

The meaning of aesthetics within the field of
applied theatre in development settings

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Abbreviations

AIDS	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
AMV	<i>Associação do Moradores do Vidigal</i> - Vidigal Residents Association
APC	<i>Asociación de Promotores de la Cultura</i> - Organisation for cultural promoters
ASTC	<i>Asociación Sandinista de Trabajadores de la Cultura</i> - Sandinista association of cultural workers
BOPE	<i>Batalhão de Operações Policiais Especiais</i> - Special Police Operations Battalion
BRIC	A grouping acronym that refers to the countries of Brazil, Russia, India and China
CFF	French Institute of Cambodia
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
CLA	Cambodian Living Arts
DANIDA	Danish International Development Agency
ECCC	Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia for the Prosecution of Crimes Committed during the Period of Democratic Kampuchea
FIFA	Federation International de Football Association
FSLN	<i>Frente Sandinista de Liberación Nacional</i> - Sandinista National Liberation Front
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GIZ	<i>Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit</i> - German organisation for international cooperation
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus, a retrovirus that causes AIDS
HIVOS	Humanist Institute for Development Cooperation
IBGE	<i>Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística</i> - Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
IMF	International Monetary Fund
INGO	International Non Governmental Organisation
KPNLF	Khmer People's National Liberation Front
MACRU	<i>Movimiento de Animación Cultural Rural</i> - Organisation for rural (farmers) cultural animation
MECATE	<i>Movimiento de Expresión Campesina Artística y Teatral</i> - Organisation for artistic and theatrical farmers' community expressions

MOVITEP-SF	<i>Movimiento Teatro Popular Sin Fronteras</i> - Popular theatre movement without borders
NGO	Non Governmental Organisation
PPS	<i>Phare Ponleu Selpak</i>
PROFIC	Program for Cultural Funding and Incentive
RUFA	Royal University of Fine Arts
SESC	Social Service of Commerce
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
UNBRO	United Nations Border Relief Operation
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNO	<i>Unidad Nicaragüense Opositora</i> - United Nicaraguan Opposition
UNTAC	United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia
UPP	<i>Unidade de Policia Pacificadora</i> - Pacifying Police Unit
US	United States of America
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
WFP	World Food Program

Abstract

This thesis presents a comparative study of the aesthetics of three theatre initiatives from development settings: theatre company *Nós do Morro* in Brazil, multi-disciplinary arts centre *Phare Ponleu Selpak* in Cambodia, and non-profit organisation *Movimiento Teatro Popular Sin Fronteras* in Nicaragua. By focussing on how different judgements within the landscape of aesthetic and social worth meet, conflict or interact within the programmes, processes and outcomes of the three theatre organisations, this research articulates the different kinds of ‘values’ attached to the (at times) competing aesthetic criteria for practitioners, government bodies and national and international non-governmental organisations that have stakes in this work. The majority of the data in this research is qualitative, generated by interviews, stories about theatre practitioners’ experiences and my own observations of performances, workshops and rehearsals.

After exploring the landscape of aesthetic and social worth across the three case studies, this research points out the many ways in which international economics and global governance – manifest in tax-reduced sponsorships by global corporations, funding decisions of international interveners and cultural policies of national governments – participate and intrude into both the aesthetic and social constructions of applied theatre’s artistic value, therefore framing its aesthetic sphere. The global pressure coming from the United Nations and the international humanitarian community seeking to shape applied theatre companies and make them respond to certain dynamics serves neither art nor community. This also makes it very difficult to locate an aesthetic of applied theatre in a way that is ‘traditional’ in discussions of aesthetics (through definition of the art ‘product’ alone, via reference to ideas of beauty, affect and the senses). This study therefore found a way of understanding the impact of economic and international actors on applied theatre using Appadurai’s concept of the ethnoscape (1991), which offers a theoretical and analytical framework for investigating the *determining factors* of the aesthetics of applied theatre, and the *aesthetic discourses* surrounding applied theatre in development settings.

I argue that applied theatre practices globally are becoming too uniform: global forms taken by transnational institutions are starting to evolve in new directions. We need to attentively investigate what the level of resistance of applied theatre companies can be. Although each art organisation is trying to find a place for applied theatre in the ‘new’ world, the theatre companies can hopefully resist the pressure to become the same kind of company, living in a state partially organised according to international agendas. As a result, this research proposes a more politicised, historicised kind of practice, teaching and mentoring around these questions. This will support applied theatre practitioners in finding their way in the new global world.

Declaration

No portion of the work referred to in the thesis has been submitted in support of an application for another degree or qualification of this or any other university or other institute of learning.

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Looking back on my many encounters in circus tents, kitchens, restaurants, theatres, universities, hostels and homes, I realise how much of my writing has been shaped by these seemingly “sideways” meetings with strangers, many of whom are now my inspirations and friends. I owe a great deal to the people who helped me in the course of my fieldwork – people who generously welcomed me as an immigrant to their field – without whom I would have had great difficulty understanding the meanings of life and theatre in their countries. More specifically, I would like to sincerely thank the theatre practitioners, facilitators and policy makers in Rio de Janeiro, São Paulo, Battambang, Phnom Penh, Matagalpa and León for their support, dedication and time, and my friends Alexandre Barreto, Jos van Kan, Don Raúl Quiroz and Nohelia Talavera for their generosity and knowledge.

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Preface

Hay hombres que luchan un día

y son buenos

Hay otros que luchan un año

y son mejores

Hay que luchan varios años

y son muy buenos

Hay que luchan toda la vida

esos son los imprescindibles

(Bertolt Brecht quoted in *Sueño con Serpientes* of Silvio Rodríguez).

In 2006, very early in the morning I visit Doña Socorro Bonilla Castellón in her house. It is another warm and humid day in the capital of Nicaragua. My clothes are sweaty and filthy after the two hours bus trip to the villa; I can still smell the chickens that were placed next to me. Local inexperienced bus drivers start their own bus companies and drive an average of one hundred and twenty kilometers an hour – willing to risk their lives – to earn as much money as possible on a daily basis. Fortunately the taxi driver is a safer driver and he knows exactly where my destination is; apparently Doña Socorro Bonilla Castellón is still a famous figure in the country.

She is working in her enormous garden facing a quiet road in the centre of Managua. While she orders me to wait in the living room, she checks the growth of her exotic plants. Couches, chairs and cupboards are covered with white plastic, possibly reserved for important guests and occasions, preventing me from taking a seat. While contemplating the wealth of furniture and the wide range of paintings, I realise that this is the first time I have found myself in a Nicaraguan villa. All my previous interviews with theatre practitioners and facilitators were held in small tin houses, where I would be offered the only rocking chair and often some fresh fruit and cigarettes, while Cuban singer Silvio Rodríguez, symbol of the Latin American revolutionary left, would often fill the room with his eloquent and symbolic lyrics.

The Nicaraguan theatre practitioners I am working with work as journalists, tourist guides or farmers, but they prefer to call themselves artists. During more informal encounters,

they articulate their struggle with the position of *teatro popular*¹, and many are confused about the value of aesthetics in this form of theatre. The practitioners argue that *teatro popular* deserves to be recognised as legitimate art, with aesthetics that differ from mainstream art. They explain that if *teatro popular* attracts funding, it is usually only evaluated in terms of social development and not according to aesthetic criteria.

After thirty minutes Doña Socorro Bonilla Castellón reappears and shouts: ‘No photos or video, perhaps after the interview when I have washed my hair. And please call me *Doña Socorro*.’ In her hand she carries numerous books, journals and flyers of previous performances. Well-known as an actress as well as a theatre director, she has performed in many plays produced by the *Comedia Nacional*. Founded in 1965 by influential artists, the *Comedia Nacional* quickly became one of the most important theatre companies of the decade. However, the performances were only staged for audiences in the main theatre in Managua, *Teatro Nacional Rubén Darío* (Arellano, 1991).

As she takes a seat on the white plastic and tells me about the high standards of Nicaraguan theatre, I feel very fortunate to see all the documented evidence: performances, histories of actors and actresses, flyers of plays from 1970 until 2005. I have spent several days in different libraries searching for documents about *teatro popular*. The books I have found only tell stories about the Revolution in 1979. Very little is written about the development of political theatre during other periods, and I have not found any literature about *teatro popular*.

Out of curiosity, I ask Doña Socorro what she knows about *teatro popular* and its value for Nicaraguan culture. Her facial expression changes; her eyes look upset as she says: ‘If you are here to talk about that pathetic art-form, then I would like you to leave the house.’ Hastily, I try to bring back the comfortable atmosphere by explaining that *teatro popular* is part of Nicaraguan culture; hence, it is necessary for my research to understand its position within the country. Nonetheless, it is already too late; she starts tidying up the room and takes all the documents away. It is time for me to leave.

¹ This Latin American term has appeared more frequently in Nicaragua since the Revolution in 1979. *Teatro popular* is a political tool created for and by the community. A more elaborate description and examination of *teatro popular* will be given in Chapter Four.

While walking out of the house, I feel a warm hand on my shoulder. A short friendly man behind me – his hands filled with old books and flyers – introduces himself as Doña Socorro's husband. He overheard our conversation in the house. 'This might interest you...' he whispers, and quickly gives me a few books. He smiles and tells me that it is better to leave now.

An hour later I am on the same bus with, seemingly, the same chickens. I have forgotten the smell. In my bag, secured with both arms, I hold unique written evidence of *teatro popular*.

-

Four years later. I am on my way to the School of Arts at The University of Managua. Her voice sounded different after all these years when I called her for this interview. I have prepared thoroughly for the meeting: my questions are structured, my camera is charged and I am dressed formally.

When I arrive at her office, the secretary offers me a strong coffee, which I gratefully accept. The current president of the Arts Department, Doña Socorro Bonilla Castellón, is delayed, and will arrive in twenty-five minutes. Having worked and travelled in Nicaragua for a few years, I have become quite familiar with how fluid appointment times are, and since I am on Nicaraguan time, it does not really bother me. She is late but not by much. After an hour and two more coffees, the elderly lady enters. She does not recognise my face. Her personal assistant brings another coffee and we sit down in her air-conditioned office. When I introduce myself and explain the nature of my research, her face does not show any recognition. One of the first things she mentions is the unfortunate passing away of her lovely husband a few months ago. Since then she has not been the same person. I do not know what to say. Her husband gave me a precious gift: the first step on this academic journey. He provided valuable material for my research, and above all he taught me that our black and white world has more grey areas than I had expected.

I ask all my questions and try to retrieve as much of the information I need as possible. She seems to be impressed by my previous work experience in Nicaragua.

I feel obliged to test her memory. In an amicable manner, I ask her opinion about the importance of *teatro popular* and its aesthetic notions. She hesitates. Her expression changes,

her voice lowers, and she says firmly: 'I am afraid I prefer not to talk about that art-form – it is not my style. Do you have any more questions? I really have to get back to work.'

-

This PhD research questions why my interviews with Doña Socorro Bonilla Castellón failed spectacularly, twice. I will argue that she might have been perfectly entitled to throw me out of her house and office. The research will create an understanding of what these encounters say about applied theatre, my assumptions about applied theatre and the place of aesthetics in applied theatre.

1

The journey away from articulating a 'pure' aesthetic for applied theatre: an introduction

DUTCH PEA SOUP

INGREDIENTS

500 gr split peas

1 piece of gammon with bone, or pork hock

1 smoked sausage

2 chopped onions

1 carrot

2 leeks

1 celeriac

2 potatoes

1 bunch celery

Pepper and salt to taste

2 litres water to start with

PREPARATION:

1 Rinse the split peas in a sieve under the running tap. Bring water to the boil with the peas, gammon and bacon. Let it boil and skim off the floating scum. Pour off, rinse again and put peas and meat back on the fire with clean water.

2 Cut the skin of the celeriac, peel the potatoes, and dice celeriac and potatoes. Peel the carrot and dice it. Cut the leeks and wash them. Add the vegetables to the pan and let simmer until the peas are done.

3 Take the meat out of the pan, remove rind and bones, and cut it in small pieces. Return the meat to the pan. Wash the sprigs of celery, and chop or cut the leaves. Twenty minutes before the end of cooking add the whole smoked sausage and the celery. Finish off with pepper and salt.

4 The pea soup is still fairly liquid. Let it cool completely and reheat it the next day, or freeze in portions.

1.1. The curious lens

To possess a telescope without its other essential half—the microscope—seems to me a symbol of the darkest incomprehension. The task of the right eye is to peer into the telescope while the left eye peers into the microscope (Carrington, 1988: 16).

Surrealist painter Leonora Carrington was obsessed with detail in her work, while simultaneously concerned with major ideas about how to perceive and look at the world. This research intends to follow this idea, telling the story of a journey of aesthetics through the perceptions of theatre practitioners, facilitators, international and national aid workers and myself. More specifically, this thesis explores how they and I have looked at the field of applied theatre: a story about other people's and my own assumptions and projections on this practice. This thesis also illustrates a story about a lens and its usage, a telescope and/or a microscope: this journey uses a lens that at times zooms in, seeking, exploring, looking and finding details, and describing shifting perspectives, while at other times, the lens zooms out in order to understand, examine and analyse wider vistas.

This thesis identifies the determining factors of the aesthetic of applied theatre and the aesthetic discourses surrounding applied theatre within three theatre initiatives from development contexts: theatre company *Nós do Morro* in Brazil, multi-disciplinary arts centre *Phare Ponleu Selpak* in Cambodia, and non-profit organisation *Movimiento Teatro Popular Sin Fronteras* in Nicaragua. I explore how the landscape of social and aesthetic worth works within the processes and programmes of the three theatre organisations. Following this, my research attempts to articulate several – at times conflicting – influences on the contesting aesthetic criteria for theatre practitioners, government bodies and national and international non-governmental organisations that have a stake in this work. I argue that global governance and international economic players participate in and intrude into the aesthetic and social constructions of applied theatre's artistic value in these settings.

This research develops a 'language' for describing the aesthetics of applied theatre, and the aesthetic discourses surrounding applied theatre in particular contexts, constructed from conversations with people involved in applied theatre projects. The key component of this language is articulating the meaning of aesthetics observed via the practitioner's context, background and economic position, whilst avoiding the search for universal or 'pure' aesthetics. This language also recognises that no universal aesthetic values surpass the contingencies of time and place or the interests and investments of different social groups.

This extends existing knowledge and understanding about applied theatre, acknowledging the embeddedness of ‘aesthetics’ within different cultures, but also taking into account tensions between social, aesthetic and economic worth, looking at how they interact. This research thus highlights a more nuanced understanding of aesthetic significance for applied theatre. The interrelation between aesthetics and applied theatre in developing countries prompts a series of questions and makes a re-examination of the practice of aesthetics in these contexts an urgent task. For example, why is it often the case that traditional criteria of assessment are not considered suitable within the context of international and government support of the art practices of marginalised communities? What are the consequences for artists if economics plays a role in the recurring tension between the social and aesthetic worth of applied theatre? How have artists developed aesthetic responses to globalising processes within their communities? To what extent is the aesthetic of applied theatre embedded in the cultural contexts of different sites? How do neoliberal economic agendas influence the aesthetic discourses and practices of theatre companies in development contexts? How do global and local political institutions and arts organisations interact?

