examine the situation. This is what Freire refers to as praxis, 'Liberation is a praxis: the action and reflection of men upon their world in order to transform it.' (1972: 52)

4.3 Cultural action

According to Freire (1972), 'Cultural action is always a systematic and deliberate form of action which operates upon the social structure, either with the objective of preserving that structure or of transforming it'. (2009: 310) He speaks of 'antidialogical cultural action', which in collaborative projects implies that the participants hardly mix or explore each other's approaches. It 'explicitly or implicitly aims to preserve, within the social structure, situations which favour its own agents'. (Freire (1972), 2009: 310) In most cases it entails maintaining the oppression. In antidialogical cultural action the emphasis is on preserving the traditional culture. By not opening up the dialogue to other cultures the participants hope and expect to maintain their own traditions, structures and power. Not opening up to other cultures can also mean that participants do not experience the other culture through embodied action. They might observe cultural practices and create their own perceptions and interpretations of it. Another option would be for participants to actively question the,

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context specific, 'foreign' culture. This can be initiated and achieved, to some extent at least, by verbally exploring the culture or physically engaging in the cultural practice. 'Physically engaging' can allude to moving or verbalising in a 'foreign' cultural practice. The bodily interaction will, ideally, bring about an experienced sense of understanding.

In dialogical cultural actions, the aim and expectations of such collaboration is not the disappearance of the existing cultural expression but a dialogue and enrichment of the culture. 'It aims, rather, at surmounting the antagonistic contradictions of the social structure, thereby achieving the liberation of human beings.' (Freire (1972), 2009: 311)

The approach to the exchange is not of fear and preservation but opening up to new ideas and hereby broadening the view and perspective of participants involved. Effects of new ideas on what one already knows is that they break through a regular and standardised pattern of thinking; assisting in actively encouraging creative and lateral thinking. Becoming familiarised and knowledgeable about what was once unfamiliar, also gives one the insight and knowledge to reflect on it accordingly and decide whether or not one would want to adopt or reject that way of thinking or being. In that sense more exposure, experience and insight can provide a better ground to make decisions.

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4.4 Mentality for collaboration

To start a cultural collaboration project, the attitude and mentality of the participants is most important. It influences the process, the energy between groups and the ease or unease in which the collaboration happens. Freire describes mentalities that actors can take upon themselves in a project. He distinguishes *cultural invasion* and *cultural synthesis*.

> In cultural invasion, the actors draw the thematic content of their action from their own values and ideology; their starting point is their own world, from which they enter the world of those they invade.
>
> In cultural synthesis, the actors who come from; another world; to the world of the people do so not as invaders. They do not come to *teach* or to *transmit* or to *give* anything, but rather to learn, with the people, about the people's world. ((1972), 2009: 311)

For participants, the attitude of cultural synthesis is effective in the context of a collaborative project. It is not about 'invading' the unfamiliar world but rather to learn from the people. This is an attitude from both sides, both from the visiting and the hosting partner, to approach the exchange with the ideas of cultural synthesis. When using the concept of cultural invasion, one party is dominating and doesn't allow space for the other partner to respond and give input. This way, the outcome of the project will be directed one way, presumably one party who 'learned' from the other, and the other party sharing their knowledge and experiences. This way there is little dialogue happening, it is more spurring

of information by one partner and receiving information by the other. According to Freire there is no communication without dialogue and without communication there can be no true education. (1972: 65) When looked at from this perspective, there is more 'learning' involved in the project when participants foster the mentality of cultural synthesis. But the question is how such a mentality can be fostered. How can the facilitator possibly create a shift from cultural invasion to cultural synthesis? The latter question has become a pre-occupation of this thesis.

4.5 Pitfalls in space of collaboration

As much as openness is desirable, differences are likely to bring about discussion and friction between participants. The space in which the project takes place is where the cultures, mentalities and attitudes come together and is likely to be filled with emotions, power dynamics and anxiety towards the unknown and unfamiliar. In international processes the participants enter this unfamiliar space and can be pushed to go beyond their comfort zones and what they already know, hereby building new knowledge and understanding. The space in which this happens can be the literal space, such as performing or rehearsing in a foreign country or it can be viewed more metaphorically: drawing attention to the unfamiliar space of engagement with people one hasn't worked with before, or who might have different opinions, beliefs and 'languages' of communication. A conceptualisation of this problematic space will be further explored in chapter three.

In practice, the space of meeting for international exchange is a highly contested zone where emotions and oppressions can come to the surface. However, when the space is familiar and safe, participants would more likely stay in their comfort zones and not be challenged to question their behaviour or values in life as much as in such a vibrant and loaded space, such as the 'neutral' space of a shared environment.

4.6 Performing arts as a language between cultures

The performing arts are an indispensable tool to raise topics for discussion. In our contemporary global environment people from different backgrounds live side by side and cultural diversity is seen as a great acquisition; but also, undeniably, a recurring cause of irritation and conflict.

The idea of No Man's Land is not about the participants communicating one voice but about the dialogue between diverse performing groups. In this dissertation the focus is on physical theatre and image theatre, which are theatre techniques in which the spoken language barrier is taken away and primarily the human body is used to create images, communicate the action, meaning and emotion. Although language can be used, it plays a secondary

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role. According to Callary, working through body can liberate the imagination. (2001: 3) It enables participants to prioritise experiencing over intellectualising and explaining in the process. It is about being 'in the moment' and following impulses. The language and stories told through the body might be different when put into words. 'The intellectual is grasped through the physical engagement of the body because, as Lecoq puts it, 'the body knows things about which the mind is ignorant.' (Callary 2001: 4) This implies that one can discover hidden stories or reasoning or feelings, or express emotions that were unable to be spoken, through the body. Also for the audience, physical theatre has a 'greater power of suggestion; environments and worlds are created onstage by actors and design elements provoke the imaginations of the spectators, rather than furnishing the stage with literal replications of life'. (Callary 2001: 5) Words seem fixed and explanatory where the body leaves room for the imagination, for the performer to be lead by the body rather than the mind and for the audience to provide their own interpretation.

5. Research design and structure

This dissertation is an enquiry towards creating an environment for 'equal' collaboration between international partners in an applied theatre project. I shall focus on the field of applied theatre in which some such projects take place and the dynamics of partners from (at least) two different cultural background engaging in a theatre process. This is primarily a research document: theorising and drawing lessons out of practise. In order for my work to develop and for my understanding of and participation in the work to develop, I need to be critical toward my practice and question how it can be most beneficial to all parties involved; and under what conditions such projects are worth undertaking. I will use my experiences in the field as points of reference I shall reflect on my own dilemmas and learnings within the processes as well as the experiences and reflection from the cast members as appropriate. The first chapter attempts to problematise the issues and possibilities of the context within which international collaboration projects in the field of theatre is enacted and will also problematise the arena in which cultural collaborations occur once a collaboration is underway. This chapter discusses the notion of culture and international collaboration.

Chapter two unpacks the concept of No Man's land as mentality of collaboration, and discusses the space in which it takes place. There are specific issues which surface when working with participants from different cultural backgrounds and different countries. Chapter two will discuss some of the pitfalls as well as opportunities for international collaboration.

Chapter three unpacks the various phases of a collaborative process and the different layers of responsibility within the process, of the facilitator, co-facilitators and the cast. It

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examines issues arising out of shared facilitation and the responsibilities of all parties toward creating a 'levelled' environment. The final chapter focuses on physical image theatre as a 'language' between collaborating groups. This language should allow space to explore multiple perspectives on the process and provoke diverse interpretations, whilst interrogating and acknowledging existing skills and performance traditions. This chapter interrogates how theatre facilitates cultural dialogue.

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CHAPTER ONE INTERNATIONAL COLLABORATION

In this chapter I will attempt to problematise the issues and possibilities of the context within which international collaboration projects in the field of theatre are enacted and shall also problematise the arena in which cultural collaborations occur once a collaboration is underway. I will start by looking at the concept and terminology of international collaborations and so begin by defining culture.

1. Culture

There are various definitions of culture and ways that cultures have been viewed over time. According to the anthropologist Edward Burnet Tylor, culture is 'not something people were born with, but something they gained through normal social interaction. (Thornton, 1988: 22) The emphasis that Tylor puts on culture as something that is learned through life and not something you are born with, correlates with the definitions by Epskamp and Hofstede.

Epskamp uses a definition given by the council of Europe in 1992: 'at its most extensive, culture encompasses the totality of a community's learned experiences as reflected in its conventions and values – economic, legal, political, religious, moral, familial, technological, scientific and aesthetic.' (2006: 29) Epskamp emphasises the broad spectrum in which cultures are practised and applied.

Hofstede provides the definition of culture as:

> *De collectieve mentale programmering die de leden van een groep of categorie mensen onderscheidt van een andere (...) iedereen heeft aangeleerde patronen in zijn leven. Deze mentale programmering is deels uniek en deels gedeeld met andere mensen.* (2005: 19)
> [The Collective programming of the mind; that distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from another. (...) Every person has patterns in his/her way of thinking, feeling and acting that one has learned during life. This mental programming is partly unique, partly shared with others.]

Hofstede speaks of habits, which are developed through life and emphasises the uniqueness of cultures as they are practised differently from person to person.

How culture is described 'is often a matter of the perspective of the observer.' (Thornton: 1988, 23) There is not one way to describe culture and the definition can change according

to the person practicing or engaging with it as well as the practices of culture in a specific place. What culture means to a South African is different to, for example, a citizen of The Netherlands. It also depends on the discipline of work; therefore in the field of theatre, culture will be described differently from the fields of anthropology or psychology.

The application and meaning of culture has also changed over time. Throughout history, cultures have been shaped by policies and laws and cultural practices have changed according to the times. For example, from the history of colonization we see culture was used for institutionalised discrimination and oppression (Garuba and Raditlhalo, 2008:40) For the colonized, 'Culture was what you could truly own and where you could truly be yourself beyond the dispossession and alienation of colonialism. Herein lay the origins of the modern deployment of 'culture' as a platform of political resistance.' (Garuba and Raditlhalo, 2008:41)

1.1. Culture as a process

Culture can be questioned, re-interpreted and applied differently by people and so I am not aiming to define it. I believe it necessary to give space for the complexity of culture: the nuance of cultures and how it is practised differently, not only between groups from different counties but also by different individuals within one group. According to Garuba and Raditlhalo, the emphasis is most appropriately placed on the process of production and exchange, which doesn't see culture as something that is inherited, passed down over time from one generation to the other. This definition allows us to recognise the process of contestation that is it the heart of 'signifying practices and processes rather than simply seeing culture as a homogeneous set of beliefs and practices consensually shared by members of a group.' (2008: 39-40) It is not about preservation but about dynamic processes which change and shape shift through time.

Carol Brunson Phillips describes 'six important concepts about the "deep structure of culture." Awareness of them helps us understand culture as a process.' (1995:1) I will highlight those that are significant to international collaboration projects as they embrace a diversity of views and interpretations of culture. First, 'Culture is a set of rules for behaviour. It is because of the rules that you know what modes of behaviour to adopt. Rules give meaning to all the events and experiences in life. The essence of culture is not these behaviours themselves, but the rules that produce the behaviors.' (Phillips 1997: 1) If you don't know the rules of a certain culture, it is hard to communicate with people from that culture or to understand them. For example, in China, a rule can be that it is polite and a sign of enjoyment if someone belches after a meal. In The Netherlands this would

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commonly be considered rude. In the Netherlands people can be straightforward or frank in their way of communication. To outsiders this can be considered rude and abrasive. Not knowing the parameters of a culture can lead to misunderstandings and misinterpretations and it can lead to behaviour that can be perceived as impolite or insensitive. However, how rules are being enacted can also change from person to person. This leads us to the next characteristic.

'Individual members of a culture are embedded to different degrees within their culture.' (Phillips, 1995: 1) As culture is something that is learned, it can be learned thoroughly or less thoroughly by others. Learning well about one's cultures doesn't imply that one will practice all elements of that culture. 'Behaviour of members of a group will vary depending upon how deeply embedded his or her experiences are within the core of the culture.' (Philips, 1995: 2) By practising culture in different ways and learning it in different ways, culture is something that is not fixed. Each person finds their own their way of practising it. However the way one moves within a culture can determine the level to which people from the same culture will accept you.

This is especially pertinent in a globalised society in which people are influenced by other cultures or find themselves in between cultures. This was the case in *No-man's land* in which different South African cast members had different ways of practicing their culture. One of our South African participants subscribes holistically to Xhosa culture, his first language is Xhosa and he practises its customs and rituals. This is different for another participant who also has a Xhosa background but has lived in the United States for much of her life. She does speak her mother tongue, but is more fluent in English and is not actively practicing Xhosa rituals. Although both participants share aspects of a cultural background, they practise different elements and different degrees of it. Part of adopting elements of culture happens unconsciously and it is not necessarily a choice. The notion that culture is not consciously part of one's awareness is what Pierre Bourdieu refers to as 'habitus'. (Bourdieu, 1990,1996) As much as this theory is relevant to cultural exchange, a thorough investigation of this term is beyond the scope of this dissertation.

Phillips' next point is that 'Cultures borrow and share rules. This happens because cultural rules evolve and change over time, and sometimes the two groups have extensive contact with one another, they influence each other in some areas'. (1995: 2) The exposure to other cultures, changes in society or environment can lead to cultural changes. The development of the Internet, global travelling, and immigration has not only made this process more comprehensive but has also made perceptions of culture change. This is specifically

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pertinent in the context of intercultural exchange in which groups are in intense contact and exchange cultural practices.

2. Culture and international collaboration

In this dissertation the focus is on collaboration between people from different countries and with different cultural backgrounds. This would suggest that, by and large, the groups are more likely to be ignorant of the differences between participants than when collaborating between people from the same country. It also means that the groups themselves might be culturally diverse.