These specific questions will be addressed throughout the research. Moreover, these questions are all part of a broader set of concerns that drove my original research after my experience in Nicaragua in 2004. The outcomes of the research point out the many ways in which global governance and international economics participate in, and intrude into, the practice of applied theatre and its aesthetic sphere. They are manifest in global corporations’ tax relief schemes, state-led subsidies, international aid agencies’ funding decisions, and cultural policies of national governments. Each practice demonstrated its controversial aspects during my fieldwork. I argue that global forms of transnational institutions are developing in novel directions, and as Noël Carroll suggests, ‘an integrated, transnational institution of art’ may be assembling itself (2007: 136).

The majority of the data in this research is qualitative, generated by interviews, stories based on theatre practitioners’ experiences and my own observations of performances, workshops and rehearsals. The relatively recently published literature on the subject and the experiences documented here give the material immediacy. I adopted a methodology of reflexive ethnography for this research. Reflexive ethnographic research is inevitably caught in ‘networks of power’ (Lopes Cardozo, 2011: 52). Central to this methodology are

questions such as: how does the complicated history – pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial – affect practice in the different contexts? What are practitioners’ and communities’ histories, and how does a researcher relate to these histories? How can the researcher position him/herself as an outsider, and how can they interact with cultural differences? How can a researcher take sides, and relate to participants? These are self-limitations of power effects that should be noted (Ibid.), and will be described in more detail later in this chapter.

This chapter starts with establishing the context and background of the research, followed by an introduction of the term ‘applied theatre’ and the significance of aesthetics within it. I then look at the recent focus on aesthetics within scholarly literature on theatre, in particular on that exploring the aesthetics of applied theatre in the last decade. I indicate how my research and fieldwork will add to the scholarly field, and present an analysis of relevant literature to establish the key critical frameworks used in my research. The literature comes from three broad areas: theatre and performance studies, international development studies and art history. Theatre and performance studies produce knowledge about the history of applied theatre and how it has been discussed in different ways. This knowledge is combined with readings from international development studies and art history to create an understanding of the intricate nature of the significance of aesthetics within the field of applied theatre in development contexts. I then give an overview of my methodology and the limitations of the study. Finally, I provide an overview of the thesis, giving an outline of the following chapters.

1.2. The initial lens

Ten years ago, in 2004, I travelled for the second time to Nicaragua to work as an applied theatre practitioner. After rehearsals I met up with *teatro popular* practitioners in bars and restaurants in the local communities. Similar to many Latin American countries, Nicaraguan *teatro popular* artists are perceived as second-class citizens: ‘people look at us as alcoholics, drugs users and governmental aid abusers’ (Mendoza 2006, pers. comm. 11 Feb.). The *teatro popular* practitioners, however, working as farmers, tourist guides or journalists, preferring to call themselves ‘theatre artists’ (Soto 2006, pers. comm. 22 Jan.), articulated a desire to talk about the aesthetic values of their practice. They explicitly struggled with their position within the Nicaraguan theatre landscape, and many were

confused about the artistic value of *teatro popular*, arguing that it deserved to be recognised as legitimate art, but with aesthetics differing from mainstream art.

The theatre practitioners stated that when *teatro popular* attracted funding from international donors or international and national non-governmental organisations (INGOs and NGOs), it was usually only validated in terms of social development criteria, rather than aesthetic criteria. Ultimately, it was in these interviews and informal meetings with these theatre artists that I saw the tension between an aesthetic discourse of utilitarianism and the desire of those involved in *teatro popular* to talk about aesthetics in its own terms. Clearly, in Nicaragua the established conceptions of quality in the arts militated against the support of art-practices of marginalised communities. Often, traditional criteria of assessment were not seen as appropriate and disallowed consideration of popular art or creative works outside the mainstream. This demonstrates the complex interrelations between art and politics, but also the gap between the utilitarian and artistic domains of theatre, revealed through the sociological and cultural importance of assessment (Wolff, 1983: 11-15).

The aesthetic value of applied theatre is a concern evident not only in my direct encounters in Nicaragua, but also in recent scholarship. Researchers in applied theatre (Ahmed, 2006; Thompson, 2009; Winston, 2006) have debated the place of aesthetics in community-based performance work. There has been a recent focus on beauty and the importance of affect in applied theatre scholarship (Thompson, 2009: 138; Winston, 2006a: 299). These accounts, however, are dominated by the artistic significance of applied theatre, overlooking its social worth. Both Thompson and Winston are too quick to dismiss the utilitarian, focussing their attention only on the aesthetic sphere. In contrast, this thesis identifies a recurring tension between the aesthetic and social worth of practice through observations and practitioner accounts. This tension is evident and re-inscribed in different ways across applied theatre literature, and has not been resolved.² Rather than focussing on taxonomy, this research consists of three case studies that reflexively highlight the social and aesthetic complexities and contradictions inherent in applied theatre practice.

² See for example Anthony Jackson (2007) *Theatre, Education and The Making of Meanings. Art or Instrument?*; Shannon Jackson (2011) *Social works. Performing art, supporting publics*; Richard Schechner (1988) *Performance Theory*; James Thompson (2009) *Performance affects. Applied theatre and the end of effect*. The landscape of social and aesthetic worth will be discussed in further detail in the following section.

1.3. The contextual lens

This section provides an overview of the key contextual ideas of this thesis in relation to questions of aesthetics and ‘the aesthetic’, as they have been framed within applied theatre and performance in international contexts. These connections will re-emerge in later chapters. Three disciplines have been combined with other research methods to create a critical framework within which to think about applied theatre, aesthetics and international community contexts.

Applied theatre is a relatively recent label for a much older practice. It was developed during the 1990s, and since the beginning of this century, applied theatre has become a popular term for academics, particularly in Australia, Canada and the United Kingdom (Nicholson, 2005: 2; Prentki and Preston, 2009: 13; Taylor, 2003: xxi; Thompson, 2003: 13). Applied theatre is used to describe ‘forms of dramatic activity that primarily exist outside conventional mainstream theatre institutions, and which are specifically intended to benefit individuals, communities and societies’ (Nicholson, 2005: 2). Today, theatre institutions – at least in the United Kingdom – are increasingly working with forms of applied theatre practice. Helen Nicholson (2005: 8) describes three significant theatre movements that have contributed to the development of twentieth-first century applied theatre: community theatre, theatre in education (influenced by Paulo Freire) and theatres of the political left. These fields overlap and are usually ‘participatory in nature’ (Epskamp, 2006: 11). For that reason, ‘participatory drama’ is also used as a common denominator for all forms of applied theatre (Ibid.).

One of these three theatre movements, theatres of the political left, is often referred to as the workers’ theatre movements of the 1920s (Samuel et al., 1985: xix) in Britain and America, in which socialist theatre workers used agitprop theatre as a tool for social mobilisation of working class audiences (Govan et al., 2007: 43-45). Other theatre forms that developed, such as popular theatre, people’s theatre, and activist theatre, also allied applied theatre to cultural activism. These different terms recall the period before the end of the Cold War in 1989, a time of social change and fragmentation of the political left (Epskamp, 2006: 1-2), when cultural and political scholars renegotiated democratic traditions and responded to new world orders (Kershaw, 1992: 6-7). These historical strands of applied theatre share three important characteristics: (i) the *application* of theatre as a shared mission and a ‘weapon’ to deeply probe some aspect of the world (Epskamp,

2006: 11; Taylor, 2003: 2-3); (ii) questioning the social purpose of theatre and encouraging grassroots mobilisation (Epskamp, 1989: 118); and (iii) a pronounced socialist or Marxist perspective, resulting in a left-wing socialist methodology. Arguably, Marxism is at heart a theory of economics and I will explore this link between Marxist theory and theatre in more detail in the practice of theatre company *Nós do Morro* in Brazil. In defining these strands, political or ideological historical references are involved. As this history suggests, the roots of applied theatre are in progressive people's movements around the world. From this it is tempting to define applied theatre as a socialist or left-wing doctrine. Prentki and Preston (2009), nevertheless, argue that 'this would be a false assumption: applied theatre is no more or less at the service of a particular ideology than any other kind of theatre' (2009: 13).

These characteristics all refer to the widespread interest in gaining recognition for the right to articulate personal social, educational and political concerns through the arts and to stimulate social, political and economic change. Moreover, the aim of applied theatre was arguably originally focussed on social empowerment of poor, oppressed and marginalised people and communities, and on issues of social utility such as healing, trauma and social justice (Babbage, 2004: 2-4; Boal, 2003). In many regards, it is not surprising that applied theatre has concerned itself with social issues; the abstracts of literature and research reports place issues of social utility 'front and centre in the content of the work' (Haseman and Winston, 2010: 465). Unfortunately, practitioners' concern for application is also a result of the pragmatics of survival, and does not solely come from their social and political engagement. As observed during artists' interviews and in the scholarly field of theatre (Ibid.), the majority of the funding for the work comes from non-art related organisations, largely concerned with the proof that will justify their funding decisions. This is increasingly exacerbated by the central importance of evidence-based art policy making (Belfiore and Bennet, 2010: 5).

Aesthetics

The aesthetic theories and historical traditions I am describing here will contribute to my definition of this complicated term, which will be used throughout the research. For the purposes of this research I use aesthetics both as a specific term linking to the history of applied theatre, and also as generic shorthand for the four different foci of aesthetics and the three additional terms of aesthetics that will be described later in this chapter. As a

philosophical concept, aesthetics is multiply theorised, and in the Western tradition, discussions of aesthetics have existed for at least as long as philosophy. Since the time of Plato and Aristotle it has examined concerns such as beauty, values and criteria. The key thinkers in aesthetic theory are Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten (1714-1762), Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) and the European philosophers of the eighteenth century. Although there were many other significant thinkers between these philosophers and the ancient Greeks, I will concentrate on eighteenth and nineteenth century theorists, as these clearly influenced John Ruskin, John Dewey and others, who were key influences on applied theatre (as noted by Jackson (2007), Nicholson (2009: 14) and Winston (2010)). I will look at three traditions of thought and expression that have been important for aesthetics and performance studies – Kant and those influenced by him, Marxists/critical theorists, and contemporary theorist Janet Wolff (1983), who arguably challenges the position of aesthetics from a sociological perspective. This is a partial examination, but I choose to focus on these scholars because they help redefine different ideas associated with aesthetics to inform an intelligent consideration of what it means within applied theatre today.

The term ‘aesthetics’ was unknown until 1735, when German philosopher Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten began to use it (Carey, 2005: 8) as an independent philosophical discipline defined as: ‘the science of how things are cognized by means of the senses’ (Braembussche, 2007: 20). British eighteenth century theorists such as Addison, Burke, Hutcheson and Shaftesbury assisted in shaping this meaning by ‘emphasising sensory perception as not centrally driven by personal desires or concerns, but characterised by an absorption in an object for its own sake’ (Levinson, 2003: 9). This line of thinking culminated in Immanuel Kant’s *Critique of Judgement* (1790), in which his ideas of aesthetic perception established themselves as a basic text in Western art theory. Kant’s ideas concentrate on beauty, beautiful objects and how we react to these objects, and Kant proposed two types of beauty: dependent and free (Kant, 2008: 44-46). Dependent beauty refers to a certain thing of a certain kind with a certain function, whilst ‘free beauty is independent of concerns with functionality and conceptual classification’ (Ibid.: 44-45). Kant argued that beauty must be admired in and of itself, and any thoughts of utilitarianism would restrict the imagination (Ibid.). He asserted that we should sense pleasure in even the simplest examples of beauty, because this beauty lies in the free interplay between the imagination and understanding, while our more complex pleasure in the sublime is due to a divergence between imagination and reason. Our pleasure in art involves an equal

interchange between reason and the material of the imagination (Ibid.: 65-66). Broadly, the dominant aesthetic theories of the eighteenth century acknowledged that our pleasures in the beautiful and the sublime were not dependent on self-interest, but instead are closely concerned with the most general features of human psychology (Levinson, 2003: 35).

This century, the philosophical concept of aesthetics has been almost only subject of the idea of beauty, separate from the sublime, and beauty has been the only aesthetic quality carefully respected by artists and philosophers (Danto, 2003: 7). In the context of applied theatre, it becomes evident that the current debate about beauty has its heritage in Kant. The main problem, however, with Kant's theory with regard to applied theatre is the argument that it is possible to isolate aesthetic judgements from political and moral concerns. The Aesthetic Movement of the nineteenth century with its maxim 'Art for Art's sake' attempted to exemplify what Kant suggested (Levinson, 2003: 45). However, in participatory community practices the appreciation of beauty is rarely separated from political, cultural or moral values. Another problem with Kant's theory in international development contexts is that for Kant, successful evaluation of artworks requires a specific learned vocabulary. However, as Winston and anthropologist Clifford Geertz note, this is an entirely Western notion, because 'in all other cultures beauty is commonly understood by attending to the broader cultural concerns that it serves' (Winston, 2010: 26). A useful sociological legacy of Kant's theory is that aesthetic judgements are invitations to critical discussions rather than mere expressions of opinion. This is crucial, for the overall argument because issues of gender, sexual orientation, class and ethnicity are not the grounds on which aesthetic judgements are based; these issues only influence the judgements (Ibid: 28). My thesis investigates on which grounds the aesthetic judgements of applied theatre are formed in marginalised communities where the aesthetics of the practice differ from those of mainstream art.

The urge to define works of art increased significantly in the twentieth century when artworks started to appear as ordinary objects. The art products of modernism challenged previous assumptions about what art was. Art critic Arthur Danto struggles in his book *The Abuse of Beauty* (2003) to understand how Warhol's boxes could be artworks while their everyday counterparts were utilitarian containers with no artistic pretensions (Danto, 2003: 3-7). It could thus be argued that art is indefinable, but also that the conditions necessary for something to be art would have to be general and abstract to fit all imaginable cases.

Beauty could not be part of the art's definition if anything could be art (Ibid.: 36). Modernism also draws attention to debates about the beauty of nature and the beauty of the everyday. The social-cultural context of modernism, including the rise of women's movement, the labour struggles, the development of psychology, the race for empire and the disastrous First World War, emphasises the impact of social change on aesthetic innovation, and many of these developments have relevance to the exploration of the everyday (Randall, 2007: 5).

The twenty-first century has seen an increased attention to the concept of beauty in art theory arising from the global North (Armstrong, 2004; Brand, 2000; Sartwell, 2004; Scarry, 2006; Thompson, 2009; Wolff, 2008). Numerous scholars are convinced that beauty matters in art, although many believe that 'beauty is a contextual property deeply connected to factual beliefs and moral attitudes' (Brand, 2000: 27). The majority of these visions are linked to debates about the role of beauty in post-Holocaust art and in war and (post-) conflict situations. Contemporary philosophers clarify that the aesthetic has become narrowly identified with beauty. However, removing beauty from the definition of art shows that something can be art without possessing beauty, and something can be beautiful without being art. Art can have aesthetic possibilities beyond only one quality, that is, beauty. However, the difference between beauty and other aesthetic qualities is that beauty is the only one that claims to be a value, like truth or goodness. Saying that something is beautiful seems to deny the assumption that beauty is in the eye of the beholder. The identification of an assumed connection between beauty and aesthetics is helpful as it links to the recent comeback of beauty and affect within the study of applied theatre and to the key questions driving my enquiry. My work comes from the same impetus that drives scholars working on beauty and affect – in that it searches for an articulation of the social-aesthetic relationship relevant to issues of social justice. However, for the purposes of my work, I am using a different critical framework. I focus on the definition of aesthetics since that is the key term I will be using, and beauty as a concept does not figure in the wider thesis. This is also what I found in my case studies: social and aesthetic worth are more helpful in understanding what happens in these contexts.