2.1. International collaboration in theatre as a whole

Interaction and exchange between countries and cultures is not a new concept.

> The development of nations and cultures historically has always involved cultural interactions, with trade, migrations, assimilations, and cross-fertilizations being the rule, not the exception. What has been new in millennium globalization is both the rapidity, the immense scale, and the horizontality of the transnational engagements. In this era, large numbers of people were – and still are- migrating from rural areas to cities and from nation to nation. (Zarrilli et al, 2006: 410)

'Performers today seem to become more and more inclined to research the arts of other societies and cultures and to incorporate them into their own artistic enterprises.' (Grau,1992 :10-11)

There are an increasing number of artists and groups who find inspiration from overseas and from other cultures and cultural expression. There is also an increase in the number of exchange projects. Cultural exchange projects have also been used to strengthen or contribute to international alliances between countries and cities. Especially in post-colonial settings links frequently remain between the former colonised and colonisers. The alliances and cultural links between South Africa and The Netherlands are very strong and organisations such as Theatre Group De Apple, Festival Afro Vibes and Theatre Group Siberia (A fusion between theatre groups Het Waterhuis, Rotterdams Lef and Rotjong) instigate projects to enhance this relationship.

2.2 International collaboration and theatre practitioners

In this dissertation my chosen emphasis is on the international aspect, working with people from different cultures and thus the potential for extreme difference. International collaboration has been defined in various ways such international exchange, cross-cultural and multi-cultural and intercultural exchange. I choose to refer to the practices of 'international collaboration', rather than 'international exchange' or 'cross-cultural

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exchange', because the term collaboration refers to a process which (at best) intends equality of contribution and power from the collaborating parties. Previously I used the term exchange, which in my understanding emphasises the difference between groups and doesn't imply actual mixing. Exchange is giving something and getting something back in return, like trading. I believe it is important to aim for a more levelled relationship and not emphasise difference but rather the curiosity and delight of exploration together. Accordingly, throughout this dissertation, I will refer to these practices by using the term international collaboration.

Various terminologies are linked to theatre practitioners who have developed their own theories and distinct ways of working. 'Intercultural theatre has been associated with the works of Richard Schechner, Peter Brook, Eugenio Barba, Ariane Mnouchkine, Robert Wilson, Tadashi Suzuki, and Ong Keng Sen.' (Lo and Gilbert, 2002: 36) I will not discuss all these practitioners and the variety of approaches, but will primarily focus on the work of Boal and Barba because both of these theatre practitioners and innovators allow space for the voice and interpretation of a diverse array of participants in the work and sometimes in the audiences of their theatre. Barba does this by giving space for the qualities and skills of participants and Boal by using techniques that embrace various views and interpretations. They are both practitioners who embrace difference and create collaborative theatre.

When defining intercultural exchange Martin maintains that the exchange is not multiculturalism: the simultaneous existence of several cultures side by side, nor cross-culturalism where people from one cultural background learn a form from another culture and practice it. Interculturalism is an area of interaction where new forms are created. (2004:2) According to Grau, 'To do intercultural work is not about picking something from this culture and something from that, it is about creating something new, belonging to no existing group, to no existing culture – though it may at a later stage be taken over, becoming identified with a group, and become representative of a new group and culture'. (1992:10) But what can be defined as 'new'? Theatre has the general characteristic of bringing influences together from the different performers on stage, director, designer and writer but this does not mean that every theatre performance is 'new' As much as mixing of cultures might bring about undiscovered movements and interpretations I hardly think it possible feasibly to define every intercultural theatre project as creating something new.

Barba states that the aims of his work and of his company Odin Teatret were not to find a new theatrical language, new forms of contact with the spectator or to develop a theatre unrooted in a cultural tradition, but to search for a 'theatre that dances', that is, a theatre not wholly dependent on spoken text but employing dance and song. (Turner, 2004: 16) Barba

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and his company have developed a particular way of working that they refer to as the Third Theatre. 'By Third Theatre' he means that their theatre is neither what might be called avant-garde or experimental, nor traditional, that is, part of a cultural institution. (...) Its aim is to research, consolidate and refine the actor's craft.' (Turner, 2004: 16) Their way of working has a strong emphasis on individuals in the group, their style and contribution within the whole group. 'Third theatre' is about using the different 'ingredients' from company or project members to shape the style and define this 'Third theatre'. This means that it can change from group to group. The 'third theatre' may be defined precisely by its lack of a shared meaning: 'each (Theatre Company) defines its meaning and legacy by embodying them in the precise activity and through a distinct professional identity'. (Barba, 1991: 7)

Augusto Boal has worked across cultures and in different parts of the world, from the slums in India to the suburbs in London and his theory of theatre of the oppressed is applicable to a wide range of cultures and backgrounds. In every society and every context there's an oppression to overcome, so in chapter three I will investigate Boal's image theatre because it crosses language barriers and can be most effective when working in an international context.

2.3 Frame of anthropology and ethnography

As a theatre practitioner working in international collaboration in the applied theatre field, it is most important to be aware of the arena in which the work takes place. By working with people from different cultural backgrounds, cultural studies are important to include in the debate, as well as ethnical considerations and cultural sensitivity within the cultural exchange practices.

Being aware of sensitivities around culture might not resolve the conflict but will provide a framework and mode of understanding through which participants can interact. When participants open themselves up for discussions around cultures they may be more inclined to adopt a more flexible attitude towards each other in the rehearsal process or display more patience before jumping to conclusions, accusations or alienation because of misreading or misunderstanding.

In international collaboration projects, the facilitator needs to be clear about her motivations and intentions for the project and 'design' the process accordingly.

> 'Interculturalism is one way of bringing previously suppressed material into the artistic arena, by admitting into a general discourse other cultures, cultures which had previously been ignored or suppressed or unknown. But the general discourse (which we must define in terms of the dominant culture) must not deform other

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cultures by making them speak the language of the dominant culture.' (Chin, 1991: 175)

Facilitators need to be clear about their intentions towards the exchange and their intended approach. The purpose is to allow an exchange in resources, theatre techniques and views on issues. The purpose is not the exploitation of skills or imposing of meaning, but rather about allowing the voices of all participants to be heard engaging in dialogue and to allow meaning to arise within the process. (Chin, 1991)

Bharucha states that 'The implications of interculturalism are very different for people in impoverished, 'developing'; countries like India, and for their counterparts in technologically advanced, capitalist societies like America, where interculturalism has been more strongly promoted both as a philosophy and a business'. (1993: 1) Bharucha is rather sceptical towards collaboration and exchange. According to him, as much as he 'would like to accept the seeming openness of Euro-American interculturalist to other cultures, the larger economic and political domination of the West has clearly constrained, if not negated the possibilities of a genuine exchange'. (Bharucha, 1993: 2) This would imply that there is never genuine exchange between collaborating partners. However, I do believe that the extent of domination is reliant on the construction of the project and what expectations of the project are. The question is : what is considered to be genuine exchange and who defines this? Coupled with this is a further question: where do the boundaries between insulting or challenging, copying or incorporating lie?

One must retain sensitivity towards working with cultural practices different to one's own. Participants work together and through exercises and intense collaboration share stories. Thompson argues that '[t]elling stories is important to the work of theatre makers generally, but made ethically more complex by the interaction with vulnerable people and disadvantaged communities that is at the heart of applied theatre practice'. (2005: 25) Therefore there is a thin line between bringing out stories in such settings and how the stories are being retold. 'In war settings this is further complicated because storytelling is a vital and widespread activity that generates the dispute-narratives that often sustain the conflict.' (Thompson, 2005: 25) This is so not only in the extreme situation of war but also at the heart of international work in general in which people share their stories. Therefore this work needs to be handled with sensitivity.

Thompson maintains that creating narratives out of painful experiences can deny as much as it reveals. 'Without extreme care theatre projects that dig up narratives, experiences and remembrances can blame, enact revenge and foster animosity as much as they develop

dialogue, respect or comfort.' (2005:26) In devising *No man's land,* we unearthed stories from the actors which were either personal stories, or were created by the group, or derived from the participants' communities or more globally. To what extent were participants able to open up? In the process of *No-man's land* it was hard for people to share personal stories. This only happened at a very intimate level and not within the entire group, perhaps because we lacked a strong enough level of trust within the group. But it is notable that during the process in Cape Town, all three of the actors and myself found ourselves able to open up in sessions on characterisation and group dynamics, possibly because as a group of performers we provided a sufficiently safe space. But once we arrived in The Netherlands, some of the South African actors closed down because of the way they perceived themselves being treated in the process. The erection of social barriers began during the very first meeting in which the South African's received feedback about the work they had prepared in South Africa. Thereafter, I perceived that one actor in particular no longer felt the environment to be sufficiently safe to open up and share stories. This suggests to me in retrospect that the process of meeting and commencing collaborations is a sensitive area and needs better facilitation than I could provide in the above instance.

3. Purpose and methodology of international collaboration

When people from different backgrounds come together, they first need to find a shared value to work from. Both groups should feel ownership over the process, collaborate and get to know each other by exploring performance forms and bringing styles together. In this way, the project may become a group initiative rather than two partners trading skills.

Conceison enquires; 'As the young postmodern discourse of interculturalism is nurtured, we who participate in the scripting of its vocabulary and shaping of its manifestations must ask ourselves not only what we are doing, but also how we are doing it. Are such projects actually fostering understanding and cultural sharing or are they merely reifying existing hegemonic structures and painful misconception?' (1995; 151) This is a relevant and recurring question in the field which needs to be posed over and over again in order to stay critical to processes. This question is important for participants in such projects, especially as many intercultural theatre projects end up having an unequal balance of power and being insensitive towards the way of working of different cultures.

In international collaborative projects the aim is to dig deep into the practices and customs of people from different countries. Through this, participants engage with a variety of issues and discover how different participants view these. It is through this more thorough interaction that people exchange and influence each other's artistic and cultural practices and processes. How participants respond to the arts practices of others can become a

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mirror through which participants look at their own lives in a different way. I will discuss the mirroring effect further in chapter three.

3.1 Roles and responsibilities

There is often a lack of clarity about the allocation of roles and responsibilities within collaborative projects. When misunderstandings and tension arise about these 'the question, not only of the specific verbal and written exchanges of the negotiation process but also of the vision each side associated with the word "collaboration," comes into the spotlight'. (Conceison, 1995: 156) Arrangements about roles and responsibilities can be made on paper but in practice groups can discover that one director is dominating or that some performers are not contributing enough. These dynamics can only surface in practice and are largely related to the environment of collaboration and how the process is set up.

In the production *Outside Voices*, there were two facilitators, one from Amsterdam and one from Durban. Their roles altered according to the environment in which they were working. In South Africa, the South African director's role was greater because he could rely on his immediate social and professional network; where the Dutch director, although he was familiar with South Africa and the community in which they were working, didn't have the contacts, inside information and approach most beneficial to the rehearsal and process in South Africa. The roles shifted once they arrived in The Netherlands where the South African director had to re-adjust his position because he wasn't familiar with Dutch customs and ways of communicating, and he didn't have his social position and network to count on. In The Netherlands his role became more the leader of his theatre group and the person everyone would address their issues to (a mediator of sorts), rather than a director. There was an instance when, in a misunderstanding about payments, he found himself caught between two worlds and couldn't deal with the consequences. The situation grew out of hand and he detached himself from the group, refusing to accept any form of responsibility. The Dutch director discussed this situation with him and called for a group meeting in which the misunderstandings were communicated and ultimately the air was cleared. This is one example in which tensions escalated and power was questioned and confronted.

It is also essential for all participants to know as precisely as possible what the requirements of participation are so that participants are enabled to participate fully in the project and attend all rehearsals or not participate at all. Whilst this may seem obvious, in many applied theatre projects this is a problem because some group members might face difficult circumstances. For example, when I choreographed the dance project *African con*

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Fusion, I started off with eight dancers. However the group membership and size of the group kept changing and in the end I had five dancers. The reason for this was that some dancers had money problems and couldn't organise transport, whereas other members had difficulty attending because of their employment circumstances

3.2 Misunderstandings and misinterpretations

Misunderstanding in international theatre exchange projects often happen because of difficulties arising from misinterpretation or translation. (Conceison: 1995, 156) Not having a common language can form a barrier and slow down or complicate the process. The term 'language' can be interpreted in various ways; it can literally refer to verbal language (word usages) but can also refer to other forms of interaction and communication such as song and physical images. In the applied theatre context, the aim is to explore issues and bring out stories through performing arts. The language of performance can enhance these stories and provide a 'vocabulary' through which stories of the oppressed can be expressed. If the participants can find their common language or languages, their collaboration can be more effective and better intertwined. Rather than having each group working in their own language, own research and own segment of performance, the groups can create and explore together and learn from each other.

From my experiences working in the field of intercultural exchange projects, I have encountered differences in theatrical language amongst groups, for example; when I was working on the production *Outside Voices* the Dutch director and South African performers had to establish a common understanding of theatre and identify the skills that they could use in creating a production together. This led to an exchange between the director's, mainly European, theatre making background and the theatre methodology established by the Durban group. What was interesting was how these different approaches came together and how skills from both parties were incorporated effectively. In the production they mainly used Zulu song, dance and image theatre. In The Netherlands the production had to be slightly adapted, albeit with sensitivity to the performances; for example, English largely replaced spoken Zulu.

'When artists attempt to cross cultural boundaries, there are times when misinterpretation may prove to be stimulating, provocative, seminal.' (Chin 1991:172) So, whilst misinterpretations are confusing on the one hand, on the other they promise new interpretations. Beyond questions of misinterpretation, artists also use influences from different cultures in various ways, such as design or aesthetics. In such cases, each artist,

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or group of artists creates his or her own representation of the culture and borrows and uses what seems relevant to the project.