Defining aesthetics

My major concern with the term 'aesthetics' was that my fieldwork did not immediately fall into the categories described above: *nature of the craft*, *theory of criticism* or *aesthetics of nature*.

This reflects the general anxiety about an agreed definition of the aesthetics of applied theatre and why this thesis poses questions such as: how do scholars and practitioners define aesthetics? Why are they concerned about the definition? And why is there a lack of clarity amongst different groups? During my fieldwork, the term ‘aesthetics’ or ‘aesthetic’ was used by my research participants as a synonym for production values, artistic quality, a system of artistic endeavour and realms of creativity, greater attention given to performance style, joy, pleasure and happiness, but also referred to the performance traditions of Brazil, Cambodia and Nicaragua, and of intercultural theatre. Although all these definitions are equally valid and likely raise different questions, leading to different insights and implications, for the purposes of this research I am inspired by a categorisation of aesthetics by Jerrald Levinson (2003: 3-4) in *The Oxford Handbook of Aesthetics* that covers all the synonyms for aesthetics mentioned by my research participants. In Levinson’s different foci of aesthetics, I have found a way to turn the term’s complexity into an analytical tool. I can use the transformation from definition to tool to remind me of the problems of the term. Also, the definitions share intimate and necessary interlinkages. This PhD refers to aesthetics in relation to *aesthetic sphere*, *aesthetic practice*, *aesthetic criteria* and *aesthetic evaluation*. The *aesthetic sphere* is general and relates to the arena of art. The second focus involves *aesthetic practice* or *aesthetic object* – the practice of art, or the activity of making and appreciating art, the artistry. A third focus, *aesthetic criteria* or *aesthetic terminology*, enhances a kind of *property*, *feature* or *aspect* of things, which refers to the criteria of how we describe an art-form, whether formal (composition, line and colour, innovation), extrinsic (content) or subjective (beauty, grace connotation, pleasure). The last focus, *aesthetic evaluation*, is the way in which we evaluate an artwork, asking questions about how the criteria interact with each other as well as the sensation-based aspects of the practice – and the role of audience members (Ibid.). Levinson’s interest in aesthetics guides his exploration of performance ontology from a historical perspective, with an emphasis on performing and sensitive reactions to its appreciation. His schema connects to the overall narrative about aesthetics I am building in this chapter, because Levinson’s foci are able to challenge the key questions in this research, and are flexible enough to change according to different contexts.

Thus, for the aims of this research I use aesthetics as a specific term linking to the history of applied theatre and as generic shorthand for four different foci. Additionally, three terms that correspond with Levinson’s foci are *aesthetic discourse* (the ways aesthetics are discussed

and written about), *aesthetic language* (the language used in performance, including sounds, senses, looks, colours, shapes and styles) and *aesthetic methodology* (the artistic method used to develop and create performances). The four foci and the three additional terms will be used throughout the following chapters, and have allowed me to analyse the data from the interviews, rehearsals and observations via the practitioners' contexts, backgrounds and economic positions. The meaning of aesthetics within the three theatre companies will be described in each case study as well as in Appendix 4 (focussing on *teatro popular*). This definition does not propose a universal application, but provides an opportunity to explore the different contexts within a broad platform.

This definition requires a clear distinction between the artistic and the aesthetic, two frequently used terms in the field of theatre. Theories about the difference between 'artistic' and 'aesthetic' provide useful articulations of this distinction: Wolfgang Iser (1978), John Dewey (1980) and Anthony Jackson (2007). Iser suggests that the 'artistic' in literature involves the author's created work and its intended meaning, whereas the quality of the writing and the reader's meaning create the 'aesthetic' (Iser, 1978: 152). Iser argues that the reader fills the creative gaps in the text. Dewey uses 'everyday aesthetics' to refer to the aesthetic experience of non-art objects and events, and to art that questions distinctions between art and craft. He argues that there exists a clear distinction between the work of art and the aesthetic experience. The 'aesthetic' is about perception, appreciation and enjoyment rather than qualities inherent in the artwork itself. Dewey argues that aesthetics is an experience of the senses and the pleasure of the audience, or the way certain values and characteristics are embedded in a dramatic form (Dewey, 1980: 15-16). He suggests that the term 'aesthetic experience' results from the transformation of the spectator's knowledge (Ibid.: 10). The experience is more than knowledge, because it is formed of non-intellectual elements. It refers both to what is happening in the head and what is happening in the world. For Dewey, then, art is an aspect of human dealings in the world. The pleasure in the aesthetic experience is in the recognition of the world's complexity. Dewey calls this 'the percipient's pleasurable *act* of recognition' (Dewey in Jackson, 2007: 36). He argues that in an aesthetic experience one can gain pleasure that is ugly and deeply disturbing, as Scarry (2006) and Thompson (2009) suggest in their definitions of beauty. The distinction between art and 'craft' or 'craftsmanship' as Dewey uses is particularly interesting, because 'craftsmanship' is often mentioned in theories about non-Western aesthetics (Davies, 2007; Feagin, 2007; Shusterman, 2000). Dewey argues that 'craft' can

only be called 'artistic' when it cares deeply for its subject matter. Jackson (2007) translates these theories to theatre. He defines the 'artistic' as the work created by artists, and the 'aesthetic' as the total experience of the work once shared with the audience (2007: 37). The 'aesthetic' becomes the active maker of meaning of the performance and that results, as mentioned by Brecht, in a dynamic relationship between the spectators and the artist's work. For this research, however, when writing about aesthetics I refer to its different foci in which 'artistic' is included.³

As will be clear in the main chapters of this thesis, it is useful to address the distinction between high art and popular or low (mass) art, as it provides an opportunity to discuss theories about taste and debates about artistic and instrumental accounts of theatre. In such cases it is a question of developing a critical approach that explores the discussion of aesthetic value and appreciation in popular art. It is surprising that the distinction between high art and low (mass) art did not earn the serious attention of philosophical aesthetics until the late twentieth century, as it was discussed extensively by intellectuals with different socio-political views, such as Marxists and critical theorists like Max Horkheimer,⁴ Theodor Adorno,⁵ Walter Benjamin⁶ and Pierre Bourdieu. Adorno argues that the aim of the cultural industry, the production and distribution of cultural products via mass media, influences people in society. The comfortable and simple pleasures produced by popular art cause passivity in people, even in the most horrendous economic conditions. Adorno states that the culture industry is a capitalist manipulation intended to keep the masses passive by stopping them from developing any critical or independent thinking. Furthermore, popular art is not only aesthetically deficient but also politically manipulative, designed to have a particular effect on its audience. In Adorno's view, popular art is intentionally manipulative,

³ For more examples of theories about the differences between artistic and aesthetic, see Wolfgang Iser (1978) *The Act of Reading. A Theory of Aesthetic Response*, and John Dewey (1980) *Art as experience*.

⁴ Max Horkheimer (1895-1973) was a German-Jewish philosopher and was popular for his Critical Theory work, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, written with Theodor W. Adorno; the core texts of Critical Theory inspired the intellectual background of the New Left in the 1960s and 1970s.

⁵ Theodor W. Adorno (1903-1969) belonged to the first generation of the Institute for Social Research at Frankfurt University, also known as the *Frankfurter Schule*. Adorno became a refugee in the UK and later in the US because Hitler's regime perceived him as 'of half Jewish origin' (Wilson, 2007: 1). In 1950 he returned to Frankfurt (Braembussche, 2007: 208-209) and became a famous intellectual in post-war Germany (Wilson, 2007: 1).

⁶ Walter Benjamin (1892-1940) was born into a German-Jewish upper class business family. During his study of philosophy, he 'committed himself to an extremely idealistic concept of social change through cultural revolution' (Witte, 1991: 23).

whereas genuine art is autonomous, not to be appreciated or understood instrumentally (1975: 15). According to Adorno, popular art obstructs (Ibid.: 19):

The development of autonomous, independent individuals who judge and decide consciously for themselves; this independence of thought is necessary for the development of a flourishing democratic society.

Walter Benjamin writes about the defeat of sensation through the mechanical reproduction of art itself. Although Benjamin was a Marxist and a critical theorist, his view on popular art took a different turn. Popular art is, Benjamin argues, potentially valuable precisely because of its anti-traditional character. Popular art encourages a critical response to traditional culture, and thus nurtures the very independence of thought that Adorno denies to this art-form. Thus, Benjamin is more convinced of the power of popular art (Benjamin, 1986: 217-218). Such debates will resonate in the work of case study *Nós do Morro*, where I explicitly address the aesthetic notions between the mainstream theatre practice of Rio de Janeiro and cultural practices in the favelas.

Pierre Bourdieu established that all cultural needs and preferences are closely connected to education and social origin (Bourdieu, 1984: 2).⁷ The influence of home background and formal education differs according to the degree to which diverse cultural practices are acknowledged and taught by the educational system. The weight of social origin is most prevalent in ‘extra-curricular and avant-garde culture’ (Ibid.). The socially acknowledged hierarchy of the arts resembles a social hierarchy of consumers (Ibid.): this inclines tastes to function as an indicator of ‘class’ (Ibid.: 2-3), and therefore each segment of the dominant class evolves its own aesthetic criteria. Bourdieu’s terms related to class and judgement of taste are: *field* (politics, science and culture), *capital* and *habitus*. Bourdieu applies the concept of capital as developed in economic theory to debates about culture. People need capital to have power in the field: economic, cultural or social capital. According to Bourdieu, our social positions are adapted by our cultural tastes, in that the cultural system allocates more worth to some tastes than to others (Robbins, 2000: 32). The value judgements of our preferences within the cultural system influence our place within it, and results in a variation of our economic and social positioning (Ibid.). The conditionings associated with

⁷ In 1963 and 1967-68 Bourdieu carried out a survey by questionnaire on a sample of 1,217 people, seeking to determine how the cultivated disposition and competence ‘are revealed in the nature of the cultural goods consumed, the way in which they are consumed, and how they vary according to the agents and the areas to which they are applied’ (Bourdieu, 1979: 2).

a particular class produce *habitus*: ‘systems of durable, transposable dispositions and structures’ (Bourdieu, 1990: 53). Bourdieu argues that aesthetic choices are created not by social origins, and not only by social and economic capital. Cultural capital is gained through the culture people receive in their family. Taste thus adjusts to social and economic conditions. Furthermore, Bourdieu posits that taste is dependent upon capital. Social or cultural capital must *include* the acquiring of it through, for example, education. Bourdieu asserts cultural differentiation as a clear and practical illustration of the disruptive results of taste, and its supreme importance in social, political and personal life. Far from being incidental or superficial, taste is the basis of all one has, in terms of people and things, and of the person one is to others (Bourdieu, 1984: 6). Consequently, Bourdieu argues, taste, defined as the ability to ‘appropriate classified and classifying objects or practices, is the generative formula of lifestyle, and aversion to different lifestyles is one of the strongest barriers between classes’ (Ibid.). This contextualisation is useful for what follows, because the chapter on *Nós do Morro* will use some of these analytical frameworks about differences in taste.

Contemporary scholars question whether legitimate art-forms always require serious thinking and mental activity. By the mid-1980s, the few philosophers – such as Janet Wolff (1983) – who had turned their attention to the aesthetics of popular art were stating that the distinction between high and popular art referred to its communal nature and the degree to which art is distinguished by its attention to the desires of specific communities. These scholars searched for a clear sense in the arts that helps to build a particular view of society and even supports the contribution of a social or cultural identity. Accounts of the ‘aesthetic’ and ‘aesthetic experience’, then, moved closer to a sociological perspective (Wolff, 1983: 11-15).⁸ Moreover, scholars acknowledged that it was impossible to hold the unquestioned view that we can recognise good art when we see it, or at least that those people who need to can do so. People who are often institutionally and structurally located with consequent ideological and partial perspectives perform aesthetic evaluations of artworks. Wolff argues that ‘aesthetic judgements often mix the purely formal with referential criteria’ (Wolff, 2008: 50) that may be found in social or political values. A key point for this thesis is that these established conceptions of quality in the arts work against the support of the art practices of marginalised communities, for which traditional criteria

⁸ Also see Nicolas Bourriand’s discussion of the move closer to a sociological perspective (Bourriand, 2002), and Stephen Davies’ analysis of the importance of the sociology of artworks in Levinson (2003: 155-163).

of assessment are often unsuitable and disallow the consideration of popular art outside the mainstream. These developments have demonstrated the complex interrelations between art and politics, but also the gap between the utilitarian and artistic domains of theatre, revealing itself through the acknowledgement of the sociological and cultural importance of assessment.

1.4. The zoom lens

The landscape of social and aesthetic worth

This section introduces the ‘landscape’ of social and aesthetic worth – to be used throughout my research – and shows how this landscape has been discussed in earlier debates on aesthetics. The relationship and tension between ‘art’ and the ‘social agenda’ can be confusing, or the two concepts can be confused with each other. While aiming to meet certain objectives (social change and empowerment, amongst others), theatre work sometimes lowers artistic or even eliminates altogether artistic standards. This challenge of understanding the relationship and tension between aesthetic and social work is found throughout this research. In order to highlight the complexity of the subject more fully and to avoid an either/or approach, I use the concept of ‘the landscape’ of social and aesthetic worth. This concept also chimes with the use of Arjun Appadurai’s ‘scapes’ that will be discussed later in this chapter.

Attempting to unravel the key elements of theatre’s function, Jackson (2007), Schechner (2002), Schininà (2004) and Thompson (2009) have each explored ways to separate ‘social’ theatre from ‘aesthetic’ theatre. These scholars have touched upon the tension between theatre as a social tool and theatre as an art. Victor Turner and Richard Schechner, for example, develop a theory to identify any form of performance as a ritual or having a ritual-derived dimension, looking for an understanding of cultural performance created within, and by, social context, serving social ends (Schechner in Maxwell, 2008: 66-68). Schechner uses schemas and diagrams to explain the dialectical relationship between aesthetic performance practices and the rhythms of social drama (Turner, 1990: 17). Schemas are used as a ‘continuum of theatrical events that blends one form into the next’, ranging ‘from non-matrixed (open, unscripted) performances to orthodox mainstream theatre, from chance events and intermedia to the production of plays’ (Schechner, 1994: xix). While Schechner acknowledges that social theatre often includes aesthetic elements, and aesthetic

theatre may include instrumental elements, the two are seen as opposite ends of the spectrum.

Belfiore and Bennett (2010) indicate numerous flows in which the aim of the arts has focussed on the progression of certain social and political causes throughout history, 'including the 'abuse of the arts by totalitarian regimes' (2010: 164). Their attention concentrates on seven instrumental arguments regarding the value of the arts in society.⁹ The arts have fundamental worth and thus the arts do not require any justification or instrumental proof to show its worth to society. Belfiore and Bennet claim that humans use the arts to identify and understand social groups: the arts reveal educational, generational, ethnic, geographic, interest and class differences, as well as stratifying those groups through assumptions about taste. In the Nicaraguan history I describe in Chapter Four, my investigation into the popular and political provides an additional disturbance to the debate around the aesthetic and social landscape – and comes from non-Western contexts. Belfiore and Bennet complicate this debate in their book, arguing that art for art's sake and instrumentalism have been entwined throughout history rather than working in opposition. In my research, I have found arts agendas and international and economic agendas working against rather than 'for' each other. This adds to the debate as it stands through the inclusion of economics. Moreover, this works against Belfiore and Bennet in some ways, but reinforces some of their points, that is, art is already instrumental in whatever guise it exists, as it always exists within economic relations. In Nicaragua I identified concerns about the links between art, instrumental purposes and politics, and this research explores the social and aesthetic worth within this context to understand how international economics and global governance intrude in the constructions of applied theatre's artistic value.