Over and beyond cultural differences, participants need to be sensitive to variations of personality and temperament among the group in order to interpret correctly. In *No-man's land*, some performers said that I was not being straight forward enough and that I wasn't clear on what I wanted them to do. I would say; 'You *can* do this', which meant there was also another option and that the choice I made wasn't firm. Another actor responded, 'But he should also know you by now and understand that if you say "can" or "maybe" that it means that that is what you want to see at that point.'

3.3 Educational benefits

In the context of applied theatre, international collaboration projects are aimed to have educational benefits. I have already introduced the educational purpose of applied theatre, referring to education in the broadest sense of the word: sharing of knowledge and learning through various channels, one of which is performance-based work. Jackson sums it up very well, positing that there are a multitude of different forms of theatre or performance used for educational purposes such as,

> 'theatre of the oppressed, 'theatre in education', 'theatre in health education', 'outreach theatre', 'museum theatre', 'theatre in prisons', 'theatre for development', 'theatre for liberation' , 'agit-prop', and more recently, 'applied theatre', 'social theatre' and 'interventionist theatre' – the list of terms related to this field of work seems endless.
>
> ...
>
> Most are intended to signify forms of theatre practice that aim to effect a transformation in people's lives, whether that be the activation of a process of *attitudinal* or *behavioural change* on the part of the audience or the creation or consolidation of *consciousness* about the audience's place in the world or, more modestly, the *triggering of curiosity* about a specific issue.' (2007: 1-2)

For many years there have been discussions about the approach to and purpose of theatre for development, social theatre and other socio-political forms of creative theatrical expression. What used to be 'helping' people, has now changed to 'collaborating with people'. The way it is formulated is sensitive and also specific to the various practices of educational theatre as well as to the practitioner or facilitator of the process. According to Brandon, a person picks up from the unfamiliar culture that which they recognise. 'One of

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the tenets of culture diffusion theory is that people only borrow what is already, in some degree and on some level, compatible.' (1990:95) In *Theatre for Development*, Kees Epskamp writes:

> the most common way for people to learn is through the desire to answer a question, solve a problem or improve something. People learn by building on what they already know or believe. One already has a variety of past experiences shaped by language, culture, values and previous learning experiences. Learning occurs when students are challenged to go beyond what they already know, understand or can do, in order to build new knowledge. (2006: 45)

In intercultural exchange projects, the process of cultural development is influenced by an intense interaction with a group from outside the cultural group. The complete experience comes by having partner organisations and participants collaborate in each other's space. They don't solely make theatre together but engage in an experience in which they collaborate intensely. At least one of the partners usually visits the other country, which means they experience living in the other culture, tasting it and absorbing it. During this collaboration the participants see, hear and fully experience their own cultural practices as well as those from its counterpart.

Both Dutch and South African performers had their ideas about the other group, for example, that the South African cast are all tall, muscled men who would be teaching the Dutch cast African dance. Already by physically meeting and interacting together, these pre-conceptions were changed.

The exposure to other cultural practices can also leave a mark on one's way of being. In *No-man's land*, the Dutch performers had to familiarize themselves with gumboot dancing and the speed and rhythm of these movements. It is through this physical action that participants experience for themselves new forms of expression. However, because of the short rehearsal time we had we didn't fully go into the significance of the dance and how it would dialogue with the production other than its (somewhat romanticised) aesthetic value. This new way of moving or thinking about performance can form part of one's new performance vocabulary and something that will be used in future projects.

Living, albeit briefly, in the same country and context and interacting, also allows the time to ask questions and to experience cultural interaction first hand. Both parties who engage in the project bring in information, approaches and experiences and learn from others as well as teach others. For the participants, the collaboration provides a learning experience by engaging with the partner organisation for an extensive time and by exploring issues that are relevant to them. However in many cases these issues are personal and can be confrontational. Engaging with new forms of expression can be tenuous and perhaps the

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aesthetic form is hard to master and might feel unnatural or awkward. Only by engaging with it over time will become more familiar. Sometimes, when a process is facilitated, the facilitation provides a container within which it may become easier to engage with the unfamiliar and to become involved in the process.

It is difficult to determine what learning is and what is perceived as learning. There is no equality in learning and new knowledge can vary from person to person. With a diverse group it can be troublesome to predetermine what the learning outcome will be. It is not to the responsibility of the facilitator to decide for them what they should extract from the process. If the approach is more 'bottom-up' and democratic, the participants can take ownership over their own learning. However, in terms of content of the production and subject matter, some articulated outcomes are helpful in providing a common purpose. Possibly, certain topics will be brought up but in such cases it is important to try and ensure that there is sufficient time to dig deeper into the subject matter. The facilitator can 'design' the rehearsal process in such a way that space is made for participants to explore these issues and possibly learn about them. In accordance with Freire's and Boal's methodologies and ideals, collaboration and exchange of knowledge and experiences is effective when groups and participants approach each other with an explorative attitude. In such cases the parties are more likely to be open to learning from the work rather than having the teacher or facilitator telling everybody what to do and what to learn.

The space in which collaboration happens is a space where, through theatre, participants can engage with each other, exchange ways of working and views on the project's subject matter. Setting up this kind of space will be dealt with in chapter two.

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CHAPTER TWO CONCEPTUALISING NO MAN'S LAND

1. Creating the frame of applied theatre

In this chapter I will elaborate on the concept of *No Man's Land* and my argument in favour of such a working space. As much as the ideal would be to create a more equal space of collaboration, No Man's Land is not a neutral space; it's highly contested because people bring in their culture and ways of working. Along with this come their morals, values and rules that frame these behavioural systems. Ralph Yarrow says that groups have first to claim their identity; so begin by asking groups to visualise and express their own identity; because one can't remove culture until it is actually there. I shall start by describing the frame of applied theatre. This is followed by attempting to pin down the concept of No Man's Land as a mentality for collaboration: the characteristics of the space, as well as its challenges.

1.1 Theatre

Throughout history theatre has proven to be a powerful tool in resistance and protest. During the apartheid years it was used in South Africa to raise voices against apartheid and in the sixties in The Netherlands it was used to represent the voice for freedom and emancipation of sexes, races and beliefs. According to Turner, 'The performance creates a sense of **communitas**: a collective experience, and it is the experience of the event that is important rather than what we think it might mean in concrete terms.' (Turner, 2004: 10) Therefore the value in the theatre event is not only about its thematic meaning but also about the experience in the moment. The event brings audiences and performers together and fosters interaction between them.

According to Boal,

> Theatre has nothing to do with buildings or other physical constructions. Theatre- or theatricality – is this capacity, this human property which allows man to observe himself in action, in activity. The self-knowledge thus acquired allows him to be the subject (the one who observes) of another subject (the one who acts). It allows him to imagine variations of his action, to study alternatives. Man can see himself in the act of seeing, in the act of acting, in the act of feeling, the act of thinking. Feel himself feeling, think himself thinking. (1995: 13)

According to Heathcote (1997), 'The most important manifestation about this thing called drama is that it must show change. [...] In drama activity, change must be seen to happen. Second, in drama, there must be interaction of people and forces. Third, these people, or these forces, must be given a framework within which they negotiate their change, their interaction'. (2009: 200) In order for this to happen, the facilitator needs to train and assist people to understand how to negotiate so that the people go through a process of change. (Heathcote, 1997) Theatre becomes more than entertainment and rather a way to self-

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reflection either by looking at others performing or by physically engaging in the act of theatre. For the performer self-reflection can come out of the process of performing and interacting with the audience. For the audience it can come through experiencing the performance and engaging in discussions afterwards: in other words from the experience of the theatre event as a whole. As much as the role of the audience is relevant, there is simply not the space to include that investigation in of this dissertation.

1.2 Applied Theatre

I shall investigate the term 'applied theatre' by referring to how it is used by other practitioners in the field. Thompson refers to terms used in similar contexts such as community-based theatre, community theatre, social theatre, theatre for development and participatory theatre as a range of terms, where some are subsets of others and some denote distinct practices. (2005) Applied theatre in The Netherlands is different to the use of the term in South Africa. In The Netherlands a common term used is 'community theatre' – referring to projects in which theatre is used to discuss local issues, mainly performed by people from within that specific community. 'While each of these forms of theatre developed from a particular set of circumstances and within specific contexts, including explicit political or economic influences with have resulted in the practitioners fiercely protecting and promoting their particular form over the others, they all have a number of defining characteristics in common, making them *Applied Theatre.*'(Bilbrough, 2009:25) Firstly, applied theatre projects are frequently more process than product oriented and have a goal beyond entertainment – the aims are not primarily staging performances from different parts of the world but about using theatre as a tool to bring people together and for partners to interact. Secondly, according to Taylor (2003), the term 'applied theatre' suggests that the projects are taking place in a non-conventional theatre setting and have the goal to raise social-developmental issues in order to provoke awareness amongst the audience and participants. Thirdly, 'applied theatre assists in a better understanding of people's lives in their society. It is very much about the intention of the work, about enabling people to take control of their lives and transform them'. (Plastow, 2008) Within international exchange project, the intention of work is discussing social and developmental issues that are specific to the different partners. Within this process, the partners can come across curiosities but also disagreements in how they want to represent the themes and present it in a production. Forthly, applied theatre is 'interested in the applications of a reflective theatre, a theatre that is concerned with facilitating a dialogue on who we are and what we aspire to become' (Taylor 2003: xix) It is within this dynamic process of investigating issues as well as creating a theatrically powerful performance in which partners can learn from each other and about themselves.

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2. From metaphor to mentality

In the story *The Christmas Truce* by Aaron Shepard (Accessed 11 August 2009, www.aaronshepard.com) the soldiers met in no-man's land and talked, shared pictures and exchanged goods. This story looks at the human side of warfare, and how soldiers re-discovered that they were more alike in their humanity than they had initially thought. As much as this story wasn't directly used in the production, it did inspire me to think about the term no-man's land, the significance of this space and the paradox implicit in the space which is so evident in this story. The story also elucidates the many aspects of a no-man's land.

According to the *Concise Oxford English Dictionary* the definition of no-man's land is a 'disputed ground between two opposing armies' or 'a piece of unowned land or wasteland'. (Pearsall, 1999: 739) The term 'unowned', implies that because no-man's land doesn't belong to either country, it is not governed by laws.

No man's land is also described as a twilight zone - 'The ambiguous region between two categories or states or conditions usually containing some features of both 'in that no man's *land* between *negotiation* and *aggression*.'(Accessed 10 July 2009, http://www.wordwebonline) Focussing on the notion of no-man's land as a 'place between negotiation and aggression', I want point out the paradox of this space. No man's land is not necessarily a space which exists in a time of conflict. When countries are at peace, entering no-man's land is an act of necessity in order to cross the border to the other country. It is usually not considered as anything threatening. However, if countries are in war or high tension, entering no-man's land can provoke hostile response. Although entering no-man's land doesn't mean entering the enemy zone, it is a highly charged space. No-man's land can be considered as the space between two groups, an apparently neutral space. It could be considered the safe space, where soldiers can meet, a space of negotiation, a space where potential peace can be made or from where both armies go back into their trenches to fight the next day. No-man's land can be a meeting point or it can be the space in which the fight is taking place, where the casualties occur. This can also be reflected in theatre exchange projects, the no-man's land between participants can become a space of negotiation or aggression, a space where theatre forms and stories can be exchanged or where the dispute takes place. No-man's land remains a sensitive space in between groups, because as soon as you enter it means that you are approaching the other group's territory. Taking possession over that in-between-space means you are taking up territory that doesn't belong to you. This could result in tension, confrontation and possibly dispute.

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As long as one is physically in one's own space, no relationships are being jeopardised. However, a person can also enter someone's space verbally; by for example, insulting their language, customs or political situation. As soon as someone enters one's space either physically or verbally, this will probably evoke a response. The safest situation would be if the different sides would not interact. In daily life this is not possible because even passivity makes its own statement. Not responding or engaging when friends are fighting or a neighbour is in grief can be read as 'not caring', even though you might have meant it as 'allowing the person their own space'. In most cases and despite the vulnerability of exposing ourselves, people choose to interact, whether via internet, or telephone or by physically travelling to another country or even by coming across people from different backgrounds in one's own country or neighbourhood.

2.1 Conceptualising No Man's Land

Having explored some of the possibilities and problems of no-man's land, I shall now discuss its greater potential as a metaphoric concept with respect to international or intercultural collaborations; first as a space of collaboration between partners and then as suggestive of a mentality for collaboration.

2.1.1 Space of collaboration

I refer to No Man's Land as the space in which the collaboration takes place. This is not a literal space but the space between two or more groups which they enter as soon as contact is made. Entering No Man's Land can happen with the first negations or conversations on the phone. This means that groups are talking and agreements are being made about the interaction, consciously and unconsciously, verbally and non-verbally. By engaging physically, the confrontation and reaction will become greater, just because people are literally in each other's space. Having someone in one's space evokes a reaction. Either one enjoys it, feels comfortable or one experiences it as a great effort, frustrating and irritating; or it can be a combination of both. Any reaction that comes about will be communicated either consciously or unconsciously to the collaborating partner and will evoke response. It is through theatre that this relationship and these responses will be evoked and explored.

2.1.2 Mentality for collaboration

No Man's Land is also a mentality for partnered or equal collaboration. It is not about forcing a mentality but suggests attitude towards the collaboration that can assist in creating an effective working environment. This attitude can be affected by many factors outside of the persons in the space but exists and is continuously being re-negotiated by the entire group. An approach which is coloured by this mentality can assist in breaking through prejudice

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and preconceptions and have a more open and neutral starting position to exchange. No Man's Land suggests the creation of an environment in which there is space for different cultures and practices, a space in which issues can be discussed, exchanged and questioned by the collaborating groups. The ideology behind the concept is that of creating a more equal space and finding within this vibrant environment, first, a sense of understanding 'the other'; secondly, a shift in ways of reflecting upon oneself as well as participants, and finally, sensitivity to the cultural dimensions involved for both parties.