I will focus on five scholars – Bertolt Brecht, Richard Schechner, Augusto Boal, James Thompson and Shannon Jackson – who are important for aesthetics and applied theatre. This is necessarily a partial overview, but I choose these scholars because they provide different perspectives on the landscape of social and aesthetic worth in the practical work of theatre and performance. That said, the concepts of efficacy and aesthetics are at the heart of applied theatre practice, as it is an aesthetic form that has been transformed by

⁹ The seven instrumental arguments are: corruption and distraction, catharsis, personal wellbeing, education and self-development, moral improvement and civilisation, political instrument, social stratification and identity construction.

social usage. The adjective 'applied' suggests a distinctive form of theatre, a form of efficacy, a commentary on mainstream theatre. As Thompson (2005b) states, 'all terms of applied theatre are as useful as they are problematic' (2005b: 14). The adjective focuses on processes of application, but also loses the sense of theatre as an art-form.

Bertolt Brecht was an innovator in theatre aesthetics in the first half of the twentieth century. Brecht taught us what theatre should do, not which types of theatre should exist: usefulness does not have to preclude enjoyment. The two may exist side by side. 'There is such a thing as pleasurable learning, cheerful militant learning' (Willet, 1974: 73): here, Brecht is describing an *epic* theatre that through artistic and enjoyable means can project a picture of the world offering models of life that help its spectators understand their social environment. This renewed theatrical direction combined the two functions of *instruction* and *entertainment* (Ibid.: 69-72). Brecht's aim was to create 'alienation' by placing the world of the characters on stage at a distance from the spectators' world. Unlike Aristotle's ideas of *mimesis*, translated as imitation or representation (Wooddruff, 2003: 594-604; Winston, 2010: 12-19), Brecht shifted the focus to critical and distanced spectatorship, moving away from involvement. As Brecht wrote (Willet, 1974: 72):

The theatre became an affair for philosophers, but only for such philosophers as wished not just to explain the world but also to change it. So we had philosophy, and we had instruction. And where was the amusement in all that?

Brecht argued that people generally believe that there is a distinct division between amusing oneself and learning. Learning may be useful, but only being amused is pleasant. In defending epic theatre, Brecht pointed out that the kind of learning familiar to us from school must be perceived under the its own conditions and ends: 'It is really a commercial transaction. Knowledge is just a commodity. It is acquired in order to be resold' (Ibid.). Brecht's argument that the contrast between learning and amusement is not laid down by divine rule, and is not a division that has always existed and will always exist will be taken up in the overall argument of this thesis. Furthermore, accounts of Brechtian principles premised on the practice of the different case studies in this research show that the conditions in which the learning of applied theatre takes place and is resold are of central importance.

Richard Schechner (1988) has also challenged the landscape of social and aesthetic worth in the field of performance theory. Schechner proposes that nothing in the performance environment can be discounted as irrelevant to its impact. Schechner links the concepts of community, performance and culture in his articulation of the aesthetics of performance. Schechner's definition of performance is (Schechner, 1988: 72):

The whole constellations of events [...] that take place in/among performers and audience from the time the first spectator enters the field of performance – the precinct where the theatre takes place – to the time the last spectator leaves.

This offers the idea that events can take place physically remotely from where the performance itself occurs. That said, this would then include all the preparatory interactions between the performance place and the spectators, and all activities post-production. All these elements are part of the performance and may affect its socio-political significance, and its potential efficacy (Kershaw, 1992: 21). Schechner intertwines entertainment and efficacy: the presence of one – entertainment – does not preclude the presence of the other – efficacy – within a single performance. This dichotomy also identifies that aesthetic and social purposes cannot act equally in one performance at similar times. I will return to this distinction in the course of this thesis, particularly when exploring the funding policies of the oil company *Petrobrás*, which has similar views on social theatre and aesthetic theatre. The functional links between theatre economics and social structuring are important to analyse, as Schechner proposes that all aspects of the event must be considered, building on the ideological transfer between a community and a theatre organisation in any cultural context (1988: 130-132). Schechner's analysis of entertainment frequently comes up in the Brazilian case study, whereas the efficacy will be discussed in the Cambodian chapter. Schechner also sees different performance forms as existing at different points within the landscape. This will be re-examined when I summarise the different aesthetic models emerging from the case studies.

According to Schechner, Brazilian theatre director and educator Augusto Boal 'eventually created the theatre that Brecht only dreamed of' (Schechner quoted in Delgado, 2002: 10). Boal focussed on an aesthetic theory towards a political intervention. His 'theatre of the oppressed' includes games and multiple techniques in participatory community workshops. Boal also used theatrical forums to reveal problems in the lives of the participants. The collective experiences of the groups are used as forums to find solutions for the

‘oppressed’, bringing about change beyond the workshop. Boal’s work has been criticised for the absence of aesthetics and imagination (Heritage quoted in Boon and Plastow, 1998: 157) and for undervaluing culturally specific practice (Plastow: 2009: 294-296). Jane Plastow argues that although Boal’s techniques are helpful for theatre practices working with ‘communities of the oppressed’, Boal’s impression that he had developed a ‘new universally-applicable system is misleading’ (Ibid.: 294). Moreover, Plastow suggests that following Boal’s ideas uncritically can suppress creativity (Ibid.). Applied theatre practitioner Geri Moriarty, who has worked in Eritrea for several years, argues that Boal’s work is useful, but ‘continuously part of the jig-saw: not the be all and end all of everything’ (Moriarty 2010, pers. comm. 9 Nov.).

Boal, however, attempted to shift aesthetic considerations of theatrical activity to a paradigm by which the testing of what could be achieved lay in the political action that resulted. Boal also offered a terminology to talk about aesthetics; for example, his fundamental hypotheses *osmosis* and *metaxis* explain social and aesthetic processes that emerge in aspects of our lives, including in theatre (Boal, 1995: 39-42).¹⁰ In interviews with Boal’s colleagues, they argue that his aim was to find an aesthetic in theatre that would empower communities struggling within the global economy (Sanctum 2009, pers. comm. 18 Nov.; Opdebeek, 2006). This is emphasised in *The Aesthetics of the Oppressed* (2006), in which Boal argues how capitalism destroys the individual: the globalised world allows an overwhelming proportion of the population to live in poverty while wealthy countries control the economy. This, Boal states, directly affects the health and wellbeing of people in developing countries (2006: 95-103). He argues hopefully that change can be brought about through theatre. Boal’s initial work focussed on participatory theatre activities in developing countries – including Brazil – similar to the focus of this thesis. Furthermore, his work is practised in both Nicaragua and Cambodia; however, in Boal’s hometown Rio de Janeiro, actors of *Nós do Morro* do not welcome his practice. The actors refuse to see themselves as oppressed; they are more interested in using theatre to flourish as actors. Finally, Boal is concerned about global economics and its influence on the world – including theatre. The three case studies each face challenges in terms of the parameters of

¹⁰ Osmosis, or ‘interpenetration’, comes out through repression and seduction; it programmes how individuals perceive reality. In theatre, ‘osmosis takes place, in an intransitive way, from stage to audience. If there is a very strong resistance in the audience to letting itself be de-activated, the show can come to a halt, but it cannot change, because it is predetermined’ (Boal, 1995: 41). The second hypothesis, metaxis, is ‘the state of belonging completely and simultaneously to two different, autonomous worlds: the image of the reality and the reality of the image’ (Ibid.: 43). This hypothesis deals with the artist’s aesthetic notions and their ability to develop images coming from their own reality.

the globalised community; that is, in tax-reduced sponsorship from global corporations, in funding decisions of international aid agencies, and through global cultural policies of national governments.

More recent key works that interrogate how the landscape of social and aesthetic worth might be understood within the field of applied theatre are James Thompson's *Performance Affects Applied Theatre and the End of Effect* (2009), particularly, Thompson's use of Jacques Rancière's 'sensible fabric', and Shannon Jackson's *Social works, Performing Art, Supporting Publics* (2011). Thompson tackles the complicated consequences of Schechner's words 'efficacy' and 'entertainment' by claiming that 'concentrating on effects implies that the work has become firmly located within one plait of that braid' (2009: 130). While attempting to blur Brecht's terms of *entertainment* and *instruction* and Schechner's braid, Thompson argues that theatre should focus on affect rather than effect. By framing applied theatre practice in this way, 'both in execution of projects that communicate or teach and in the interpretation of those projects that report on effects, problem solved and things learnt' (2009: 111, original in brackets), the work will awaken individuals to possibilities beyond themselves (Ibid.). Thompson concludes that compassion is vital for social change. Although applied theatre might appear insignificant, sensitivity and engagement are necessary to keep its political commitment to its capacity to care (Ibid.). Focussing on the aesthetics and politics of performance in sites of disaster, post-conflict and crisis, Thompson's thoughts are of interest to my writing in and around such settings. Moreover, Thompson's arguments demonstrate the significance of compassion and sensitivity, which support my observations of applied theatre's failure in Cambodian detention centres. The absence of passionate engagement in these centres has reduced political passion's capacity to care, resulting in a lack of aesthetic quality.

Thompson's use of Rancière's ideas resonates with Brecht's thoughts on the social and aesthetic landscape. Thompson draws on Rancière in a discussion of the possible disruption of 'sensible fabric' (Thompson, 2009: 174). For this research, Rancière's concept of the 'distribution of the sensible fabric' is significant. In *The Politics of Aesthetics* Rancière states that the concept discloses who can have a part in 'what is common to the community based on what they do and on the time and space in which this activity is performed' (Rancière, 2006: 12). Having a particular social, cultural or economic profession thereby determines the capability to take charge of what is shared in the community. It

defines who can participate and what is visible in society (Ibid.: 13), as distribution is ‘a relation of inclusion and exclusion’ (Ibid.: 34). There is a pre-existing order of practices. This all characterises Rancière’s understanding of art and political practices. Furthermore, the theory adds to the idea of dirt and ‘matter out of place’ (Douglas, 1966: 35) used by social anthropologist Mary Douglas, which will be employed throughout this research. Douglas considers who or what is in the place allocated to them, and who or what is out of place and will be further explored in the following chapters. Returning to Rancière, who states that artistic equality is comparable to the different phases of social and political regimes.¹¹ He is careful, however, to clarify that this is a matter of analogy; the similarities between the competition of artistic boundaries and struggles for political equality are difficult to draw. Rancière’s thinking offers a way to describe affect as a political act: ‘artistic activities are ways of doing and making that intervene in the general distribution of ways of doing and making’ (Rancière quoted in Rockhill and Watts, 2009: 90), suggesting that ethical affect and political acts work within the *fabric*. Thompson calls Rancière’s political art working in an affective register ‘a negotiation between *affect* and *effect*’ (2009: 175). Rancière’s theory as used by Thompson offers a place to suggest that the applied theatre practices examined in this thesis are already politically engaged because of the participants’ contexts.

Shannon Jackson draws attention to theatrical and visual artworks that challenge the blurry landscape of the aesthetic and social, rather than looking at how art does something for or to a public. Jackson proposes the term *infrastructural aesthetic* to recognise the significance of socially engaged practice. Economic structures and the so-called superstructure are terms that come from Karl Marx. As Jackson notes, Marx theorised ‘the base’, where economic and material structures act in a determining relation with the superstructure (Jackson, 2011: 34), and the base has both a social and aesthetic character. Jackson argues that social works aim ‘not only to take a community stance on the arts but also to take an aesthetic stance on community engagement’ (Ibid.: 212). The importance of socially engaged work is that it prompts a ‘reflection of the supporting infrastructures of both aesthetic objects and living beings’ (Ibid.: 39). This is exactly the idea that comes from works that explore socially engaged art within visual arts disciplines, for example Grant Kester (2011) and Claire

¹¹ Rancière’s different aesthetic regimes are the ‘ethical regime’, the ‘representational regime’, and the ‘aesthetic regime’. The aesthetic regime asserts ‘the absolute singularity of art and, at the same time, destroy[s] any pragmatic criterion for isolating this singularity’ (2006: 23).

Bishop (2012), who pursue models for social change and offer viewpoints about the transformative role of the arts.

Opposition to the victory of neoliberalism (privatisation and free market policies) are central to Kester's and Bishop's theory. Kester argues that the struggle against neoliberalism should be compensated through the use of dialogical art: offering artists the possibility to gradually develop solutions to socio-political problems through continued dialogues with specific communities. Bishop also attempts to find standards for assessing participatory practices and pursuing aesthetic criteria (2012: 28). Kester, however, has found in the capacity of works the possibility to enhance the agency of participants without artistic backgrounds. Her definition of the aesthetic is drawn from the writings of Rancière, who argues that art must sustain a certain autonomy to oppose political and economic forces imposing a misleading social agreement (2011: 27-29). Debates are emerging within visual arts on socially engaged art; however, for the purposes of this research I will focus on theatre scholars, and in particular scholars who have explored theatre in development settings. Returning to Shannon Jackson, performance is a suitable form in which to study the connections and tensions of art and the social because of its communal aspects. The term *infrastructural aesthetic* is relevant for this research because Marx's ideas of economic structures will be described with regard to the first case study. This research argues that it is the control of the whole social and economic regime in which the aesthetic sits. In particular, the Brazil case study's performance exhibits a tension between the dominance of the upper class and the *favela* dwellers, through which economic aspects are visible.

Although the field of applied theatre in 2014 is still grappling with the term 'aesthetics', it appears that a turn towards aesthetics in applied theatre is being accepted. During my fieldwork, audiences and practitioners argued that the political and social imperatives of the works had dulled the aesthetic. It is obvious, however, that the tension between aesthetics and politics remains problematic. Despite this, the concern the topic attracts shows that it inhabits a pivotal role for applied theatre and practitioners, one that must be acknowledged rather than ignored. This research therefore adds to this debate, questions its implications and analyses the practice of aesthetics in development settings.

Return to affect and beauty

Amidst the debate as to what validates and constitutes the critical indicators and evidence-based outcomes of applied theatre practice, there has been a recent focus on aesthetics, beauty and affect within the scholarly field.¹² This focus has not been exclusive to theatre and performance, but has resonated across disciplines. In the past decade, scholars in diverse areas of intellectual and political thought, including theatre and performance studies, visual arts and philosophy have turned their attention to questions of affect, feeling and sentiment and are questioning their functions. Using various research methods coming from visual arts, psychology, philosophy and anthropology, scholars such as Susan Feagin, Erin Hurley, Elaine Scarry, James Thompson, Joe Winston, and Janet Wolff have explored the affective potential and power of theatre. This reintroduced focus on one of theatre's most essential purposes, that is, to affect people by means of their senses (Hurley and Warner, 2012: 99-100), could result from several factors, including artistic transformations in Western performance since the 1980s, such as interdisciplinary work and post-dramatic theatre (Hurley, 2010); the events of September 11, 2001 and what has changed since then (Winston, 2010: 4; Wolff, 2008: 1); and the influence of globalising processes on contemporary theatre work. The common concerns underpinning the affective shift are perhaps positioned as a rejection of the utilitarian or 'evidence-based' rhetoric that comes from the neoliberal economic movement, which in turn has directly affected theatre for development. Another concern could be the meaning of affect in the face of rapid global shifts.