2.1.3 No Man's Land as a descriptor

I found No Man's Land a useful descriptor for international collaboration because of the diversity of ways in which it can be used and interpreted. I consider that cultural collaboration projects happen in a space between the two (or more) cultures, between the borders, in a metaphorical No Man's Land. When participants of a theatre project meet in a metaphorical No Man's Land, this often happens with good intentions: with the idea of harmony and peace. It implies that participants do not plan to fight about territory or power whilst in that space. However in practice, this exchange can be experienced as an environment of competition, threat and tension.

The term No Man's Land implies a level of 'de-possessing' your surroundings: letting go of your power bases with a view to being more vulnerable in the exchange process. Each group takes a measure of risk since they are no longer 'at home' and enter the collaboration with possible suspicion and anxiety. Both parties leave the security of home behind and enter an unknown territory. For at least one of the participating groups this means that they visit a foreign country where the process takes place. For the other group this means entering an intense process with a 'foreign' group of people and undertaking a project, the outcome of which they can't predict. In the story *The Christmas Truce,* no-man's land was a particularly defined time and space in which the soldiers found it possible to explore common ground. In this space between the two opposing armies, between the enemy lines, for the time of Christmas Eve the soldiers dared to lay aside their guns and interact as individuals.

3. Characteristics of No Man's Land

In the following section I will elaborate on characteristics of No Man's Land. It goes without saying that international collaboration projects will not necessarily include all these characteristics. Depending upon the context, some might provide a positive bridge into the process and others a sticking point; but because circumstances are so variable, I have found it worthwhile to consider all of the characteristics below.

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1. More about the space which exists in between countries or between groups
2. A space which identifies diverse needs and expectations from the participants,
3. A space where new rules and conventions can be formed
4. A space for cultural dialogue to take place
5. A space where you may take risks and cross boundaries
6. A 'fleetly'[1] space, 'created' specifically for the project, and to be 'destroyed' or 'abandoned' afterwards.

3.1 More about the space which exists in between countries or between groups

No Man's Land happens when different partners agree on entering this metaphorical space. The interaction and collaboration can't happen with a single person entering a space; it is an interaction between two or more people or groups. Thus it is not about 'inviting' the other group into 'your space' but about finding the encounter in the middle. When the collaboration happens in the space of one of the participants, this would suggest that they hold more power. For example, *No-man's land* took place in The Netherlands and was funded and mainly facilitated by Dutch partner organisations. This would imply that much of the power lies on the Dutch side. However, much of the preparatory work and generation of material happened in South Africa. This creative input gave more power to the South African cast. No Man's Land doesn't belong to anyone, but who-ever enters the space can inhabit it for some time and use the space for explorations. However in theatre projects, the facilitator(s) or director(s) usually take a large part of the responsibility. (The roles and responsibility of the facilitator will be further discussed in chapter three.)

No Man's Land is 'created' as a space that moves away from, and questions, entrenched power structures. When participants remain attached to entrenched power structures, how can they find the freedom to explore and express their issues? No Man's Land is a space where new ideologies and ideas can be put to the test and tried out, the 'yes lets!' and 'yes we can!' space. Below I shall visualise the space of No Man's Land diagrammatically and how the partners engage with each other in the space.

Image 1

Two groups (Yellow and Blue) in the space of collaboration (Red)

The groups are both in the space but each stay on their own 'land'. They may teach each other skills and work together, but they are keeping a clear distinction between the groups.

[1] In my rather second language English, I conjured the term 'fleetly' and my supervisor urged me to adopt the term as a delightful variant of 'evanescent'.

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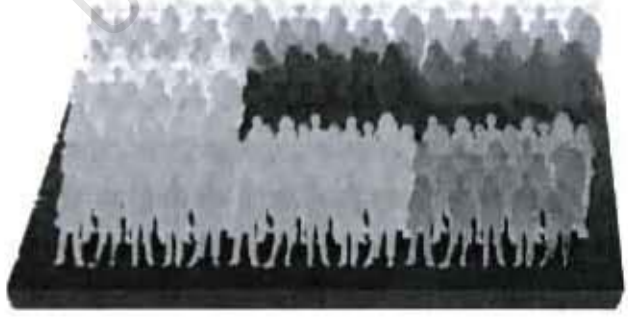
Image 2

This group is deciding on how No Man's Land should be designed and what rules conducted. The space of collaboration is mainly taken in by Yellow. Blue is entering the space of Yellow to contribute to the process. Here the partners are as yet unequal in the collaboration.

Image 3

The two groups, (Yellow and Blue) collaborate and meet each other in the middle (Green) where the groups exchange and become intertwined in style. They both fill an even space in the collaboration. There is room for further explorations (indicated by the Red groups)



A level environment doesn't imply that the groups need to be fused and unable to be distinguished (this would be an entirely green space). In No Man's land there is space for each partner and the individuals in each group. There may also be parts which remain un-explored because the time is not right or the groups are unwilling or their courage or

imagination simply doesn't take them there at this time in this particular collaboration. The ideal of a more equal working environment is difficult to achieve in practice and differs from project to project, for a number of reasons. First, relations between participants and director or project leader shift the dynamics. Secondly, it is affected by the artistic input from participants or the chemistry between group members.

As much as every project is likely to have points of struggle, the points of success or sense of achievement is to a large extent dependant upon how it is perceived by the participants and is therefore hard to measure or copy. Participants can find success in the relationship they have with fellow performers, or from what they have learned in the process, or in their performance technique. The sense of success and achievement is highly subjective. What works well in one project might not work in another, therefore it is important to stay open towards the process and perceive every project as unique.

3.2 A space which identifies the needs and expectations of participants

The principle of No Man's Land corresponds to Casmir's idea of a 'Third culture' which ideally is 'a mutually beneficial interactive environment in which individuals from two different cultures can function in a way beneficial to all involved' (1999: 92). This third culture develops as a result of the actions of all the members in establishing their own frameworks, value systems, and communication systems for the purposes of survival, mutual growth, and enjoyment of life experiences.

In order for participants to create a mutually beneficial environment they need to clarify what defines this space. Each person involved has his or her own aims and expectations. When creating No Man's Land, needs and expectations from within the group need to be identified. This can be done by starting the rehearsal process by having participants 'draw out' what their expectations are from process and what they expect from each other. This provides the facilitator with a sense of what is required by the group whilst making the group actively involved in their own learning process. Articulating what the expectations are, doesn't necessarily mean that they can all be accommodated within the process, this depends on whether the intended approach can accommodate (some of) the participants wishes or if the facilitators can or will adjust their approach to accommodate expectations which they did not anticipate.

3.3 A space where new rules and conventions can be formed

Rules influence the working environment and make it into a collaborative space, into a No Man's Land that everyone agrees on. According to Bourdieu, all social fields, ranging in scale from the global community to villages and families, depend on illusion to be real. To

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accept the 'rules of the game' an illusion of a whole, ordered by certain conventions and of a shared interest, is a precondition (1990: 66ff; 1996: 166ff.) Without a sustained (and shared) 'illusion' (or convention) about the social space in which one participates, no action makes sense. In the environment of collaboration, participants need to set out their rules and conventions. The rules and agreements ensure that participants all share the same conventions and all inhabit the shared reality of that particular project. As much as the process can be open and democratic, agreements have to be made. Collaboration can become frustrating and unproductive if half the cast turns up late for rehearsals, or if there isn't a clear idea of the project goal or outcome. Rules and common goals provide structure for the process, for participants to understand the nature of the particular project they are engaged in and to create a sense of the collective.

Agreements made by the collaborating participants are determined by various elements such as the expressed needs of the groups, their preferences or inclinations, as well as the nature of the theatre project being attempted, for example: the form of theatre, environment of collaboration and subject matter. When starting a theatrical process, the first agreement is that the participants will be working together using theatre and performance. Another agreement is that they will be performing, for example, at a festival, for their community or presenting to each other. Rules and agreements change per project, and through this the facilitator and cast create their own shared 'illusion' and their own No Man's Land.

3.4 A space for cultural dialogue to take place

The ideal of No Man's Land is to create a space in which dialogue can take place. Chapter One introduced the notion of cultural dialogue in Freire's terms and this section elaborates on cultural dialogue in relation to No Man's Land. According to Freire (1972), 'Cultural action is always a systematic and deliberate form of action which operates upon the social structure, either with the objective of preserving that structure or of transforming it'. (2009: 310) Participants either open themselves up to be influenced and inspired by the process or they choose to stay with what they know. When the objective is preservation, this implies that there is little interaction and little dialogue taking place. Freire uses the term 'antidialogical cultural action', which in collaborative projects implies that the participants hardly mix and explore each other's approach. (1972) Freire's dialogical cultural action is relevant to exchange project, to approach the process with the perspective of exchange, of having a conversation about issues whilst using theatre methods. In No Man's Land participants physically and verbally interact, exchange and actively question issues and ideas. The aims are not necessarily to transform but for explorations which inform ones way of seeing the world. The interaction between participants can be by verbally trying to find out more about each other or by physically engaging in bodily patterning with which one is

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unfamiliar. Bodily interaction will bring about an experiential knowledge. This physical interaction and exploration can be done through improvisation. Chapter three will elaborate more on the use of improvisation within cultural exchange.

3.5 A space where one can cross boundaries

Through the discourse of theatre, boundaries can be crossed and new rules made or practices forged. Theatre comes with its own sets of rules and within this framework; participants can challenge the boundaries within themselves. When participants practise their own styles of performance in a process it is less likely to spark critical ways of thinking about forms and ways of thinking and being. Learning about and engaging with a 'foreign' performance form, participants are more likely to access undiscovered emotions. When employing a 'foreign' performance style, this will sit differently in the body, it will evoke different emotions and will make a participant go through a process of exploring the unfamiliar. This engagement with 'foreign' styles is not only about copying set movement, it is only through engaging with it, setting it against what you already know, that the participant will start to create a renewed and dialogical method of observing and comparing performance forms. Submitting to an unfamiliar form of expression can evoke unexpected emotions and provoke the participants into venturing across personal boundaries, even if these are as material as performing for an audience of 'foreigners'.

3.6 A 'fleetly' space, created specifically for the project and that can be 'destroyed' or 'abandoned' afterwards

No Man's Land in the context of applied theatre can provide a safe space. Within this space stigma and tradition can be put aside and new sides of participants can be discovered. This No Man's Land is not a 'real' space, it is created specifically for a project and possesses specific rules which determine the space and which will be abandoned following the cessation of the project. In other words, the situation of collaboration and the environment in which it happens is always different following the closure of the project. For these reasons the space is flexible and fleeting.

In as much as No Man's Land is a hypothetical and 'fleetly' space, at the same time very real and tangible issues can surface in the concentrated present of the project. Hopefully, after abandoning a No Man's Land when the process is over and the production performed, some of the leanings and impact of the project will remain in the consciousness of the participants. Within No Man's Land, perhaps participants might have encountered obstacles or confrontations, which affect their perceptions and attitudes more permanently, albeit on a personal (and, thus, indeterminable) scale.

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CHAPTER THREE: THE ROLE OF THE FACILITATOR

Having discussed the characteristics of No Man's Land and how the metaphor can foster a mentality conducive to an equitable working environment, this chapter focuses on the role of the facilitator in creating such a space. I will be discussing the tasks and responsibilities of the facilitator and participants in creating a productive, and fruitful environment and her approach to collaborating. I have chosen the word facilitator but in some projects this might be referred to as director, project leader or initiator. The choice of terminology depends on the person initiating the project. I use the word facilitator as it is someone who doesn't strictly direct but who steers, accommodates and facilitates the process. There is no clear artistic vision which will be acted out by performers, but rather she develops a clear concept together with participants, using explorative exercises whereby scenes will be developed leading to a production which incorporates ideas and stories from the participants.

I will discuss some key issues which are pertinent to the field of exchange and which I experienced in various projects. To achieve insight into such processes in April 2009 I met with professor, facilitator and writer Ralph Yarrow[2] and asked his views concerning the position of a facilitator in applied theatre projects and will incorporate his answers in this chapter, which draws chiefly on the ideas of Prentki, Thompson and Yarrow because of their applied theatre work in international environments.

1. Principles underlying the facilitator's' responsibilities

There lies a paradox in 'facilitating' a levelled space. The fact that it is facilitated, designed or directed from the outside already implies that it is not levelled. If the facilitator designs a process beforehand, this means that the setup of the project is potentially 'top-down', that it has been thought out by one person. However, facilitating a levelled process goes through various phases, phases where decisions and ideas can come from within the group through collaboration, and phases when the facilitator needs to take more 'leadership'. These phases will be discussed in this chapter.

1.1. 'Levelling' the playing field

Chapter one raised the issues of facilitating in an environment of extreme difference and when working with people from different cultural and ethnic backgrounds. It suggests that facilitators need to be aware of the dynamics and sensitivities in such a culturally diverse setting. They need to be able to work around existing power structures and established

[2] Ralph Yarrow is Professor of Drama and Comparative Literature at University of East Anglia. He teaches a broad range of courses and his publications include Indian Theatre (Routledge 2001) and Le Coq in Britain (ed. with Franc Chamberlain Routledge 2001) He is one of the authors of *Improvisation* by Frost and Yarrow. (2007)

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rules and attempt to facilitate a 'levelled' environment. But what can be defined as 'levelled' and who defines this?

The extent to which a working environment is more egalitarian depends on various factors such as the space, cultural dynamics and the perception of these issues by the particular group of participants. In The Netherlands a facilitator might find they are working with a group of people who have established their own power dynamics in which they are invested. It is the responsibility of the facilitator to be aware of the dynamics in the group, to adjust and design the process accordingly and to set realistic aims.