What follows is an account of the work of scholars who have shown interest in the aesthetic of theatre practice in the last decade, *how* they have articulated their attention and *how* my research adds to these developments. The major themes this body of work raises are around the role of affect in applied and global settings in theatre. Moreover, these scholars raise their concerns about the absence of beautiful and pleasurable values within contemporary arts. As the Nicaraguan applied theatre practitioners forcefully argued that the aesthetic value of their work was pivotal, James Thompson states (2009: 7):

¹² See for example, John Armstrong (2004) *The Secret Power of Beauty: Why Happiness is in the Eye of the Beholder*; Peg Zeglin Brand (2000) *Beauty Matters*; Susan L. Feagin (ed.) (2007) *Global Theories of the Art and Aesthetics*; Crispi Sartwell (2004) *Six Names of Beauty*; Elaine Scarry (2001) *On Beauty and being Just*; James Thompson (2009) *Performance affects. Applied theatre and the end of effect*; Joe Winston (2010) *Beauty and Education*; and Janet Wolff (2008) *The Aesthetics of Uncertainty*.

By working solely in the realm of effect, where performance communicates messages or concentrates on identifiable social or educational impact, the practice becomes restricted and weakened. By failing to recognise affect – bodily responses, sensations and aesthetic pleasure – much of the power of performance can be missed.

Thompson therefore claims that applied theatre is ‘limited if it concentrates solely on effects – identifiable social outcomes, messages or impacts – and forgets the radical potential of the freedom to enjoy beautiful radiant things’ (Ibid.: 6). The phrase ‘beautiful radiant things’ comes from Russian-American anarchist Emma Goldman’s biography *Living my Life*, in which she explains that her enthusiasm and joy were vital for her anarchistic ideals (Goldmann in Thompson, 2009: 1). Thompson is concerned about the emphasis on the ‘applied’ aspects of the practice, and questions how the importance of the term ‘theatre’ within the work has been located.

Joe Winston has developed similar arguments within the contexts of drama in schools and the broader field of education. Both Winston and Thompson discuss the artistic significance of theatre used for social purposes. In his book *Beauty and Education* (2010), Winston states that ‘in arguments for the educational value of the arts, words such as culture, creativity, quality and excellence are common, but beauty is entirely absent’ (Winston, 2010: 1). Moreover, he argues that beauty is a common human value that should be considered in the classroom, as beauty can inform what teachers do in progressive ways. Winston contends that particularly since the events of September 11, 2001, the journey to find those values that we hold in common has become more urgent, as well as the need to understand the ‘political realities that mark us out as different’ (Ibid.: 4). Winston later quotes John Ruskin’s envisioned relationship between beauty and creativity as an ethical one (Ibid.: 86). Ruskin’s vision purports to unite the poor and the powerful. He argues that art is the supreme cultural expression, having a social, moral and economic purpose: a purpose of helping people experience their lives intensively, and satisfying people’s spiritual needs by bringing them into close contact with the patterns of nature. Ruskin sees art as the ultimate expression of this work (Ruskin, 1849). Despite the radically different geographical and socio-political contexts, Winston’s and Thompson’s arguments resonate through my analysis of international practice in Cambodia and become relevant particularly within my discussion of the absence of an aesthetic terminology within the work of *Phare Ponleu Selpak* in Cambodia. Winston’s and Thompson’s claims will be questioned in the following chapters, and will form a part of the debate within the empirical work.

Janet Wolff and Elaine Scarry are both significant contributors to understanding the concerns that Winston mentions, and Wolff's scholarly work is particularly important for this research. Wolff defends in her book *The Aesthetics of Uncertainty* 'the return to beauty' [...] 'and to make the case that the aesthetic is not the enemy of feminist politics or art practice' (Wolff, 2008: 29). Wolff recognises that what has changed since September 11, 2001 must be addressed (Ibid.: 3); Wolff's book participates in 'the challenge amongst political and moral philosophers today to establish a new discourse of value without foundation in certainties or universals' (Ibid.: 5). I agree with Wolff that aesthetics has been confronted by the same challenge. Wolff's participation in this debate using uncertainty and judgment in aesthetic discourse, including themes of 'indirection, obliqueness and marginality' (Ibid.), is thus very useful for my research. Wolff explains that the frameworks of the viewer are disturbed by some of the artworks Wolff is looking at, which maps onto the more general disturbance of our critical framework, and the broader social and economic context. Moreover, Wolff suggests that essential for any useful theory of uncertain aesthetics is a sociological account paying careful attention to the situation and structure of the communities involved in aesthetic discourse (Ibid.: 23). Wolff concludes that art in other cultures is not comparable with art in general, and therefore proposes to 'initiate dialogue based on recognition of the social production of that aesthetic (that is based on reflexivity)' (Ibid.: 38). At the same time, the criteria for the judgment would be made explicit, 'whether formal (composition, line and color, innovation), extrinsic (content) or more subjective (beauty, connotation, pleasure)' (Ibid.: 38). In fact, working from Corbett and Perry's *English Art 1860-1914*, Wolff makes a very strong argument through their specific complaint (in Wolff, 2008: 35):

There is no reason to assume that an account derived from the circumstances of one culture will adequately describe the conditions of another. Moreover, judging the achievements of one culture according to the norms of another is a certain recipe for missing what is characteristic and significant in the culture that you intend to explain.

Wolff makes two important points. Firstly, she proposes a dialogic account that does not insist on the admiration of the dominant aesthetic but is instead based on social production and reflexivity. This allows any art-form to exist and be valued through social contingency and reflexivity. The second point Wolff makes is about the explicitness of aesthetic judgment criteria. Both Wolff's arguments correspond with the initial arguments of the

Nicaraguan applied theatre practitioners on how they wanted to be judged on their *teatro popular* practice. More generally, judging the achievements of applied theatre according to the norms of mainstream theatre will fail, as it will always miss the characteristics of the applied theatre practice being judged.

Elaine Scarry (2006) develops a strong case for the educational power of beauty, particularly in relation to social justice education. Scarry suggests that beauty urges us towards a concern for justice and the diminution of pain, which she relates to both beauty and justice through their communal synonym, 'fairness'. Scarry argues that in societies where there is no justice, either because the notion is not yet conceived or because it has been withdrawn, 'beautiful things hold steadily visible the manifest good of equality and balance' (Ibid.: 97). Furthermore, Scarry claims that one of the key features of beauty is that beauty is lifesaving. Scarry states, 'Beauty quickens. [...] It makes the heart beat faster, it makes life more vivid, animated living, worth living' (Ibid.: 24), possibly inspired by or derived from Dostoevsky's maxim in *The Idiot* (1868-1869) that 'beauty will save the world', through which the author not only demonstrates that beauty alone cannot save the world, but also argues that beauty and suffering can capture the heart of the viewer for reasons other than sexual desire or romance. One of Scarry's primary insights is similar. The claim that beauty saves lives can be explained by the perception of beauty as a greeting, making people momentarily lose their capacity to harm. When people enter the presence of something beautiful, it greets them and welcomes them. Scarry argues that if you are welcome, people are pleased that you are there; it is not something that only you want, but that the world that you have entered also wants. Scarry's summarises that 'the moment of perceiving something beautiful confers on the perceiver the gift of life; [...] the moment of perceiving beauty also confers on the object the gift of life' (2006: 69). Many practitioners of *Nós do Morro* in Brazil stated in informal meetings that the company had saved their lives; the theatrical encounters had curtailed their involvement in the gangs and drugs wars of the favelas. Scarry describes the meaning of Matisse's Nice paintings in her life – 'a perfect cross between an anemone flower and a palm frond' (Ibid.: 33) – and gracefully demonstrates that Matisse's purpose was never to save lives, but to make his work 'so serenely beautiful that when one came upon it, all problems would subside' (Ibid.). I found in Scarry's descriptions close similarities to the poetic language used by practitioners and audiences living in miserable circumstances in each case study when describing their practice and performances.

Global aesthetics

Susan Feagin notes the strong connection between aesthetic and social arts practices around the globe in her edited publication *Global Theories of the Arts and Aesthetics* (2007), which concerns itself with the arts that have been ignored or marginalised by Anglo-American aesthetics, focussing on the content of artistic practices in Vietnam, China and the Islamic world (2007: 1). This publication is useful because Feagin immediately points out that the analytical tradition of aesthetics in the West is not comparable with any intellectual tradition or philosophical methodology elsewhere. Feagin therefore does not situate these art practices unilaterally; she brings together papers that ‘stretch the Western imagination, potentially enriching and extending theories of art and the aesthetic’ (Ibid.). What is fascinating *and* worrying at the same time about the practices in Feagin’s publication and those observed during my fieldwork is that the characteristics of aesthetics are revealed not only through the conflicts that develop within traditional forms of practice, but also through the pressure for these practices to become ‘artistically’ worthwhile, as Noël Carroll in Feagin suggests, and thus more dependent on international economic and political processes (Carroll, 2007: 135-140). What seems to be changing today is that a unified and even internationalised arts practice (and, following this research, applied theatre practice) with shared interests and outcomes appears to be emerging across the globe. The premise of Feagin’s edited collection is thus a call for a more nuanced understanding of art, including the identification of the relevant features of art practices and their relationship to broader social structures and the characteristics of a culture or community, whether that be Chinese avant-garde art, Japanese aesthetics or any other practice. Carroll takes a step towards the process of increasing knowledge on this complicated topic in the ‘new’ global world. One of the major threads in the following chapters is the extent to which the revealing consequences of globalisation on the arts exposed here – that is, the possible future unification of arts practices due to political, economic and/or cultural causes and pressures – conditions the practice of applied theatre. Drawing on Feagin’s and Carroll’s propositions, the following questions will be the starting points for the three main chapters of this research: to what extent is the aesthetic of applied theatre embedded in the cultural context of the different sites? To what extent do economic agendas influence or restrict the aesthetic dimensions of the theatre companies in the different contexts? And to what extent do global and local political institutions and the aesthetic concepts of the three arts organisations interact?

Development and globalisation

When we discuss *developing countries*, the debate mostly involves problems confined to developments contexts, including poor economic performance, the never-ending need for aid, political instability characterised by wars, coups, revolutions or guerrilla movements fighting against the authorities, and financial debt (Arnold, 1994: xiii). Where exactly to draw the line between developing and developed countries is unclear, and this might suggest that ‘a developing and developed country dichotomy is too restrictive and that a classification system with more than two categories could better capture the diversity in development outcomes across countries’ (Nielsen, 2011: 4). Following Nielsen, an agreement on how to classify countries based on their development level must consist of a clearly articulated idea of what constitutes development (Ibid.). This section of the thesis immediately introduces a different register – numbers, investment, development and economics. This thesis explores and signals this move and the juxtaposition between the different registers of the field of theatre for development.

This section also introduces Amartya Sen’s development model (1999) that includes categories that capture the diversity in development outcomes across countries. The first category of this model, *vast numbers of very poor*, poses the question of what constitutes acceptable minimum living conditions. Sen’s humanistic approach suggests that development increases freedom by eliminating ‘*unfreedoms*’ (Sen in Nielsen, 2011: 6, my italics), for example dictatorship, violence and hunger, which leave people with little chance of prosperity. The next two categories are *lack of services* and *uneducated people*. An acceptable minimum economic standard includes housing, nutritious food, basic education and health services. The fifth category is an economic classification and refers to *per capita* income, which is calculated by measuring all sources of income in one location and divided it by the entire population. This classification is particularly important for one of the case studies, Brazil, a well-developed agricultural, manufacturing, and mining country, its economy overshadowing those of all other South American countries, and currently expanding in world markets (Brainard and Martinez-Diaz, 2009: 1-2). Brazil is already the sixth-biggest global economy, having transcended the United Kingdom at the beginning of 2012. Moreover, by 2050 it will likely move into fourth place, overtaking countries such as Germany and Japan. Ten years ago Jim O’Neill, an economist at multinational investment bank Goldman Sachs Group, developed the grouping acronym BRIC referring to Brazil, Russia, India and China, which are considered to be in similar situations of economic

development (Cheng et al, 2007: 144). It should be noted that the BRIC countries count for 24% of the world's combined gross national product, while ten years ago this number was only 11%. O'Neill speculated that by 2050 these four economies would be wealthier than most of the current major economic power.¹³ Although Brazil has strong development potential and can therefore be perceived as a developed country, extreme poverty exists: 5% of the population owns 85% of the wealth, resulting in poverty, social inequality and developmental needs.¹⁴ Therefore, the five categories constructing Sen's classification system are necessary to understand the development contexts within this research.

A wider development significant to my exploration of the aesthetics of applied theatre in international community contexts is globalisation – globalising processes and their contemporary consequences. The world is rapidly developing into interconnectedness: a shared social space created through technological and economic tools, movements and forces, migration patterns, and transnational and inter-organisational networks. The twenty-first century is characterised by moving cities and nations, an increase in – willing or unwilling – human traffic between cultures and nations, various schools of thought and beliefs becoming increasingly interwoven, and interconnectedness forming a part of everyday life (Baulch, 2001; Knowles, 2010: 3-5). However, for the practitioners I have interviewed in developing countries, these globalising processes only emphasise their own poverty and isolation. In Nicaragua and Cambodia, the terms 'global North' and 'global South', defined as economically sustainable and developed societies and the poorer nations around the globe respectively, are continuously used in funding applications for theatre practitioners. The importance of a positive global image for the upcoming sports events in Rio de Janeiro has influenced the work and living conditions of the artists in the *favelas*. *Favela*-dwellers are directly affected in this global shift; their houses are being demolished and their areas redeveloped for sports-related purposes.

The term 'globalisation' lacks an exact and clear definition. The term refers as much to an approach of thinking about the world as it does to a definition of the dynamics of political, economic and social relations within it (Kofman and Youngs, 1996: 1). Scholars Ian Goldin

¹³ It is important to note that Goldman Sachs does not refer to these countries as a political alliance (like the European Union) or a formal trading association, but they have the potential to form a powerful economic bloc (Cheng, et al, 2007: 144).

¹⁴ See for example the Dutch Foreign Affairs website: www.minbuza.nl/brazil

and Kenneth Reinert summarise the most important criterion of globalisation as development in all its forms (2007: x). They offer an understanding of the main dimensions of economic globalisation and their impact on poverty and development through five key global economic channels affecting development: ideas, trade, finance, aid and migration (2007: 2). Ugandan policy maker, activist and scholar Yash Tandon includes culture, conflict and politics in debates around globalisation (2009: 4). Although I agree with the weighting of these different phenomena, as mentioned earlier, for this research I will focus on culture, politics and economics as the foundations for my chapters. The consequences of culture, finance and aid, and politics on globalising processes are visible in each of the case studies. These consequences also condition the economy of the countries at large. Cambodia is an aid-dependent country as is Nicaragua, unlike Brazil. The Nicaraguan and Cambodian communities' ability to have agency and make decisions is limited because the broader economy is dependent on aid.