The facilitator is 'the figure who moves between two worlds, like the joker' (Prentki, 2009:253). This person crosses borders into and out of a particular community in which the project takes place. 'Where practitioners come into a community or context to which they do not normally belong, they (...) move temporarily into other, unfamiliar worlds where, as outsiders, they will see some things less clearly than the participants and others, perhaps, more clearly with the benefit of distance.' (Prentki 2009: 252) The facilitator is both an insider being part of the process, engaging with participants and with their stories, as well as maintaining an outside eye for the whole and knowing when to guide and take decisions. It is the facilitator's responsibility to ensure that the process is monitored and that participants practice the rules of the project (which was discussed in chapter two). The facilitator can determine whether the group is engaging well in the process, that the process is going according to schedule and ensure that the process finishes on time. The facilitator is the person in contact with performance spaces and knows what is required and what elements to take into account. For example in *No-man's land*, I had to ensure that we had sufficient time to explore the different performance spaces and within that process keep an outside eye for how it would be experienced by the audience and how it could be technically feasible. Within these frameworks, the facilitator can provide a clear plan of action and tasks to her cast.

1.1.1 Identify differences before coming together

In *No-man's land,* we created an environment of extreme difference by starting the process separately, interpreting the themes, developing scenes and characters work from a distance. In that way the process was almost set up as if the groups were soldiers fighting from both sides of the trenches needing to be facilitated into the meeting in No Man's Land. The Dutch group worked collectively in giving each other assignments and generating material. In South Africa I was facilitating the process in which there was space for input from participants. We were a small group and managed to generate material effectively. Within this initial phase of generating material separately, both groups managed to establish

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a 'levelled' working environment. However, when both groups came together in The Netherlands we did not manage to find this space between groups where we could work collectively. I as a facilitator did not manage to establish No Man's Land.

Chapter two introduced Yarrows idea that 'you can't remove culture until it is actually there.' (Yarrow, 2009) This implies that groups need first to claim their identity before they can explore commonalities. According to Ralph Yarrow, 'facilitators usually have to cheat, not by participants talking to each other but by starting with the reversed o what you are aiming for.'For example, in *No-man's land*, friction between the groups was established in their very first meeting in Amsterdam. When the cast met in Amsterdam, both groups presented the prepared work and ideas. This escalated by bringing material together and generating new work collectively to create a production, without having fully facilitated a secure environment. However, following Yarrow's suggested method, it was exactly in this moment of primal encounter and of sharing where it could be effective in inducing a safe space. Instead of starting to work on our intended goal, which was to bring the ideas together into one, we should have started with the opposite by taking a step back from our goals. This could have been achieved by starting on first getting to know each other through introductory games and by spending the first days on generating new work together before including the separate work. The result of this difficult start of *No-man's land* was that the presentation of work was experienced by both groups as a direct comparison and competition. The reason for this feeling of competition was partly because the groups didn't have a common starting point. the South African cast had been involved in the primary phase of conceptualisation and had been rehearsing for well over a month. The Dutch cast had been working for one week and had been involved in the conceptualisation process from a distance. That way, the Dutch cast felt as if they started the process as 'outsiders'. They felt as if they had to create their work in a way to fit into the generated material from the South African cast. In the first meeting they presented short scenes and proposals of scenes whilst the South African cast presented various worked out scenes with much performance power. The Dutch participants said that it felt as if this was a finished production and that it wasn't clear where there was space for their characters. To regain their sense of power they responded to the proposed work with strong criticism and a discursive power.

On the other hand, the South African cast also felt 'outsiders'. Visiting a foreign country and having to be accepted within the process, they felt they had to be sensitive to the new culture and took a more accommodating stance at the beginning of the process. They were trying to find out if some of the Dutch criticism was merely a cultural trait of being straight forward; or whether they were inherently offensive in their personalities. Once the South

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African cast had acclimatised and adjusted to the process and placement of themselves in the work, they could distinguish the intention of the remarks and respond appropriately.

The difficulties and tensions from collaborating groups could have been avoided by using the processes of generating a level playing field to accommodate these inequalities. The above example also demonstrates the sensitivity toward exchange in which one partner is visiting another country and regarded as a 'guest' in that environment.

Much of the learning in international exchange projects comes from visiting an unfamiliar place, eating different food, and hearing a foreign language and so on. As much as an equal collaboration is desirable, already by having one group entering the space of the other, the hosting organisation is in a position of greater power, because of the distinct advantage of access and accommodation – they are 'at home', in every sense of the word. For participants it is a different experience to be a guest in someone's country and space than it is to be in your home country and having a group coming into your space.

The South African group was able to put all their focus on the production whilst the Dutch participants had distractions from their day-to-day life. The South African cast was also able to get an 'overall' impression and experience of Dutch culture and cultural practices by living and working in that environment for an intense month. The experience of South African culture by the Dutch participants was exclusively based on the project experiences.

This history of colonisation and the acquisition of political power still has its effects on contemporary practices. (Thompson, 2005: 10) The dynamics of the Dutch and South African partly shared colonial past were still evident within the collaborative process. When they started the collaboration the colonial past formed part of their perception of each others' cultures. It was in the process of creating work together that the participants moved beyond these preconceived ideas and started to experience each other in the moment, creating new values and opinions about each other. Thompson believes that 'we have to work doubly hard to break the link to the colonial past'. (2005: 10) As much as a process is automatically informed by historical relationships, it is the role of the facilitator to accommodate these power dynamics and re-assess the relationship between participants.

1.1.2. Facilitating a mentality of collaboration

In the introduction, Freire's notion of cultural synthesis was introduced as a mentality in collaboration projects which fosters dialogue. In *No-man's land* in the very first meeting the feedback from the Dutch group towards the work of the South African cast was interpreted as invasive – and visa versa. The work the South African showed represented one month of

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intense rehearsal. For the Dutch cast this felt invasive toward the work they had been able to work on in one week. Because the groups had started the process differently, the first meeting started off by both groups responding to each other with the idea that the other group had an uncompromising and unaccommodating mentality. The Dutch felt intimidated by the work of the South African group in relation to the amount of time and work they had been able to put in; the South African cast felt as if their work was being criticised and compared with the values and ideas which the Dutch groups had developed. After this encounter, it was a difficult process to shift the mentality – and the question is, to what extent this could have been facilitated? By acknowledging the disagreements and tension and facilitating a discussion, the 'problem' could have been acknowledged and the cast would have known that there is a place where they can talk about it. If it isn't resolved during the first discussion the facilitator can propose to come back to it in the next rehearsal. That way the 'problem' becomes that of finding the time and mentality for reflection in the process and becomes something the cast and facilitator can work toward improving. This doesn't mean that all problems need to be solved immediately, but the facilitator should attempt to identify clearly when they can allocate time towards it and what the most suitable approach might be.

1.2. Sharing responsibility

According to Prentki, the facilitator should make it clear that he or she is not the bearer of solutions and that the participants are responsible for their own attitudes and commitments towards the process and to what level they are able to open up and cross personal borders within the process. (2009:253) As much as the facilitator guides the process, he or she is also in a position of learning, learning from the partners, the space of collaboration and from the participants. This goes back to Freire's dialogical approach to being always both a teacher and a learner. The facilitator should not assume or imply that she knows everything and is able to provide solutions to local problems. The facilitator can set up a project plan but can't predetermine how the process will go. It is helpful to use existing knowledge from within the community to find the most effective approach. This participant-motivated approach is often used in applied theatre practices because it draws on local knowledge and facilitates participation. To ensure a bottom-up approach, facilitators frequently co-facilitate the process with a local partner. The motivation for a co-facilitated process is that it increases the sustainability of the project within both the participating communities and ensures that the approach to the work, in keeping with the principles of applied theatre projects, is more inclusive. Local partners have experience of their own community and knowledge of what would be best received and processed in that particular environment. Provided the two facilitators can develop a close working relationship, cases of shared facilitation can ensure that the project is well 'designed' for the community and the

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participants. Another motivation for a co-facilitated process is when two facilitators work on a production, this levels the working process as they can fuse ideas to create material and collectively make a final decision about the montage of the production.

A Dutch and South African facilitator who discussed the method, themes and developments together jointly facilitated *Outside Voices. No-man's land* was also intended to be a co-facilitated process. Both projects showed both advantages as well challenges of a project with two facilitators. Their task of ensuring a fruitful working environment must begin with their own working relationship. Issues of power need to be brought into the open and discussed, roles allocated by mutual agreement even as the idea of creating together is fostered in both parties.

1.2.1 Division of roles and responsibility

In *No-man's land,* one of the Dutch performers was co-directing in the preparation phase in the Netherlands prior to the exchange and then took up his role as performer in the rehearsals with the entire cast. This made his role in the process unclear. In the preparation phase he was involved in the conceptualising and during rehearsals he became one of the performers. Already in the rehearsal process in The Netherlands, the group decided to generate material collectively instead of having him facilitate the process. This process was effective up until the point in which they were in need of a director to give an outside opinion and clarify if they were working in the right direction. Thus clarified by role and responsibility of the facilitator, the cast felt they could generate material in a devised process – but there is a need for a facilitator or one person to make final decisions on what the production will entail.

The Dutch facilitator and I decided that it would be most effective that I facilitate and he performs. However, in spite of his revised position as an actor, he made it clear that he didn't approve of some of the artistic choices I made, as well as my approach to the process. It seemed to me that he implied that he had higher expectations of the process, which nevertheless remained unarticulated. Instead he became reluctant towards my idea of a collaborative process and expressed this in rehearsals by questioning and criticising my decisions without providing clear counter-proposals. It became a power struggle between the Dutch facilitator and myself. I think that he felt I was demanding too much input from the group and I felt they were expecting too much leadership from me.

Given this situation it might have been wiser (for the group as well as for our partnership) to meet with my Dutch 'facilitator' separately and re-examine our roles and responsibilities within the process. We should have discussed again whether he was performing in a

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process which I was facilitating, which meant that he needed to attempt to trust the decisions I was making and I needed to be more firm in my steering, as well as include him more in the process. Possibly we needed to revisit the option of him returning to a co-facilitating position. Whichever approach we collectively decided upon, in retrospect I think this central cause of tension in the working environment needed to be dealt with more quickly and more completely than I managed at the time.

Within this process it became evident that we all had expected roles and responsibilities towards each other. The cast members were expecting me to guide the process, provide tasks from which they could collectively generate material and through that explore the themes and performance forms. On the other hand, I was expecting input from participants, not only in their performance but also in their initiative in providing exercises in the process and the amount of input they gave to where the production was going. In retrospect I realised that I had to revise my definition of collaboration, respect the roles and responsibilities from the performers and take my responsibility as a facilitator.

1.2.2 Bringing together artistic vision

Within the rehearsal process of *No-man's land* in The Netherlands, I soon started working on placing the proposed scenes into the overall concept for the production. Because both the Dutch as South African groups had generated ideas separately, some varied greatly and not all proposals for scenes could be developed by the group as a whole. As much as many ideas did find a place in the process, others remained unexamined. The Dutch cast didn't have enough rehearsals to put proposals into concrete scenes and as a result, possibly contradictory proposals to scenes were left unexplored in the rehearsals by the group as a whole. As much as conflicting ideas can evoke interesting discussions or can open up new ideas to mould the process and the production, not all ideas need to be actively catalyzed; this is dependant on whether there is time and space for it within the process. It is a learning point for me as a facilitator, to determine which proposals are worth investigating in rehearsal whilst acknowledging proposed ideas and explaining to the performers why some ideas are used in the production and why others not. By making this process and decision making transparent, the cast can feel their work is taken seriously.

Having worked on three international collaboration projects I propose that it is the role of the facilitator to provide the framework in which the process takes place such as exercises and tasks. Within this framework it is the role of the participants to contribute to the process and commit themselves to the exercises. I experienced problems with performers who weren't able to fully commit to a scene and seemed unwilling to try things out. This negative attitude was a response to the tension that had been building up from the start of joint rehearsals in

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The Netherlands. It was an attitude that was present from the beginning of the process, which needed to be adjusted to create equilibrium in the working environment in which all participants contributed.

2. Setting out phases of No Man's Land

It is a delicate process of knowing when to take leadership over the process and when the facilitator can allow space for the participants to generate material and explore together. However, as the project aims towards creating a production together, towards performing for an audience, the process is confined within a restricted timeframe. The facilitator is the one who oversees the process, who communicates with the performance spaces and who maintains the overall vision of the process moving according to schedule. According to Heathcote the facilitator should begin a process by figuring out what minimum conditions are needed to feel successful as a facilitator. Heathcote refers to this as 'edging in'. (Wagner, 1979:34) Identifying these conditions can provide a ground from which the facilitator can identify what is needed in particular phases towards creating No Man's Land.

For example in *No-man's land* we were working with four different performance sites which meant that investigation of the spaces was an important aspect to the process, and then we had to ensure that the performance would be created in such a way that it could be performed at all four sites. The facilitator also needs to take into account what the technical requirements are and how much time their set up will take and who the expected audiences are.

It is the role of the facilitator to identify different phases that the process needs to go through in order to create the production. The participants need to feel secure that the process is going according to plan. It is within this secure structure that No Man's Land can be established. I'm not suggesting that there is a fixed formula for creating a levelled working environment but I will discuss pertinent phases which I identified within the process of *No-man's land,* either because we found them valuable or because they were noticeably absent. Whilst the phases follow a certain order below, it is understood that in any particular project the order might change or certain phases might occur concurrently.

Phase one: *Agreeing upon rules and conventions*

When groups meet, it is beneficial to identify ground rules in which the process is taking place. The facilitator should clarify what the intention of the international exchange project in theatre is to the participants. She should also set out the framework of collaborating towards making a production, emphasising the collective ethos and proposing the idea of a 'levelled' working environment. In order to create this open environment, the facilitator needs to begin

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the process of identifying the rules of the space, the terms under which the project takes place, practical implications relating to space, time of rehearsals and people involved, and also some rehearsal conventions. However the facilitator alone can't determine all these rules, some of which will be partly determined by participants. This provides the facilitator and the group with more insight into what is needed for the process to work and also provides the cast with ownership over how they want to engage with the process and what they expect from each other and themselves.

In *No-man's land* we had not set up clear rules of collaboration. In retrospect I should have let the cast establish their own rules for the collaborative space. I had considered including this phase but decided not to because I was afraid that it would put too much pressure on the already hurried process. In retrospect, the rules of collaboration should have been articulated and agreed upon within the group rather than having them based on assumptions. Within the process of establishing agreements, the facilitator can find out from participants what they expect to receive out of the collaboration. This ensures that the facilitator is aware of needs from within the groups and the cast can voice their needs and feel that they are being accommodated within the process. The agreements can be used for both the facilitator as well as participants to refer to as soon as there are problems or uncertainties.

Phase two: Intro to the style of the facilitator(s)

In this phase the facilitator introduces the theatre methods to be applied within the process, and the extent to which they will be using different performance techniques. For example, when working with gumboot dance as well as abstract physical theatre, how will these techniques be facilitated? Facilitators sometimes foster their own favoured techniques which the cast may be unfamiliar with and to which they need to be introduced.

The facilitator also presents the planning of the devising and performance process. This plan should identify different phases in the collaborative space and in which phases the cast will be giving input to the process and which parts will mainly be facilitated and directed. By having set out the frame and the idea of No Man's Land, the participants can start discovering boundaries within the space, and boundaries within themselves in relation to the partner.

In *No-man's land* I had articulated the plans and proposed schedule for the process and had asked the cast what their expectations were. As much as I did present a project plan in the beginning this wasn't transparent enough and I didn't discuss the overall planning sufficiently with the cast. This left the cast with a feeling of panic, as to whether we were

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going to finish devising in time and what form the process was taking. Another problem was that I didn't always stick to my intended plan but let the process of the moment sidetrack me. I was still exploring the space of No Man's Land and within that was influenced much by the ideas from participants. As much as I wanted it to be an open and democratic working environment, I found it hard to establish an effective collaborative mentality and attitude in the group. My personal pitfall was that I allowed the democratic and levelled environment to take over the process. The effect wasn't directly constructive or effective, which was to some extent because of how I positioned myself in the group. By having a levelled working environment I placed myself on the same level and even below the group. I included them in discussion to reflect on different exercises and in exploring our performance spaces. However the extent to which the participants contributed wasn't facilitated effectively. Instead of creating clear frameworks for their contribution I let their contributions and opinions lead the process instead of the other way around. I took note of their criticisms and questions at times when I needed to follow the intended plan.

For a facilitator, it is important to keep to the overall planning to ensure that all goals will be met and if there is a change this needs to be articulated to the participants. Making the schedule visible to all involved, for example, by means of a chart in the rehearsal space, also makes the process more transparent for the cast as well as for the facilitator. In that way it can relieve some stress – especially when working on a tight schedule.

Phase 3. Developing the play

This phase is about generating material, foregrounding themes, developing interaction. It is the phase in the collaborative process in which the cast put in their skills and ideas towards the process. The facilitator can take a step back in terms of strict facilitating and can work more from a collective. This is the phase in which the group discover together by using theatre processes and the interaction is specifically aimed at the performance. The cast is allowed to explore, play, try out different things, and make proposals for scenes. This doesn't mean that all work has to be accommodated into the performance but does mean that the work should lead to the production, for example doing exercises which enable the cast to develop their character. This does mean that the facilitator needs to steer to process towards focussing upon work that is relevant and not only 'nice to have'.

'Facilitators need many different resources, games and tools to open up the process. If one angle doesn't work they can try another.' (Yarrow, 2009) In that way they have a wide range of approaches to the collaboration and choice of which is most applicable to the specific project in a particular phase. 'Provide participants with a list of options of what can be offered by the facilitator, and build on what they already have done. It is about improving

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and building on existing skills rather than teaching completely new techniques and ways of performing.' (Yarrow, 2009) This way the process acknowledges existing skills and proposes techniques which can bring (for some participants) 'new' approaches to the process. By offering them a choice of techniques, they gain power and input in their own learning process.

Yarrow says that you can't achieve stepping back as the facilitator unless the participants take over. (Yarrow, 2009) However the relinquishing of authority of the facilitator needs to be clearly communicated and participants need to know what is expected from them. In *No-man's land*, I often neglected giving clear direction and clear guidelines as to when the participants could take over. In improvisation exercises they were left too much to discover by themselves instead of me clarifying within what framework they needed to discover together. However, reflections from the group after the process made apparent the extent to which the cast needed clear and directed tasks since these gave them the space to generate their best work. In her logbook a participant reflected that 'it was helpful to strengthen our character and personal relationships without the constant guidance of a director. I enjoyed this moment of freedom and felt that I was no longer stagnating. I have a greater sense of M̈ and J's rhythms and mannerisms as their characters.' (Anon Logbook 2008)

The facilitator should aim to hold an overall view of where work needs to be done, which scenes need extra work, where scenes needed to be linked, and what process is applicable to achieve the required result. Thus the facilitator oversees the process and can assist if there are sticking points. This doesn't mean that the facilitator offers the solutions but he or she can facilitate the exploration of the causes of friction and possible routes to finding agreeable solutions.

Part of creating the levelled environment is to have a clear concept as a starting point. Throughout the devising process the concept can be re-interpreted and developed. Therefore, it is important to keep track of what the group as a whole thinks the concept is at any stage. Within the concept, the facilitator can also clarify what performance forms she is looking for, dance or song or if the participants can decide themselves this needs to be made obvious. The more specific assignments are the more freedom participants can have in exploring within the task. Moreover the participants can explore various elements to ensure that the project communicates multiple views on the subject matter.

By having one central narrative, *No-man's land* allowed space for various sub-narratives and character stories. Each participant had their particular character for which they could

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generate a narrative. Each participant had engaged in their own character research and how each character related to what was happening in the production and what motives they had for their behaviour. For example, I asked the cast what would make their character reconcile with other characters in the play. For some it was for emotional reasons, such as when one of the other animals died; or it might be for practical considerations such as when they needed other to search for food. Within these sub-narratives, the performers could create their own perspectives on the story.

Chapter one introduced the notion of story telling, sharing of stories and the sensitivity towards telling and re-telling of stories. In applied theatre projects, it is particularly important not only to express the artistic views of a director but also to solicit stories and other material from participants. 'The form in which stories are retrieved and told reveals complex value systems that need to be considered closely in any analysis of this work.' (Thompson 2005: 24) The sharing of stories doesn't literally mean telling a story from beginning till end but could also mean telling a story in pictures or mime, communicating an emotion, a sense or a feeling through gesture or sound or music. How participants and facilitators 'read' the images or interpret the songs can be unexpected and can provide a basis for dialogue between participants, which will be discussed in chapter four.

Phase 4 Investigating site

As was mentioned in chapter one, applied theatre projects frequently take place in non-theatrical spaces and diverse locations. This was also the case with the project *No-man's land* in which we were performing in four different sites ranging from Shipyart 't Kromhout to the theatre ship, to a theatre in the suburbs of Amsterdam. These sites also brought their specific audiences. As much as the issue of site was pertinent to the process of *No-man's land*, I have chosen not to elaborate on this within this dissertation. However I do find it relevant to include it within this discussion on the phases of devising a performance. It is the task of the facilitator to ensure that the issues of location are not overlooked in the process. This starts with undertaking research about the history and characteristics of site, including physical or theatrical restrictions or possibilities. How the site will be used and included within the process needs to be clearly articulated to the cast to give them a feeling of security. In *No-man's land* we started investigating the site at an early stage because we wanted the site of Fortress Diemerdam to form a foundation for generating material. Instead of placing the performance in the site, we used the site as one of the starting points to generate material. Within the process we undertook various tasks in which the cast investigated the site. We grappled with how to move the audience through the site, how the characters entered and appeared out of the space. We also worked with voice and the natural elements in an outdoor venue.

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In the case of *No-man's land* the sites created much stress because the cast and set needed to be transported between sites and we needed time to investigate each site. Each space required specific performance qualities from the performers. At Fortress Diemerdam the cast needed to project more to be heard in the outdoor space and at theatre NoLimit the scenes required more intimacy. As a facilitator, I had to ensure that the generated material could be staged at the various sites and to allow time to 'translate' the production to fit the 'new' performance site. At the Shipyard 't Kromhout we used the boat engines as working tools for the animals and at the Theatre Ship we used the dock outside to stage part of the performance. In retrospect, the use of the particularities of these sites was a strength in performance but it caused considerable stress because of the time it took and the adaptability it demanded from the performers. Cognisance of this is important when site work is part of the collaboration.

Phases 5-7 The final phases of structuring, rehearsing and preparing for performance

The last three phases I will go through swiftly as these do not fit the scope of my research. Phase five is 'Structuring the play'. This is a phase in which the facilitator has to step forward to make final decisions. The facilitator re-examines how the generated work fits into the overall concept, how it represents the theme and how it can be put together in a final montage. After the work has been structured and put into a clear order, the process moves to phase six 'Rehearsing the play' in which the cast runs through the generated work and the facilitator provides last points of direction. The final phase seven is 'Preparing for performance' in which the facilitator has to incorporate lights, sounds and audiences. The phases which are identified don't necessarily follow each other but can happen simultaneously. Some phases will get more emphasis because of the nature of the project or the dynamics within the group.

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CHAPTER FOUR: COLLABORATING IN NO MAN'S LAND

In international collaborative processes participants provoke and push boundaries. This can be done intentionally or unintentionally, but as they are humans working together, this interaction can lead to provocation and dispute. How can one avoid conflict? Are the provocations that serious that it can lead to war? Is it not safest to each stay in one's own space to avoid conflict? And is provocation and dispute necessarily bad or can it raise important issues?

The themes of the production *No-man's* land were prejudice, reconciliation and causes of conflict. The motivation for the themes in *No-man's land* corresponds to my motivation for this dissertation. I want to generate awareness within the Applied Theatre field of these issues and, within my own work, given our multi-cultural and globalised world, foster awareness amongst all the participants, myself included, about our attitudes and manners towards one another.

In *No-man's land*, we used the metaphor of the role of animals in war. This avoided pointing fingers at people whilst nevertheless identifying with our daily behaviour. People are being bracketed according to their background and assumed role in society. In *No-man's land*, one character was a bossy goose who manipulated information to maintain power and create a fear-driven society to keep the group together. Meanwhile the rest of the characters inhabiting this space, were happy to believe the goose. They also contributed to the 'lie', to give purpose to their lives. This is an example of how the message was represented in physical images and how the animal behaviour was in fact anthropomorphic.

Chapter two elaborated on No Man's land as a metaphorical space which identifies needs and expectations from participants, the voices of participants can be heard which comprises more levelled and 'equal' working dynamics. This chapter will investigate exactly *how* the collaboration in No Man's Land takes place. *How* do theatre practices facilitate intercultural dialogue? I will mainly be looking at phase three of devising which is generating material and beginning to make the play, by focusing on the application of devised theatre techniques and physical image theatre and how these can be used for partners to engage in cultural dialogue.

1. Devised theatre

The process of *No-man's land* was not about one person learning about the other but about a cross-fertilisation, about learning from each other. It is not about inviting persons in your space but meeting in the middle. Devised theatre forms an effective method and framework

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within this interaction of learning and exchange can take place. 'Devised theatre' is what is often referred to as 'collective creation' or in South Africa as 'workshop theatre'. These three terms essentially all refer to the same process – the process whereby a group of persons working together develop a production from initial concept to finished performance. This means that participants are integral to creating material for the production. Another point which makes it effective for creating a 'leveled' working environment is that a group devising process is more likely to engender a performance that has multiple perspectives, that does not promote one, authoritative, 'version' or interpretation, and that may reflect the complexities of contemporary experience and the variety of narratives that constantly intersect with, inform, and in very real ways, construct our lives (Heddon and Milling: 192). It is not about empathising difference but allowing space for nuanced and differing interpretations.

1.1 Devising differences coming together

In *No-man's land*, the Dutch and South African group started the devised process apart. This provided insight in the different ways of interpreting the concept of using animal characters to represent human behaviour. The South African cast had been working on animal characters that have human characteristics, which meant they could walk and talk. The Dutch performers had the idea of looking at the animal side of humans and adjusted their acting from the human towards the animalistic by using physical emphasis. Although interpretations from both groups were interesting and could have provided an approach to the production, we had to decide on one to ensure that all the characters generated a single world in performance.

Devised work is strongly dependant on the work of the participants and is sensitive to power relations within the group. Some participants can share of themselves more easily others. It is the role of the facilitator to ensure that the process is not dominated by some participants and others fall by the way aside. According to Yarrow, there are different approaches which a facilitator can use in order to create a more collaborative project. Some devices go some way towards ensuring that most participants have a more or less even role. Yarrow speaks of 'telling a story together and thereby making it more global'. This can be done by incorporating more voices from within the group instead of one dominant voice. (2009) All the performers were commissioned to develop their own characters and narratives. Every actor undertook their own character research and decided for themselves how they would relate to what was happening in the play and what motives they had for their behaviour. In that way we succeeded in having all voices heard. The expression of the animals' sub-narratives was done using various performance forms. Some cast members used more movement where others used song or spoken text. These multiple stories and multiple ways

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of representation allowed the audience to follow the animals' individual stories. In reflections afterwards it became evident that audience members found different animals whom they identified with in their day to day life or whose behaviour they particularly disliked.