Although the aesthetics of applied theatre is the main focus of this thesis, international economics is a pivotal area of research. As concluded above, it is impossible to grasp the aesthetics of applied theatre without understanding the social and economic regime in which it sits. Furthermore, the research process repeatedly highlighted a pressing need to better understand the relations between aesthetics and economics, both historically and contemporaneously. The discussion that follows is an exercise to foreground particular conceptual categories relevant to the investigation of aesthetic notions in theatre in developing countries in a globalised world. Some see globalising processes as predominantly *cultural* (Appadurai, 1996; Cowen, 2004), an exchange and hybridisation of cultures, which influences local, national and regional cultures through the spread of transnational corporations. This notion involves three movements: flows of cultural goods, flows of people and flows of investments and knowledge (Anheier and Raj Isar, 2007: 9). Some thinkers, like Arjun Appadurai, claim that nationalism has been replaced by alternative forms of belonging arising out of the new dynamics of time and space compressions afforded by globalising processes. By using the term 'ethnoscape', Appadurai is able to express new pathways and dimensions of transnational social relations that surpass the primacy previously accorded to national affiliations (Gilbert and Lo, 2007: 7-10). Moreover, the politics of location and dislocation conceptualised as borders, margins and hybridity articulate a diversity of political, cultural and artistic-aesthetic meanings of space and place (Nicholson, 2005: 11). These meanings have been emphasised through

cultural globalising processes (Rebellato, 2009: 5), and transform previously stable forms of everyday life and of identity and belonging. Two major conceptual aspects of this viewpoint are (i) cultural identities, patterns and structures; and (ii) cultural processes, communication and flows (Anheier and Raj Isar, 2007: 11). The term ‘ethnoscape’ will be used as a theoretical and analytical framework throughout the research to understand the different moving groups and shifts influencing the aesthetic discourses of each case study, and will be described in more detail later in this chapter.

Others view globalisation primarily as a *political* phenomenon (Baylis et al., 2008; Edkins and Zehfus, 2008; Iriye, 2002) in which the rise of various international non-governmental organisations, as well as political institutions like the European Union (EU) and the United Nations (UN) has led to a new era of global membership transcending the assumption that the political borders of nations determine the nature of politics and experience (Amrith and Sluga, 2008: 252). Within the post-Second World War era, the creation of the UN, a ‘global police’ within a system of international humanitarian law, has led to a new relationship between local sovereignties and international policies. This globalising process has increased the central importance for nations to position themselves within the international community. The interference of political activity operating at a transnational level sometimes restricts national and local governments, resulting in each case study having to negotiate the complex arts funding and sponsorship policies of the international humanitarian community for applied theatre projects.

Finally, for others, globalisation is an expansion of the concept of *economics* (Ellwood, 2001; Steil and Hinds, 2009). On a visceral level, this viewpoint was captured when I observed an adolescent in Cambodia wearing Nike shoes manufactured by Ralph Lauren, illustrating Ellwood’s identification (2001) of ‘the integration of the global economy’ [...] ‘the dismantling of trade barriers and the expanding political and economic power of multinational corporations’ (2001: 12). The birth of the neoliberal era came when Margaret Thatcher (UK) and Ronald Reagan (US) adopted the formula for economic progress by allowing companies – multinational corporations and transnational private associations, amongst others – to shift their operations to anywhere around the globe in order to reduce costs and enlarge revenues for investors (Ibid.: 19). Thatcher resolved the decline of London banking – due to overregulation – via free market doctrines of unregulated competition. The consequences were major. London strengthened rapidly, becoming the

most significant financial centre globally. Economic liberalisation was imposed to achieve greater efficiency and effectiveness that would translate to economic development. The economic view of globalising processes will be considered in the discussion of the role of financial drivers within the cultural landscape. The economic interference of multinational company *Petrobrás* within the case study of *Nós do Morro* in Brazil gives a clear example of how global finance affects the aesthetic concerns and global image of this theatre company. Following the key political and economic aspects of globalisation, an intangible asset for nations, including Brazil, is the ‘branding’ of their nation worldwide.

Ethnoscape as a theoretical framework

This research looks at the relationship between economic drivers, global governance and aesthetics from Arjun Appadurai’s cultural anthropological standpoint, encapsulating this sense of “moving” cultural identity by introducing the term *ethnoscape*¹⁵ (1991). By ethnoscape, Appadurai explains (1991:192):

I mean the landscape of persons who make up the shifting world in which we live: tourists, immigrants, refugees, exiles, guest-workers, and other moving groups and persons constitute an essential feature of the world and appear to affect the politics of and between nations in a hitherto unprecedented degree.

The term ethnoscape approaches the question of how to address the complexities of identity and culture in an interpenetrated and cosmopolitan world, rather than one restricted by geography. ‘Ethnoscape’ is a neologism from two Greek root words, referring to people (ethno), rather than to ethnicity, and to landscape (scape); combining both terms offers an intercultural and transnational distribution of correlated people (Appadurai, 1991; 1996). Appadurai introduced the term ethnoscape during the 1990s while searching for a way to analyse and describe an intercultural and transnational phenomenon arriving from global changes in society, where new cultural and territorial reproductions of group identity were appearing within the globalised world. Consequently, Appadurai states: ‘as groups migrate, regroup in new locations, reconstruct their histories, and reconfigure their ethnic ‘projects’, the ethno in ethnography takes on slippery, non-localized quality’ (1991:191). During the 1990s, anthropologists and ethnographic scholars (for example Clifford and Marcus, 1986; Fardon, 1995; Rabinow, 1986; and Strathern, 1995) recognised that the

¹⁵ ‘Ethnoscape’ is one of the five dimensions of global cultural flows, Appadurai argues (1990: 95), which brings together ‘the building blocks of the *imagined worlds* of persons and groups spread around the globe’: ethnoscapas, mediascapas, technoscapas, finanscapas and ideoscapas.

character of the local and the trans-local were changing due to the broader context of international influences, in which even the most restricted and limited of locales was operating. In other words, the production of locality had become a constant struggle, because different social actors were involved in ongoing negotiations to define and produce locality. Appadurai mentions ‘the woof of human motion, as more persons and groups deal with the realities of having to move, or the fantasies of wanting to move’ (Appadurai, 1991: 192).

Appadurai’s ethnoscape is a useful framework for this thesis, because it attends to the range of social, political and economic groups involved in communities around the globe. This framework considers hierarchies of power, cultural engagement and the economic and material conditions in which questions of aesthetics are explored. For example, by determining the hierarchy of the different cultural players in Nicaragua, including *teatro popular* practitioners, NGOs and national cultural policy makers, we can draw out in which ways the power relations control aesthetic freedom within applied theatre. In order to understand aesthetics in applied theatre, we cannot detach from the ‘ethno’, which refers to something attached to the ‘human’ shapes and flows of ‘life’ through economic, social and cultural channels. Moreover, this framework helps me to pursue questions of aesthetics because the recognition that there are no universal aesthetic values that surpass the contingencies of time and place or the interests and investments of diverse social groups requires a clear description of the space and groups involved in the aesthetic arena.

‘Ethnoscape’ is an adequate framework – subject to its perspective – with which to trace, analyse and describe global movements and their consequences for society and its inhabitants. This framework has been chosen for this research because it is a model that offers identities beyond the conventional ‘home’ nation, a model of scholarly praxis that is aware of the researcher’s own positioning and the process of scholarship as itself necessarily within the context of the international community, while also being effective in attempting to understand applied theatre practices in their original locations. The term ethnoscape fits the enquiry most closely amidst all other concepts, as on the one hand it enforces a redefinition of subject matters beyond their isolated cultural communities and, on the other hand, it allows us to understand the fluid and irregular shapes caused by human groups or networks and their cultural expressions linked to international capital flows. In addition, the term indicates that collections of people are not the same from every

angle, but are instead influenced by political, historical and linguistic contexts. This process has an impact on group identity and dynamics, but also on the notions of cultural anthropology. Geography or country of origin is no longer a direct sign of culture with the shifting ethnoscape. Furthermore, within this research I attempt to provide a model for multi-layered, broad and deep kinds of analysis. Ethnoscape offers the specific kinds of attention that I argue are needed within the field of applied theatre, and also the specific directions in which this attention needs to be focused. For example, the attention to funding streams and the broader economic contexts of projects, the attention to the extraordinary dilemmas these economic contexts cause for arts projects in Cambodia, and the tensions and conflicts within communities of practice in Nicaragua.

The ethnoscape will be introduced further in Chapter Three – in the context of Cambodia – to unravel the different groups involved in the complex community of *Phare Ponleu Selpak*. While Chapter Two will lay out the impact of the role of international and economic players in the field, Chapter Three will examine these influences by using the ethnoscape. It will provide a deeper understanding of the complexity of the fluidity of the moving groups and their aesthetic practices within this multi-arts centre. The concept will then be explored further in the last chapter that deals with Nicaragua. This thesis is about the ethnoscape as a whole – the complete social-economic picture – and how aesthetic understandings are conditioned by it.

1.5. The methodological lens

Justification of three case studies

If there is growing evidence of an ‘aesthetic turn’ in applied theatre, it is important to consider the meaning embedded in the term ‘aesthetic’ from its deployment in accounts of contemporary practice in different development settings. Three theatre companies have been used as case studies: *Nós do Morro* in Brazil, *Phare Ponleu Selpak* in Cambodia and *Movimiento Teatro Popular Sin Fronteras* in Nicaragua. These three companies articulate, in different ways and to different extents, a social change agenda inside a context-specific understanding of aesthetics – the research attempts to critically explore the significance of aesthetic concepts in these practices. Since applied theatre is a very fluid term, this thesis presents a variety of theatre organisations that are related to the broader applied theatre field. For example, a theatre production of *The Government Inspector* by Russian playwright Nikolai Gogol by *Nós do Morro* in Rio de Janeiro, a Shakespeare project by *Movimiento Teatro*

Popular Sin Fronteras in Nicaragua or a theatre performance of Jean Genet's *The Maids* by *Phare Ponleu Selpak* in Cambodia may not seem to be applied theatre, but the context of the work within an educational performance and a community setting positions it as part of applied theatre work.

The following section is framed as a discussion about why I looked to theatre in development settings as a useful domain for exploring the questions arising above. Theatre for development – one of many forms of applied theatre – is used in the settings of ‘development support communication and/or in the field of adult education and training’ (Epskamp, 2006: 11). Tim Prentki argues that theatre for development serves developmental aims available for development agencies to improve the lives of those whose material conditions leave them ‘vulnerable to hostile, predatory forces, both natural and human’ (Prentki, 1998: 419). The art-form is an instrument in the struggle to help such people become subjects of their own histories. The concepts ‘theatre’ and ‘development’ widen the field to any form of drama within the theatre context, even mainstream theatre performances and new literary works. As Feagin and Prentki argue, distinct cultural traditions and aesthetic practices in development settings come face-to-face with global, social and economic agendas, which makes theatre for development a domain in which social and aesthetic tensions are explicit (Feagin, 2007; Prentki and Preston, 2009). The neoliberal economic movement, globalising processes and political agendas often directly affect applied theatre practice. Epskamp notes accurately (2006: xvi):

The ever more overt discrepancies opening up between the neoliberal economic agenda by which all the governments of the world are more or less enthralled, and the framework of universal human rights to which these same governments subscribe but on which they cannot deliver within the dominant economic structures.

These contexts map onto the historical threads and influences of applied theatre I identified above. That is, they are some of the most important sites for exploring aesthetics, because the combination of social, aesthetic and economic factors they exhibit bring the contradictions of each corner of this triad to light, thus opening them up for analysis and interrogation.

The initial research questions originated in Nicaragua, where this thesis starts and ends. It was pivotal for the research about Nicaragua, its *teatro popular* and its aesthetic concepts to

develop a more comprehensive understanding of the practice of aesthetics in applied theatre in development settings. The perspective thus broadened. This shift was not entirely foreshadowed by my academic curiosity. It was unquestionably also a result of having spent an extended amount of time in Latin America – particularly in Nicaragua – where I immediately sympathised deeply with those who attempted to achieve equal rights for theatre practitioners. I was astonished at the determination and courage shown by many Nicaraguans, some facing incomprehensible problems and living in horrendous circumstances. I have been witness to the most sophisticated theatre shows and celebratory performances, which created conditions for new ways of knowing and learning. Despite the practitioners' terrible living conditions, they were concerned with aesthetic quality. This fascination remained with me and made me want to write a thesis about applied theatre in other developing countries.

The other two companies were identified because they are also located in development contexts. I aimed to explore how aesthetics works in different but similar contexts affected by global flows around humanitarian aid and development issues by finding two theatre companies as case studies to compare with the Nicaraguan case. This thesis explores what arises from placing international community contexts side-by-side, analysing their differences rather than making generalisations. Through this process, we can learn how aesthetic notions are embedded in each culture. The Nicaraguan case study *Movimiento Teatro Popular Sin Fronteras* as a distinct aesthetic practice has been pivotal for my research. The two other theatre companies are used as comparative case studies to understand the landscape of aesthetic and social worth.

I conducted a review on the Internet to locate theatre companies working in discourses around development, community and global contexts and social theatre practice. My search terms were 'applied theatre', 'social theatre', 'theatre for development', 'community theatre' and 'theatre in developing countries'. My exclusion criteria were dangerous countries in conflict settings because the ability to conduct safe ethnographic fieldwork was vital. From search engines and applied theatre literature, I identified a total of twenty-five theatre companies from developing countries all over the world. The Internet review illustrated the frequent use of the terms 'desire', 'fantasy', 'pleasure of the senses', 'artistic value/quality' and 'cultural preservation' to articulate the emergence of aesthetic considerations. The terms 'artistic', 'pleasure', 'value' and 'quality' were mentioned on almost every website,

while the terms ‘beauty’ and ‘aesthetics’ were observed only once or twice. The theatre companies identified from a search using community and development frameworks all articulated aesthetic values, couched in terms such as ‘artistic’, ‘pleasure’ and ‘value’. These terms construct a universal sense of value for articulating their aesthetic notions in the form of a certain value. Using the term ‘artistic’ from Anthony Jackson’s perspective, the practitioners seemed more attentive to their own artwork than to the experience of the spectators, or the ‘aesthetic’. In addition, the theatre companies articulated their intentions as a tension between *fantasy* and *utility* and between *individual desire* and *collective purposes*. On the theatre companies’ website and in personal letters from theatre directors, the following sentences are representative:

‘We are seeking to create an equal world’; ‘Our practice is a ‘medley’ of social, artistic and ordinary languages’; ‘As artists we are concerned with our freedom of artistry’; ‘Artistic aims usually result in quarrels with agencies’; ‘Our aim is to help and support the communities’; ‘We are seeking to create a more beautiful world’; ‘I am dreaming of making artistic plays for my community’; ‘My desire is to explain the problems of the society in an artistic way’; ‘I would like to become a good actor or director in the near future’ (Websites and personal letters between Jan. 2009-Jun. 2009).

These sentences illustrate that some companies value their artistic intentions in a broader context. This context includes their community and spectators.¹⁶ Other companies do not seem to take any notice of aesthetic concepts and write solely about the instrumental use of their theatre practice. The theatre companies overall refer to five distinct aesthetic concepts. Firstly, each theatre company has a particular way of constructing the visual appearance of the performance in set and staging. The second concept involves the craft of acting. As mentioned above, the term ‘craftsmanship’ is used more often in contemporary theories. However, companies use the term craftsmanship particularly in relation to the quality of acting. Some companies define acting as specific actions or speech as well as movements and gestures that create transformations of the performer into the character. Other companies are more implicit in their definition of acting quality; however, they mention valorising the skill. This concept also involves the performers’ thinking. The artists seem to have an equal voice in the artistic process, and this is also expressed on the companies’ websites. This leads to the third concept, the craft of rehearsal processes. These processes are defined by trust, commitment and engagement. Directors of theatre

¹⁶ A general footnote is my awareness of the risk that theatre companies may purely use their websites as an advertisement for development agencies. In order to restrict this bias, I have attempted to include the information I have received in personal letters from theatre companies.

companies expressed in personal letters that they have high expectations of the performers because the performances are usually based on sensitive stories coming from their communities. The storytelling and the nature of the artists influence the dynamics of the rehearsal processes. Fourthly, the concept of audience response is linked to the importance of the stories' content. The spectators are defined as participants and witnesses to their story. Therefore, the companies value the role and responses of the audience. Wolff (2008) argues that taste, being formed in relation with and always in dialogue with other people, not only presupposes community but also generates it. In the aesthetic sphere, then, judgements are influenced by the genuine variety of group and individual tastes. This illustrates how aesthetic criteria produce social benefit. The final concept is pleasure; the companies explicitly use this term to express the enjoyment and freedom they feel both in acting and in providing pleasure for the spectators. This concept weakens criticisms of popular art. Enjoyment and pleasure are not limited to the intellectual level.

During my Internet and literature search, one company appeared as prioritising an aesthetic over a social discourse in describing their identity and values, while another prioritised a social discourse over an aesthetic. These theatre companies were *Nós do Morro* in Brazil and *Phare Ponleu Selpak* in Cambodia. These two companies were chosen because they represent different parts of a continuum. *Favela*-based *Nós do Morro* clearly prioritises the aesthetic constructed in the arena of art. The company has brought renowned texts from national and international theatre to the stage – including Shakespeare, Brecht and Gogol – together with stories about the everyday life of the community. It promotes artistic quality and perceives aesthetics as its main rationale. The company works with theatre that comes from an aesthetic framework, not a development framework. *Phare Ponleu Selpak*, on the other hand, prioritises the social over the aesthetic. The nature of *Phare Ponleu Selpak*'s ideas is utilitarian, and their aim is to take care of vulnerable and disadvantaged children, to provide them with protection and offer them formal education and artistic vocational training. This process is seen as more important than the artistic product. This company clearly works from a development framework: the terms listed on their website and in personal correspondence focussed on social matters rather than on aesthetic notions.

To conclude, it is important to critically examine the ways in which applied theatre and its aesthetic significance manifest themselves in developing countries experiencing globalising

processes. This research explores what can be learnt from these contexts to understand the aesthetics of applied theatre more broadly.

Reflexive ethnography

This research – exploring the narrative of aesthetics across different contexts – has used the reflections of theatre artists as well as my own observations of their work and my theoretically informed analysis. Participant observations, group and individual interviews were used as main methods in my reflexive ethnographic approach. The term ‘ethnography’ as ‘the study of people and of their culture in their natural habitat’ (Powdermaker, 1966 quoted in Robben and Sluka, 2007: 7) refers both to a process of research based on fieldwork using numerous qualitative research techniques and to its eventual written product (Atkinson and Hammersley, 2007: 2-4; Davies, 1999: 4-5). One of the key elements of ethnographic fieldwork includes the researcher’s engagement in the lives of those studied – their customs, beliefs and behaviour – over an extended period. The written document is a description of the culture based on the information collected by participatory observation, interviews and records through fieldwork. Within this thesis, I produce these data in quotations, descriptions and excerpts of documents. To understand the aesthetic notions of three theatre companies in three countries, ethnography as a methodological choice has provided me with the opportunity to observe, participate and formally and informally interview participants from different organisations and institutes.

In researching applied theatre in these contexts, there is an implicit assumption that I am looking into topics ‘outside’ myself; the knowledge I seek cannot be gained only through introspection. However, I cannot research something from which I am completely isolated. As a researcher, I am to some degree part of, or connected to the object of the research. Questions will therefore arise as to whether the outcomes of the research are results of my presence as a researcher, which will undeniably influence the process. It is therefore vital for this methodology to include reflexivity, in particular regarding the practice of ethnographic research, in which the relationships with my participants are particularly intimate and long-term, and my involvement in the different contexts and cultures of those studied is particularly close. Reflexivity attempts ‘to ensure objectivity through reducing or controlling the effects of the researcher on the research situation’ (Davies, 1999: 4).

Additionally, observing an array of performances along with participating in and hosting relevant workshops assisted me in the data collection and reflection. The methods included participatory observations, individual and group semi-structured interviews, informal encounters before and after rehearsals, participating in formal meetings, leading workshops and witnessing performances. The objectives for these methods will now be described.

Participant observations were carried out within in a multitude of social, political and artistic events within each case study locations and in art, theatre and dance organisations in surrounding cities. During the first few weeks in each location, I observed the habitual behaviours and routines of the actors involved in the case study. This included the way the actors lived, the way they worked with the different art-forms the school or organisation offered, the way teachers and children connected with each other, and the behaviour in the places shared by all actors, teachers, children and board members.

Moreover, I carried out observations of rehearsals, classes, meetings and performances over a total period of nine months at the three case study locations. The observations of daily lives and a variety of classes, joining informal gatherings, sharing lunches and suppers, giving drama workshops, participating in classes and discussing new projects implied a well-intentioned use of my time in each case study, as it allowed me to look deeper inside the cultures of the organisations and theatre companies. The informal conversations and meetings offered me understanding and awareness into the country's history, personal stories, struggles and challenges.

Participant observation was also very helpful outside the organisations and companies. I observed various theatre and dance activities and actively participated during conferences and meetings. In total I observed thirty performances and a variety of classes at different universities. I acquired vital data on applied theatre, and on the connections between the international community contexts by participating in formal meetings and visiting international aid agencies and transnational corporations such as oil company *Petrobrás*. I used video and photography during these observations, and I wrote down my experiences.

Another significant method I used for data collection was semi-structured interviewing. I conducted 76 semi-structured interviews in total during the fieldwork in the three

countries.¹⁷ These interviews were mainly with a single respondent. 13 interviews were with more than one interviewee. The group interviews were mostly with actors or directors, because I was interested to hear a variety of artists discuss their work within the company. Interviewees spoke more freely during the group interviews than during the individual ones and the interviewees were able to respond to each other's comments.

The semi-structured interviews were open-ended. That is, the main purpose was to understand the discussions and ideas around aesthetics within applied theatre. After my interview experience in Rio de Janeiro, I also attempted to explore new topics in each interview that I had not foreseen during the previous conversations. Often this revealed new understandings and overlooked aspects of my proposition. The interview list I used for the semi-structured interviews was adjustable and included the questions I asked in interviews. The order of the questions and themes was adjusted after the experience of interviewing during the first fieldwork period. Contingent on the profession of the respondent, we sometimes spent more time on specific topics. As the interview list was adjusted based on the interviews I had conducted previously, the themes consisted of: the importance of aesthetic notions; work in rehearsal processes; the pleasure of creating and performing; use of the visual; effects of performances; incentives to become an artist or facilitator; theatre's primary aims; the ideal nation's notion of beauty; institutional limitations and challenges; the role of audiences; societal change through different decades; the benefits and challenges of international influences; international funding and donor conditions.

The majority of the interviews took place in the work locations of the respondents: in offices of theatre directors, NGOs and donors; in the kitchen of an arts school; or in the rehearsal spaces or workshop rooms of the theatre, circus and dance companies. Overall, obtaining interviews did not cause any complications, although it took three months to contact elderly survivors of the Khmer Rouge to hear their horrific experiences first-hand. The Tuol Sleng Memorial Center was seemingly the only authority to give out their contact details, and it took a few months before their doors opened. The other exception was obtaining an interview with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in Cambodia. It was impossible to speak to the majority of my Cambodian respondents without using a translator. The interviews, in addition to some

¹⁷ All respondents are included in Appendix 1.

rehearsals and gatherings, were directly translated by a Cambodian with Khmer as his native language, in the case of non-English or non-French speaking respondents. The fieldwork in Cambodia was the only time when I needed help from a translator. The language barrier obviously influenced my work as a researcher in Cambodia – as will be described in Chapter Three – because I have probably been unable to access some of the subtleties of the practice in Cambodia, in comparison to the other two case studies where I am familiar with the languages spoken.

Conducting reflexive ethnographic research inevitably involves ‘being caught in networks of power’ (Lopes Cardozo, 2011: 52). Several restrictions of power effects should be noted here: domination, silencing and being ‘the other’ (Ibid., my quotation marks).¹⁸ Observations and interviews cannot prevent ‘domination’ or being dominated because of the on-going power relations (Ibid.). The fact that my networks in Brazil, Cambodia and Nicaragua unfolded consistently with my links with artists and researchers means that my research is ‘dominated’ by the observations and ideas of a specific group of artists. The domination also reflects the distinction that *we* as researchers are not *they* in the community or the subject of research. Whilst the research can speak for the other, the other’s words might be important, but are not perceived as ‘a threat to us as ours are to them’ (Nordstorm, 1997: 18). This then develops into a hierarchy, placing the researcher on top, and charges the research with uneven power effects. It confirms the ‘divisions through which domination has been constructed’ (Ibid.).

A second limitation is ‘silencing’ (Lopes Cardozo, 2011: 52), which is connected to the perceptions that are not present in this study. Although this research intends to take in the thinking of various practitioners, facilitators and international interveners, it has limitations in its geographical scope, range, and my choices about the way the perceptions are embodied. The notion of silencing leads to another major limitation of this case study: the researcher is ‘perceived’ and ‘performed’ as the ‘other’. Following the extension from ‘being an observer to becoming a participant, there are limitations as an outsider and a visitor’ (Ibid.: 42). That is, I never belonged to the different cultures being researched.

¹⁸ For more research on the limitations of ethnography, see: James Clifford and George Marcus (1986) *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography*; Dwight Conquergood (1985) ‘Performing as a Moral Act: Ethical dimensions of the Ethnography of Performance’; Metje Postma and Peter Crawford (2006) *Reflecting Visual Ethnography. Using the Camera in Anthropological Research*.

Being Dutch from a northern European tradition is an unavoidable position. In other words, my involvement had its limits, particularly because of my incapability of communicating directly with all my respondents in Cambodia. Carolyn Nordstorm accurately describes this limitation in her book *A Different Kind of War Story* (1997: 18):

Theory has all too often been a zoo in which we cage the wild beasts [...] that inhabit our worlds. We then gaze at these beasts from a safe distance, we contemplate them, we theorize how they would act in their own environments – and we never go to those environments where the beasts roam freely to actually check our theories.

Thrinh T. Minh-ha (1989) and Gayatri Spivak (1988) have questioned Western scholars' motives in studying non-Western people, claiming that these scholars try to 'speak' for those they have worked among. In particular, Spivak argues that scholars who give 'voice' to those not capable of speaking are usually involved in nothing better than post-colonial discourse altered for a contemporary world (Nordstorm, 1997: 30). Moreover, Spivak argues that doing fieldwork requires serious self-critique from the researcher, not limited to the researcher's role as an academic, but also as a Westerner, as a link to privilege and as a historical product (Ibid.). I have taken these critiques into consideration. On the other side, however, are scholars (see Nancy Scheper-Hughes, 1992; Michael Taussig; 1987) and human rights organisations that argue that academics should raise their voices against violations of the rights of others observed in foreign countries. Dwight Conquergood proposes, in his essay 'Performing as a Moral Act: Ethical Dimensions of the Ethnology of Performance' (1985), that the ethnographer's goal in relation to the other is for 'genuine conversation': what he calls *dialogical performance* (1985: 10). As an anthropologist, Conquergood understands that the 'moral' dilemma for the ethnographer, in relation to the other, is the tension between detachment and commitment, and between identity and difference. This limitation cannot be resolved, and this research does not attempt to do so. I can only describe the world through a lens whose glass has been tinted by the force and influence of discourses from my own social, cultural and political histories.

1.6. The systematic lens

In order to understand global influences and developments, and how they affect the aesthetics of applied theatre within international community contexts, three different understandings of globalising processes – cultural, political and economic – will be used as pillars for each of the three main chapters in this thesis. In pursuing this investigation, I

intend to avoid broad conceptualisations about the research subject. One important premise of this PhD is that we can learn from three unique and detailed case studies and from the rich range of international community contexts for the practice of applied theatre. My goal is to explore the widely shared cultures of applied theatre and its creativity. Consequently, much of the PhD's intellectual journey is documentary in nature, with examples drawn from contemporary practices.

To provide a context for my discussion of the landscape of social and aesthetic worth in applied theatre, I begin by tracing these connections and tensions within Brazilian theatre company *Nós do Morro* (freely translated as 'We from the Hill'). Chapter Two analyses *Nós do Morro* by describing their location, Vidigal *favela* in Rio de Janeiro, and the context of their work. The foundation of *Nós do Morro* is in sympathy with a Freirian approach, and the *favelas* inspire many performances; however, the main goal has never been to create a space to discuss the problems of the community. The creation of artistic performances is the company's main focus. The economic relationships within the debate about social and aesthetic tensions will be introduced in this chapter, because commercialisation – the economic driver within cultural organisations – is particularly notable here. This chapter will look at what a consideration of economic relationships brings to an understanding of the aesthetic discourse of applied theatre. The economic debate becomes the framework of how we will look at the following chapters.

The economic attention shifts when the thesis moves to the analysis of *Phare Ponleu Selpak* – a Cambodian multidisciplinary arts school – in Chapter Three. This chapter outlines how political and economic powers affect the practice of applied theatre. I argue that the cultural life of *Phare Ponleu Selpak* – aesthetic and social alike – is subject to the vagaries of international aid agendas following the war. This made it very complicated to define a secure Cambodian aesthetic or social domain. Everything is developing, provisional, transitional, and ad hoc. In addition, there have been a series of clashes between the aesthetic and social discourses of the centre, the donors, the performances – and the context of the work. The notion of these destabilising and shocking clashes is important for this research, as it was in these clashes that my search for an aesthetic for applied theatre came to an end. Moreover, by using the theoretical framework of the ethnoscape, this chapter illustrates that the ethnoscape can assist in my analysis of the position, the

meaning and the fluid movement of aesthetics within the field of applied theatre, and therefore the difficulty of locating an aesthetic within applied theatre.

In Chapter Four I take up where the introduction leaves off and look at the debates in the previous two chapters around the relationship between the aesthetic and the social, and the relationship between the international community and local sovereignties. The case study of this chapter, *Movimiento Teatro Popular Sin Fronteras* (Movitep-SF) in Nicaragua, builds on the thesis's argument. It examines the push and pull movements between local sovereignties and the international aid industry, and shows how this interaction occurs on a micro level between the commissioning and execution of cultural projects and theatre performances within Movitep-SF. Across its various parts, this PhD attempts to capture the aesthetics of applied theatre, and to arrive at a nuanced understanding of this subject that is in dialogue with national and international debates.

This thesis now travels to Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, where the first ideas will unfold. The following chapter will set out the first stage of this thesis, which develops ideas of aesthetics and moves forward to a new understanding of applied theatre.