International devised and collective projects, both have difficulties as well as interesting aspects to them. The point of achievement comes when the group can find a meeting point, a place where ideas can fuse into the collective. The collective or the collaborative doesn't mean that everyone has to agree and that the production communicates one point but within the process there are moments in which differences can be embraced and other moments where they need to come together for the collective, for the group to feel one and for the production to express the joint work.

2. Variety in performance forms

In international collaboration projects theatre is *applied* to foster dialogue between partnering groups. Chapter two discussed commonalities in the approaches of Barba and Boal. What is essential to their approaches is how performance can be used to find common ground between participants from different cultural backgrounds. It is through finding a shared mode of interaction that differences can be explored. When partners collaborate in No Man's Land, theatre is used to explore common issues, to discover differences, and bring them together into a performance. Within the process, participants engage with and experience 'foreign' expression and bring in their own styles of theatre and performance. Within the collaborative space various theatre techniques may be used to find commonalities as well as differences between participants. For example, some performers needed more guidance in improvisation exercises whilst others wanted space to explore and play by themselves within the improvisation. Some performers wanted to talk through the order of scenes whilst others preferred to act it out. It is within these commonalities and differences, agreements and disagreements that the learning element of applied theatre practices takes place, learning from the 'other', about the 'other' and about oneself. According to Boal, learning and expanding of life in experiences, ideas, meanings and sensations should be done as dialogue: 'receiving from others what others have created, giving them the best of our own creation.' (Boal, 1992: 2)

In *No-man's land*, the performers contributed their variety of experiences and approaches. This varied from performance art to traditional dancing to physical theatre and musical theatre. There was an overlap between techniques as well as differences, both groups were familiar with improvisation techniques and physical theatre and the South African group brought in South African dance forms such as mine and war dances and songs. For the South African cast members the gumboot dance was a technique which they could teach,

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and the Dutch cast members enjoyed mastering it. As much as it was a superficial form of exchange, it did provide the cast with a shared skill and exchange of technique.
Within the process and performance of *No-man's land* we wanted to incorporate these different styles and to embrace diversity within the group. I emphasises this intention from the beginning of the collaborative process and we managed to include such performance forms seamlessly within the production, rather than having them stand out obtrusively on their own. For example the cow used contemporary dance as a code for producing milk and gumboot dance was used as the 'salute' between the animals, it became a ritualised code of behaviour.

2.1 Physical image theatre

Within the devising, participants can attempt to engage in dialogue with themselves as well as their partners by using theatre to explore the boundaries of the collaborative environment or the borders within themselves. Theatre can form a new language through which an oppression can be explored and in which potentials for change can surface. In *No-man's land*, through the characters the performers explored how prejudice and xenophobia affects their daily life. For example, the character of the Donkey was perceived by the other animals as lazy and easy to bully around. The actor playing that part, recognised elements of this character in himself; and how people in his daily life as well as and cast members tend to misuse his friendly nature whilst he has to put his foot down not to be taken advantage of and have his voice be heard.

Since we were working with an international cast in *No-man's land,* we decided not to focus on spoken but rather physical language and imagery. Within this section I refer to it as 'physical image theatre', which is about giving meaning and creating work through physical interaction and imagery. At the start we used physical image theatre to generate material, develop characters and to visualise power relationships between characters. We had an exercise in which the animal characters had to position themselves in a row according to power. This was done without speaking. The cast moved and searched for a position within the group. It was interesting to see that the characters had different conceptions of levels of power in the play. For example the cat behaved and expected to be treated like a princess although she was in a lower military rank. Whilst the cow was elevated to a point high (on the hillside at Fort Diemerdam) from where he could keep an eye on the entire group. This image embodied the cow's grandiose status within the group.

In the performance of *No-Man's Land* the audience could follow the 'storyline' mainly because the images and physical actions between characters clarified the meaning of the performance. The isolation and blaming of the goose was visualised by having all the

animals surround her and form a literal 'pack' against her. She was hunted around the performance space and ultimately trapped behind fencing. This fence was open at the back, which meant she wasn't locked up but segregated from the rest. Such physical images do not necessarily have to be literally correct, but rather an understated suggestion can carry more weight with both audience and cast. At the same time, as Boal maintains, such physical images can be 'read' differently by cast and audience members and allow space for multiple views and interpretations. (Boal, 1995)

2.2. Improvisation

Another technique that we employed throughout the process of *No-man's land* was improvisation. 'Improvisation, like any physical or spoken act, necessarily produces meaning: indeed it may be said to be primarily a way of generating a plurality of meanings through performance.' (Frost and Yarrow, 2007: 187) This requires both physical and psychological unblocking, since it requires performers to be in the moment, responsive to impulses and susceptible to possible meanings.

However, as I have pointed out, in *No-man's land* the participants found it difficult to open up. One way to generate a level of trust is for the facilitator to provide guidelines by which the improvisation should take place. For example, a small exercise such as working with an object, a focus on one of the characters, incorporation of a particular word, or just stating clearly which scene we are working towards are all ways of facilitating ease and confidence. Without these instructions and sense of direction, it is difficult for participants to open up. Within a clear frame, improvisation can lead from one thing to another and the direction it takes will depend on how the cast responds to each other's impulses. The generated meaning can differ from person to person. For that reason improvisation can be an effective medium to explore the casts' different interpretations and perspectives towards issues. In our case the use of improvisation improved until the cast used it freely within rehearsals and even in performances; for example, when the dog found his new master in the audience and when a letter from Pig Chancy was read by a member of the public.

3. Reflection and performance

In *No-man's land,* I had hoped the process would be experientially focussed. In practice we had many moments of reflection and discussion in which we verbally tried to find solutions to structures, order of scenes and ways of working. Group discussions are valuable but can also generate misunderstandings because of language barriers. In that case, discussion can be dominated by translating what individuals say, or mean, instead of effectively looking for a way forward. As Boal advocates, it proved more constructive to attempt different actions or scenarios instead of deadlocking in discussion and disagreement. It was only in

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the enactment that it became clear whether a proposal could work or not. By actively trying out proposed ideas, the process keeps moving and developing, which generates a feeling of success within the group. When stuck in a scene or not knowing where to go next a useful exercise can also be to use the improvisation exercises in which participants accept everything that is being proposed or to get out of the mindset of being stuck in the process. By making and having fun together, the feeling of success can come back to the group.

3.1 No Man's Land represented in *No-man's land*

The 'narrative' of *No-man's land* corresponded with concept of No Man's Land: creating a collaborative space. Within the story of *No-man's land* the characters were living in a newly-created society. Each character had a clear role and clear purpose within the space. They also had a similar enemy, it was an envisioned enemy, but for the animals it created a common purpose. One of their fellow soldiers, Pig Chancy went missing and the animals assumed that Chancy had been taken by enemy troops. The audience had come in to strenghten the defense line.

When the animals received a letter from Chancy stating that in fact the war was over, the world they had believed in fell apart. They started accusing each other, needing a scapegoat and eventually blaming the goose. Consequently the entire group seperated in anguish and blame and they felt lost. They had lost their common goal and with that their purpose in life. Meanwhile they were afraid of the 'unknown' and were reluctant to to leave the 'No-man's land' they had created. Subsequently, Cow left; he no longer had troops to lead and left to find his last straw of grass to chew. Finding out that Cow was missing brought the group together; once again they had to conclude that, in fact, the war was on-going, Cow had been taken by enemy troops. In the end they went back to the roles they knew well, of protecting their 'No-man's land'.

This production is pertinent to my concept of *No-man's land* and many elements of the story resemble creating the collaborative space of No Man's Land. The animals created their own space with existing rules in which each animal had clear roles and responsibilities. This is similar to an exchange process in which the facilitator and cast set up the rules of the space and in which roles and responsibilities are clear from the beginning. The common goal, the 'enemy', is to create a theatre production together. However as soon as this purpose is out of site or when a cast member of the facilitator doesn't fullfill her role, it can create tension and jeopardise the collaborative space.

Although the devised process is facilitated, it is highly dependant on the input from participants and it is sensitive to the dynamics within the group. The cast doesn't only act

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out a character but has the space to bring in their own sentiments and own story. Therefore, the performance moves beyond being a theatre performance and personal characteristics of the cast members within that process are discernible. For instance, Cow regularly placed himself outside of the rehearsal process. His representation of Cow's character reflected this attitude. For the bulk of the play he had placed himself overlooking the group, whilst the other animal characters respected him because of the heroic stories he had shared about his past. When the animals found out that there was no longer a war, the group fell apart and Cow felt he was no longer useful and his purpose in life had been fulfilled. Therefore he left to find his last straw of grass. The personal process was also visible in the character of the dog that needed direction, and needed to be told what to do. The co-facilitator who had established this role had also taken on a position in the process in which he wanted to be told what to do.

3.2 The people in No Man's Land

No-man's land was intended as an intercultural exchange project. On reflection, I changed the description to 'collaboration' rather than 'exchange' because the idea of such projects is to create and work through challenges together as well as sharing the success. The space of collaboration and exchange was described in the Logbook by one of the participants:

> It started as intercultural exchange but at some point, somewhere down the line it ceased being that. We merged, we became our own culture. It's funny. I was no longer aware of differences. We were all in the culture of trying to do this thing. We were in the culture of trying to challenge, question, create and love each other. It wasn't an exchange. It was an assault, an offering of self, forced understanding – resistant coming together. (Anon logbook 2008)

In practice I found myself in a space filled with dynamics and the more I wanted the process to come together, the more it seemed to drift apart. At the start of the process of No-man's land my perception of a 'levelled' environment was that everyone would agree, would easily collaborate and co-operatively work on creating a production. As much as the aim of *No-man's land* was the coming together of groups, in practice this was largely established within an environment of competition and dispute. The entire process, the difficulties and points of success generated learning about how groups do meet in no man's land. A levelled 'environment' leaves voice for participants whether in agreement or disagreement but directed towards the joint goal of creating a performance.

Returning to the initial story *The Christmas Truce,* the impulse which brought the enemies together was their common humanity. It is about breaking through prejudices and stereotypes and finding moments of connection and exchange. The common denominator is that we are all human beings; and by getting to know the individuals within a group you

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learn about each other, find commonalities and generate respect. In international collaborations, the common situation is not war but creating a production. This is what draws partners together and what draws them into no man's land. Inside this space, partners exchange theatre techniques and ideas about the theme of the production. At the end of the process and after having performed the production the partners return to their side of the trench, return to their country possibly, with a better sense of understanding about the people on the other side.

In *No-Man's Land*, much of the collaboration was effective on a personal level. In reflection regarding the process one of the participants said:

> It has been really tough and interesting and invasive working so closely and intensely with a group in such a short amount of time. We've just had to trust and make ourselves vulnerable in no time. We became friends; we spent more time with each other than I've ever spent with fellow collaborators in and out of rehearsal time. I got an 'in' into the personal lives of these people – their pasts, vulnerabilities, fears, weaknesses, flaws, virtues and it was.... It was much of what was said by these people touched me in a deep way, in a deep place and that is the way it is when you care about people. (Anon Logbook 2008)

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CONCLUSION

This dissertation was an enquiry towards creating an environment for 'equal' collaboration between international partners in an applied theatre project. The focus was on exchange involving quite extreme difference, that is, between people from different countries and cultural backgrounds. I began by exploring the various definitions of culture and how culture can be understood as a process which changes and is understood and practised differently from person to person. An exploration into cultural collaboration revealed diversity in the approaches by theatre practitioners and I chose to be most guided by Augusto Boal and Eugenio Barba who use drama as a common language within diverse groups.

This research gave me insight into my own approach in attempting this collaborative and 'levelled' space. This dissertation showed the paradoxes inherent in this collaborative space, between levelling and allowing people their own spaces and approaches, between setting out rules and allowing the cast to generate their own rules for the space; between being facilitative and being obdurate. In *No-man's land,* I attempted to generate an egalitarian environment by taking a step back and expecting input from participants. However, within the process and through this research, I realised that in order to take a step back as a facilitator the expectations towards the cast need to be clearly set out. By identifying the different phases within the collaborative process, it becomes clear to the cast when they can explore together and when the facilitator might step in.

Dialogue takes place through the intense interaction between participants, working together on the common goal of creating a production. The production of *No-man's land* represented various performance forms which were within the vocabulary of the performers. The cast mixed techniques and approaches which meant that they not only learnt from the techniques but also from moments of friction which the learning process threw up. The metaphorical concept of No Man's Land was conceived of by undertaking the production *No-man's land.* By using devised theatre methods and focusing on physical image theatre, the play communicated stories from within the group and explored the dynamics of the shared space in which the animals found themselves. At the same time, the production taught me a great deal about facilitating a 'leveled' working environment. Now I need to bear in mind that *No-man's land* does not comprehensively represent collaborative processes and that each project needs to generate its own No Man's Land.

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APPENDIX

Transcription of *No-man's land* by Katy Streek

Pre-set

Music Track 1 No-man's land

Audiences arrives outside, the animals are positioned around the space, looking deserted, hungry, abandoned. They say snippets of their monologue.

Music track 2 No-mans land.

Scene 1: Into animals outside - Arrival Goose

Goose arrives on a boat paddling. (Makes honking sound) She comes on land. Pigeon and Donkey help her off the boat. Goose surveys the audience, other animals become more active and look at audience with curiosity and suspicion.

Goose: Honk
Donkey: Saluti bafana *(final salute straight into imponeer dans supported by Cow percussion. End of dance. Cow ruffles the drum.)*

Music track 1 CD Landmacht

Cow walks slowly down. Cat is cleaning his way, Dog is jumping forward enthusiastically but being pushed back by Goose.

Cow: mooee
(Fade out music)
Cow: Moeee
(Group forms a straight line)
Cow: moeee
(Group stretch out arm - Group spreads apart -Group salute movement
Cow: Moeee

Goose: Head of all c..... *(other animals laugh in the back, Goose looks back with annoyance)* communication present and accountable for.
Cow: moeee
Goose: All is very well on the naval front. Just one thing to report, the enemy is approaching.
Dog: Wij bevinden ons in een een oorlogssituatie en zijn in alarm fase 3 omdat onze vriend varken Chancy, Leiding van de Voedsel Opsporings Eenheid, is vermist.
Goose: Enemy forces have most probably kidnapped him.
Pigeon: Misschien wordt hij wel gevangen gehouden, verdacht
Goose: And possibly even been assassinated! For that reason new recruits have been brought in, to strengthen the defense line.
Cow: Mmm Dus jullie zijn de nieuwe soldaten? Denk maar niet dat hier gezellig is ja? Jullie moeten je eerst bewijzen. Succes. Druktemakers. Jullie eerste test, als ik roep Galasnikov dan staan jullie allemaal op, pakken een zak en volgen de andere soldaten... Galasnikov *(Audience stands up, get linen sugar bags and are being shown to their place to sit, they pass Donkey who opens the boom at the entrance to the no-man's land)*

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Scene 2: Intro animals

Goose: Honk! *(animals stand in one row. If space serves it the introductions can be made from the different positions, Ikati at kitchen, Donkey in garden)* Sergeant Ikat
Ikat: Present and accountable for.
Dog: Kan ik iets doen?
Goose: Not now
Goose: Ikati, report on kitchen
Ikati: Condition of kitchen is very poor.
Dog: Wij hebben ons laatste brood 2 dagen geleden opgegeten.
Ikati: One tin of beans left.
Dog: Waar we een week mee kunnen doen als we per keer een lepel per persoon eten.
Ikati: I'm keeping my paws crossed that one of us *(signing to Goose)* will lay us an egg.

Goose: Very well. Thank you Sergiant. Voetsoldaat Yann
Dog: Woef, kan ik iets doen?
Goose: Report back on safety and security
Dog: Ik heb dit gedaan...*(sniffs under legs)* en dit gedaan etc...(digs)
Goose: very well thank you.
Dog: Kan ik iets doen?
Goose: Yes, you can go dig a hole.

Goose: Lieutenant Mbongolo
Mbongolo: Present in full force and strength sir!
Goose: Enough of that... report on garden
Mbongolo: Very good news kapitain, very good indeed...We've got one tomato growing which is ready to be picked any moment now.
Dog: *(all look with admiration to tomato in garden)* ohhh lekker tomaat
Goose: That is excellent.

(Pigeon comes crashing in)
Goose: Wing commander, Chere Ami
Pigeon: Present and on the ground!
Goose: Report on post
Pigeon: Nog geen post ontvangen, of wel... toch
Goose: What is it, yes or no?
Pigeon: No kapitein
Goose: Thank you very much wing commander

Cow: Moeiee
Cow: (Monologue about him being an icon.) Ik was de meestbegeerde koe van het land... etc. Mooee

Scene 3: Building shelter

All animals: Ahj, ahj ahj! (*running step to poles)* Lets build a shelter, ... Ik ben niet laf dus blaf. *(Preparation of defense of fortress, animals turn to the side and Ajh to pick up poles and place them around fortress. When finished stand in front of Cow in a row.)*
Cow: Moee

Track 1 CD Landmacht

(Cow is being lifted up to his lookout point by Donkey, who has been instructed by Goose.)

Pigeon / Goose: *(from top stairs)* Gevaar, waar? Ik zie iets, waar daar ik zie het niet *(Donkey/ Dog bump into each other, pushing Donkey and continue searching)*

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Pigeon / Goose: *(Pigeon from below stairs)* Gevaar, waar? Ik zie iets, waar daar ik zie het niet. *(Startles from sniper Ikati)*
Cow: Gezellig hier he!
Cow: Stelletje druktemakers

Scene 4: Prepare for danger

Goose: But you never know when the enemy is coming; they might be above you, below you, behind you, above you. Therefore it is most important to know what to do in the case an alarm goes of. Ikati and Mbongolo will demonstrate our safety measures.

Phezulu, panzi (They show movement looking above, below and want audience to participate.)

Dog: Jongens even opstaan, heel goed en doe haar na en als je het goed doet krijg je misschien wel een beloning.
Goose: Very well recruits. Ikati, do we have something to reward them for their good work?
Ikati: I've managed to dig up some rozijntjes (Hands-out raisins)
Pigeon: Ohhh lekker rozijntjes
Dog: Ik kan je adviseren om de helft nu te eten en de andere helft later.
Ikati: Because this might be the only thing you get for a long time.
Cow: Wees dankbaar met wat je krijgt. Wanneer jullie jezelf hebben bewezen krijgen jullie misschien wel meer tee te eten zoals een tomaat uit de tuin of een lepel of wat van mijn begeerde melk. Maar voor nu wees dankbaar met wat je hebt.
Goose: Ikati, isn't it about time for OUR lunch?

Scene 5: Kitchen scene

Ikati: *(singing)* I'm gonna cook us some food... and it's gonna be perfect.. etc.
We're gonna search for some food *(get audience of Ikati and Dog to help)*
Ikati: *(singing)* how about a shoe?
All: *(singing)* we'll eat it
Ikati: how about some hair?
All: we'll eat it
Ikati: how about some fingers?
All: we'll eat it
(Dog, is barking attention to the Goose who is about to lay an egg. All animals gather around.

All: Goose, Goose *(Goose manages to lay an egg, everyone continues the song)* We're gonna eat us an egg.
Dog: Laten we omelet maken *(everyone looks at Cow)*
Cow: moee

(Cow, shaking milk/ fun stick dance. Animals look towards him with great expectations. He moves behind boat or in the shelter house.)

Fade-in Track 1 CD Landmacht

(Everyone hoping for good results, volume up when Cow comes up with bottle of milk. Walks proudly to other animals. They each take a sip of milk. Cow stands at the head of table, everyone moves to the back of table)

All: *(Singing)* Aan tafel aan tafel, etc. *(Each take turns eating according to rank. Nothing left for Donkey. Goose gives order to clean dishes. Collectively decide it must be Donkey. He leaves table with pan singing. Rest of animals are resting and lying around)*

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Donkey: Monologue complaining they always call him lazy. *(Starts working in garden, singing loudly)*

Scene 6: Alarm scene

(Goose smells danger)

Goose/ Ikati: Shhh *(to Donkey to be quiet, he doesn't hear)* Shhhh *(he's quiet)*

(Everyone walks in a row, sniffing for danger and smelling each other.)

Goose: Honk *(get children to honk with)*

(Alarm, all animals run. Donkey and Ikati bump into each other. They repeat the taught movements with the audience Phezulu, panzi)

Donkey: Set up. And March, Quick-step. Shoot. On Guard, Gevaar

(Sending Donkey forward to see if there is really no enemy. He takes 2 kids with him from audience.)

Track 6 No-man's land

Donkey: All safe *(relief from group)*
Goose: Very well, this was just a trial run, just checking if you were awake.
Dog: Heel goed gedaan, we wilden jullie alleen even testen. Nu mag je als beloning de andere helft van je rozijntje opeten!

Scene 7: Post

(Pigeon crashes down with letter)
Pigeon: Post, Post!
Goose: Wing commander, Chere Ami
Pigeon: Present and terug op de grond Kaptein!
Goose: Report on post.
Pigeon: Ik heb iets belangrijks, geloof ik, toch? Waar is het.
Goose: Do you have post?
Pigeon: nee, ja *(looking and eventually finding)*
Goose: Give it to me! *(snatches letter out of Pigeons hand and starts reading)* Gevaar,
Pigeon/ Goose: Waar, daar, ik zie het niet.
Ikati: G.... *(hairball)* gelukkig
Donkey: gelukkig?
(Confusion about the letter. Letter being passed around group to Donkey)
Donkey: I can't read

(Ikati takes, other animals cue behind her. They had it to audience member to read out loud.)

Audience reads:
Beste Vriend,

Met mij gaat alles goed. Het is geen oorlog en ik vier aan met een cocktail aan het strand van Curacao. Ik voel me op en top gelukkig.
Groeten Chancy

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Scene 8: War is over

Dog: Dus er is geen gevaar?
Donkey: Chancy's alright, it's safe
Pigeon: Dit is goed nieuws, toch, toch?
Donkey: Does this mean the war is over?
Dog: De oorlog voorbij? Kan ik iets doen? Wat kan ik doen?
Cow: Positite

(Moment of confusion. Pigeon and Dog seem relieved and happy and Donkey and Ikati first confused and struck. Donkey and Ikati sing Unzima lomthwalo. Dog and Pigeon instigate leaving, they all jump on the machine and start leaving. Donkey makes sound, everyone moves to the left, after that everyone right and back to moving. Cow walks towards them and shouts)

Cow: Positie *(no-one notices him)* Genoeg! *(rest of animals go into slowmotion)* Ze hebben me dus niet meer nodig. Ik was de grootste held van het land. De meest begeerde koe, gaf de beste melk, redde ieders leven. Maar deze beesten hier denken dat ze het beter kunnen. Van waardig icoon tot clown. Nou ja, ze zullen het wel merken. Geen melk voor jullie en deste meer voor mezelf. Ik ben blijkbaar niet meer nodig, prima. Als u mij wilt excuseren dan ga ik opzoek naar mijn laatste sprietje,tabee. *(salute)*

(Animals start moving again. Slowly one by one they become unclear about if they really want to go and stop moving.)

Donkey: What we going to do? I don't want to become a domestic animal again. I'm a donkey trained for war, that's who I am.
Dog: Worden we nu allemaal weer huisdieren?
Ikati: *(picks up letter)* Gelukkig, Gevaar, Gelukkig, Gevaar
Donkey: Gelukkig, gevaar, can't you read? That Goose, we trusted her. How ungrateful can she get, we treated her with honor and respect and all she does is lie lie lie.
Ikati: You're responsible for this, you're responsible for this, you're responsible for this. I've always said, anything that flies with feathers is as flighty as they look. I'm sure Pigeon is on it too.
Pigeon: Roekooeee
Dog: Ja dankzij jullie zitten we hier al te lang voor niets, dus jullie mogen zeggen wat we moeten doen.
Pigeon: Nu moet je zeggen wat ik moet doen, kun je zelf niet beslissen?

(Everyone accuses each other and speaks at same time.)

Ikati: *(gets attention from all)* And who needs eggs when you can have Goose? *(song)* Who needs eggs when you can have Goose…

Dog: Ik ruik een rat!
Goose: But I'm a Goose!
Ikati: so the guard dog has finally awoken. Where have you been? You should have been guarding us. *(Dog growls, Ikati hides behind Donkey)*
Ikati: Get him Donkey
Dog: So you want to tell me what to do? What should I do?
Donkey: Why don't you dig a hole and bury your head in it?
Dog: You want me to dig a hole? *(runs to garden en destroys it and eats tomato*
Fight between Donkey,-Dog, Ikati and Goose. Honk by Goose who is upset by seeing them fight and loud Honk separates Pigeon and Ikati. All animals go to their isolated position. Donkey trying to safe what is left of his garden, Pigeon playing with game she has with Goose, trying to communicate, all have moment by themselves of confusion)

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Scene 9: Seperation of animals

Duet Ikat and Donkey

Ikati: The war is over *(to Donkey)* Donkey, the war is over! But I'm a veteran
(Sings) In the army I was the number one sniper... etc *(Song is about Ikat pretending to be a war hero but Donkey actually saving her and deserving the medals which Ikati got)*
Ikati: I'm still a hero in my eyes *(Donkey drops her)*

Song Goose, 'I'm not a liar'
I never meant to tell a lie, I'm very, very sorry
I feel so lonely I could cry
I'm truly very sorry.

I'm sorry that you are sad
I know I have been very bad
Please don't feel like you've been had
If you forgive me I'd be glad.

(Monologue Dog starts building up throughout last part song)

I'm not a liar *(sound Donkey)*
I'm not a liar
I just can't read

Dog: Ik vertrouw je niet meer. Kan iemand vertellen wat ik moet doen? Jij maakt een grap zeker? Wie is mijn baas? Ik wil weten wie ik kan vertrouwen alsjeblieft. Toen ik in de oorlog was had mijn baas me verteld dat ik moest rennen en ik hoorde geen fluitje om terug te komen, en ik rende door en kwam bij een loopgraaf... etc Ik wil weten wat ik moet doen? Kan ik iets doen? Wil jij mijn baasje zijn?

Goose: I've never meant to tell a lie. I'm truly very sorry. *(interruption Ikati)*

Scene 10: Cow has gone

Ikati: Mooeee *(Everyone one after other moeing)*
Goose: where is cow?
Donkey: where is cow (in Xhosa)
Ikati: Where did he go?
Dog: (to audience) Hebben jullie koe gezien?
Audience: Hij is daar heen gegaan!
(Ikati / Donkey run to see if he's still there)
Ikati: He's left
Dog: Is hij weggegaan?
Pigeon: Was hij alleen?
Donkey: Are you sure he left? No-one dragged him away?
Pigeon: misschien is hij door UVO's meegenomen
Dog: Ik weet wat er is gebeurt. De vijand heeft koe meegenomen en gevangen gehouden en willen dat wij geloven dat het geen oorlog meer is.
Pigeon: Dus het is nogsteeds oorlog?
Donkey: Is it still war?
Dog: Wat moet ik doen, kan iemand zeggen wat ik moet doen?
Goose: Sergeant Yann, I can tell you what to do. If you let me out we can all stand together and find Cow.

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Dog: *(to audience)* Kan ik haar vertrouwen? *(lets Goose out)* zeg me snel wat ik moet doen voor de vijand komt!
Ikati: At this point Vlaaidimir would say, Moee *(they all get in line)*
Donkey: And I would say, Saluti bafana *(all do movement)* Salute!

(Blackout or walk off into house marching, ajj ajj etc)

THE END

Track 1 CD Landmacht - buiging

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