‘Dirty’ money = ‘clean’ performance: The economics of a
‘clean’ aesthetic in *Nós do Morro*

BOBÓ DE CAMARÃO (*Shrimp bobo*)

INGREDIENTS

500 g *shrimp*

1 kg *manioc*

4 *tablespoons olive oil*

3 *cloves of garlic*

4 *tablespoons butter*

1 *onion*

1 *red pepper*

200 ml *coconut milk*

4 *tablespoons oil palm*

Salt and pepper

2 *spoons coriander*

PREPARATION

1. *Chop the garlic, onion, coriander and pepper.*
2. *Peel the cassava and cut into large parts. Cook until the cassava is soft.*
3. *In a skillet add garlic and sauté until golden. Add the prawns and cook for three minutes.*
4. *In another pan, add butter. When melted, add onion and bell pepper. Cook for five minutes.*
5. *In a blender, beat the still warm cassava, coconut milk, palm oil, sautéed onion and pepper until mixture is smooth.*
6. *In a large saucepan, place the shrimp stew and cassava cream. When it boils, season with salt and pepper. Remove from heat and add the coriander. Mix well and serve hot.*

2.1. Introduction

After four broken phone conversations half in Portuguese, half in English and an official letter from the University of Manchester, I get permission to observe theatre company and school Nós do Morro.¹⁹ The presence of researchers and practitioners should only enhance the aesthetic sphere and not distract the students, artistic director Guti Fraga later explains. On my first day I am stuck in traffic. Whilst enjoying the view of the sun reflected in the ocean and runners in scanty clothing passing by, suddenly 50 feet in front of me a public bus catches on fire. Nobody on my bus seems to be concerned, but not wanting to take the risk of possible explosions I get off the bus immediately. The consequence is that I have to walk uphill to the Vidigal slum (or favela in Brazilian Portuguese), the location of Nós do Morro.²⁰ Perched on a hillside overlooking Ipanema beach and Leblon, the richest neighbourhood of Rio de Janeiro, hiking up the hill is not a punishment on my first day of fieldwork.

My contact person is waiting for me in the exact place where we decided to meet in front of the Vidigal favela. He is the same person who patiently answered my many emails. The man clearly knows the neighbourhood and all its inhabitants: every few feet we are stopped by shop owners, young children and motorists with massive shotguns. I suddenly feel a bit dizzy and try to reassure myself that it is a consequence of the relentless Brazilian beat. My new friend accompanies me to the bottom of the hill and advises me to increase my pace. Small buses and numerous taxis are passing me.

In the distance I can see one of his friends. His weapon is more visible. A second shotgun is attached to his lower leg. Made from stolen building materials and scraps, a community of self-constructed shacks rises in front of me. In the last ten feet I meet my companions co-habitant, a young boy who seems to be around 14 years old. He reminds me of cyclist Lance Armstrong. His strong face bears an enormous scar, and his smile is friendly. I admire his ragged fluorescent bleached hair, while he introduces himself and welcomes me to his community.

They lead me through their favela: a labyrinth of shortcuts, massive blue water tanks and illegal electrical connections. For no apparent reason he brings me to a platform uphill: a place where he always celebrates New Year's Eve and enjoys the million dollar fireworks. Tourists and businessmen pay more than a thousand dollars for an ocean view room. He laughs infectiously. "In my community they can enjoy the luminous heavens for free... And to be honest," he continuous, "here you are a world closer to God!"

¹⁹ 'We from the Hill' or 'We from the Favela'. 'Morro' is a term synonymous with *favela* and is frequently used in Rio de Janeiro. On the barren slopes of the *morros* (mountains) the first *favelas* were constructed (Coutinho, 2011: 87).

²⁰ For the purposes of this research, I will use the term '*favela*'. This Brazilian term has somewhat different connotations to English terms such as slums, squatter settlements or shantytowns. For a discussion of political uses of the term '*favela*' in Rio de Janeiro, see Souza e Silva and Luiz Barbosa, 2005. *Favelados* are people who live in *favelas*.

Upon arrival at the theatre school I am officially introduced to the board of directors, teachers and marketing and coordination team. I immediately notice the structured organisation of the school. The building and the atmosphere around the school feel very intimate and cosy. Students patiently explain what kinds of classes they are in and why they are committed to coming to this place. One of the young adults living in Vidigal states: 'This is a space where I feel safe, not only because of the absence of bullets, but also because I can freely grow as an artist and a human being'.

This chapter follows community-based theatre company and theatre school *Nós do Morro* based in this *heaven*, in Vidigal, one of the *favelas* in Rio de Janeiro. It provides the foundation for addressing the fundamental question that animates this entire study: exploring the meaning of the aesthetics of applied theatre. The focus of this first chapter is to articulate an aesthetic discourse for theatre happening in marginalised community contexts. With an analysis of *Nós do Morro*, this chapter provides the background and discussion with regard to the landscape of aesthetic and social worth that is generalisable to the other two contexts, Cambodia and Nicaragua. It also offers an increasingly layered overview of how *Nós do Morro*'s artistic practice is embedded, determined and networked in a complex series of sometimes overlapping, sometimes competing economic, social and aesthetic practices. Moreover, it introduces the pivotal *economic* relationship within the debate of social and aesthetic tensions, because commercialisation – the economic driver within cultural organisations – is particularly notable here. It illustrates the ways global economics influence the discourse about aesthetics, but not the actual aesthetic practice. The economic debate becomes the framework of how the following chapters will be explored. The terms 'applied theatre' and 'aesthetics' both come from an alien cultural context and do not carry the same resonance within *Nós do Morro*. The framing of these terms therefore needs to be critically interrogated.

Presented as 'one of the most important initiatives in the field of *artistic* and *social* activity in Brazil's marginalised communities today' (Coutinho and Nogueira, 2009: 170, my italics), *Nós do Morro*'s first layers were built during the 1980s at the end of the military dictatorship, when it was founded by a group of friends inspired by journalist Guti Fraga. Similar to the cultural movements he had observed in Harlem, New York, Fraga's dream was to create aesthetic qualitative theatre by using the artistic talent of the young residents of the Vidigal community, and by developing actors and technicians that would present theatre to the inhabitants of a community without access to art. Nowadays, the company consists of 350

participants, including children, young people and adults who live in the Vidigal *favela* and other neighbourhoods. The school is open seven days a week and offers classes in acting, text interpretation, capoeira, voice, video editing and many other subjects. The theatre company has its roots in the heart of Vidigal while also gaining recognition nationally and internationally.

Four impressions from interviews and observations are the key elements that support the overarching objective of this chapter. These four elements will dictate the structure of the chapter, that is: i) the rehearsal processes and performances of *Nós do Morro*; ii) the space of the *favela* behind the wall; iii) the global image of *Nós do Morro*; and iv) the funding policy of oil company *Petrobrás*. Firstly, the chapter introduces *Nós do Morro* by describing the rehearsal processes and performances, demonstrating its aesthetic practice in action. This comprises interpretations and different key aspects of ethnography such as reflexivity, dialogue and participation, and a brief overview of *Nós do Morro*'s history. This first part consists of a critical discussion of Bourdieu's and Freire's theories to theoretically understand the everyday practices of *Nós do Morro*'s aesthetic and social processes, which illustrates an overarching schema that sees education as happening in an aesthetic – rather than a social – realm.

The second part introduces the pivotal *economic* relationship within the debate of social and aesthetic tensions through two perspectives. Firstly, I present the conceptual metaphor of the construction of Rio de Janeiro's walls and how these walls show that *Nós do Morro* is shaped through economic development. I then describe *Nós do Morro*'s location and its historical and contemporary political field of operation within the Brazilian cultural landscape. Following that, I argue that *Nós do Morro* as a Brazilian export is *only* 'culturally necessary' for a positive image during the upcoming 2014 World Cup and 2016 Olympics. The Brazilian political and economic insights help to understand the complexities and tensions between the discourse and reality in which *Nós do Morro* works in the *favela*. The second key player is oil company *Petrobrás* – sponsor and cultural policy maker – that emphasises the funding policies in a cultural and social sense. I state that in order to create the oil company's brand, *Petrobrás* sees *Nós do Morro* as a social concern because it supports their welfare for the public good. I argue that *Petrobrás*'s insistence on seeing the money that goes into the *favela* as social rather than cultural is part of keeping the *favela* behind the

wall; the ‘culture’ coming from the *favela* cannot be integrated into the mainstream cultural flows until the *favela* and *favelados* have developed ‘socially’.

Fieldwork plan

I arrived in Rio de Janeiro in September 2009 for three months of fieldwork, and conducted 25 semi-structured interviews in Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo. The interviews, workshops and rehearsals were all in Portuguese. Two interviews were with more than one respondent. In the first week, I was informally introduced to the board of the theatre company (Guti Fraga, Luiz Paulo Corrêa e Castro, Fred Pinheiro, Fernando Mello da Costa and Zezé Silva), the teachers and the coordination and marketing team. I observed the ways the students worked with the different artistries the school offered, the way the teachers and students connected with each other and the interactions between the students in the school’s communal places. I also carried out observations over a period of two months, five days a week, during the rehearsals and workshops of four classes assigned by the school: i) acting classes for the youngest children at level one; ii) acting classes for secondary school children; and iii) two interpretation classes for young adults. Afterwards, I observed capoeira and voice classes or evening rehearsals of the professional productions. At the school, I witnessed text-based theatre performances of William Shakespeare, Nikolai Gogol, Plínio Marcos and Molière. The school also presented several music and dance performances, such as hip-hop, percussion and *baile funk*.

Outside the theatre company, I witnessed samba school rehearsals, professional and university theatre productions, French and Brazilian musicals and comedies and other *favela*-based group performances by *Afroreggae*, *Favela Força* and *Observatório de Favelas*. I visited the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro and observed contemporary theatre improvisation and acting classes there. In addition, I participated in meetings at several research institutes, for example at the Centre for Studies on Public Security and Citizenship in Rio de Janeiro.

2.2. *Nós do Morro*

16 December 2009. In five days the official Brazilian summer will start. During the evenings the sun is still using her powerful warmth, and with the heat of the theatre lights, it is getting humid inside the theatre school. Tonight one of the classes of Nós do Morro presents O Inspector Geral, a version of the classic The Government Inspector, a satirical play by Russian playwright Nikolai Gogol. The play is a comedy of errors exposing human greediness and the corruptive powers of Tsarist Russia. In the attic of the

school, the actors are finalising their make-up. The atmosphere is energetic and intimate: everyone checks the details of their costumes, make-up and the lights, whilst rehearsing the translated Russian dialogue. Placed on each audience seat are small pieces of cardboard, serving as fans. In the small space a total of 75 people have gathered on red plastic chairs arranged in a circle around a large dinner table. The crowd is a mix of family, residents of the Vidigal favela and curious dwellers of other neighbourhoods.

The concept of the show is very eloquently directed: the actors hastily enter the stage to bombastic classical music. All the characters wear white make-up and as the story progresses, the white mask disappears and dark faces appear. The stage becomes a spectacle of white spots when the true faces of the characters are exposed. The costumes – remaining clean and neat throughout the show – are made in the style of Terry Gilliam: small fairy tale details, an exuberant personification of the everyday. The stage lights are specially designed for this performance, consisting of plastic Coca-Cola bottles with small focus holes and three basic colours. Due to the circular audience set-up, the actors are forced to play in different directions. They move around and surprise the audience by taking seats next to them. The acting style is grotesque, almost absurd. The classical music returns throughout the show. The smell of sweat, make-up and rain rises slowly. The audience roars.

During rehearsals, the director and the students relate this play to the Brazilian elite that closes its eyes to the current problems of Brazilian society: a metaphor for the facial masks. The actors' role is to wink at the audience – the spectators are observed, surprised and grabbed. The director and students are aiming for a "gentle" form of Brechtian theatre. They mainly want the audience to be entertained, but also give them material to think about the society they live in.

The meaning of aesthetics within this performance and its rehearsal process – similar to other workshops and rehearsals I observed during my fieldwork at *Nós do Morro* – had a strong focus on *detailed aesthetic choices, collective work, social and personal development and aesthetic discourse*. This connects to my overall enquiry: it demonstrates the interconnectedness within the landscape of social and aesthetic worth, and the emphasis on the 'aesthetic'. During the rehearsals of *The Government Inspector*, the students were collectively assigned a task on stage and within the group, for example choice of music, rhythm of movements, style of acting, ensemble work and production of the costumes. The director and students would go through their 'homework' and collectively discuss their ideas during the rehearsals. Through intense discussions, the aesthetic choices for the performance were decided. As such, the concept of 'aesthetic discourse' – the ways aesthetics are discussed

and written about – is an important aspect of *Nós do Morro*'s philosophy. During the weekends the students visited each other and continued working on the visual elements of costumes, lighting and make-up. Improvisations, directing and writing texts are all created in collective work. The performance is seen as a common final result and a collaborative product, where ideas are created during the process and not before. The terms 'quality' and 'discipline' were the most common terms I heard during this rehearsal process. This example relates to how *Nós do Morro* talks about its artistic philosophy: based on the development and growth of the individual, the actor, through which art functions as a catalyst sensitising the individual. The company's intention is to create a triangle of a small-scale real world (De Melo 2009, pers. comm., 16 Dec.):

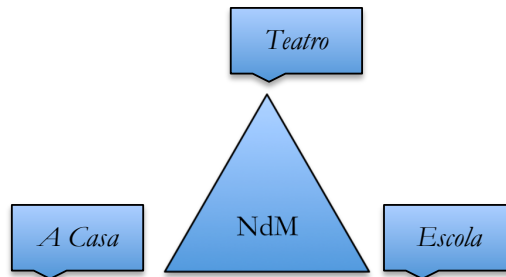


Figure 1: *Nós do Morro*'s artistic philosophical triangle

A Casa (home) signifies the theme of being at home at *Nós do Morro*, without any fears, prejudices or concerns with regard to safety, security or health. *Escola* (school) represents the theme of education, in which students learn to live and to be educated as human artists and respectful citizens, 'where *excuse me* is still in use and *please* is essential' (Fraga 2009, pers. comm., 3 Dec.). Finally, *teatro* (theatre) at the top of the triangle is the communal concept that shows the conjunction between the three different elements. *Nós do Morro*'s directors embrace these three concepts and attempt to find a balance between them in their professional careers. That is, *Nós do Morro* is a space where students are able to express their individual aesthetics and where the work focusses less on its social use. The space is defined by the concepts of home: familiarity, a social sense of belonging, identity and safety. Guti Fraga, living in Vidigal, is embedded and committed to the Vidigal community, its development and identity. He knows all 350 students' names and backgrounds by heart. This security allows the students to feel safe and wanted, as opposed to the challenges and risks they often experience outside the walls of *Nós do Morro*. In addition to questioning *who they are* during their time at the school, they also have the opportunity to question *where they*

belong. During rehearsals all the students proudly wear *Nós do Morro*'s brand t-shirts, which confirms the strong identity within the community. The company's professionalism is tangible through the rules and the students' mentality. The violent *favela* life exists outside the company and neither gang laws nor gang behaviour are permitted within the school.

Although Fraga encourages the students to become performance artists, following a common expression on the Vidigal mountain, 'Living through or living with art makes life worth living' (Lima 2009, pers. comm., 5 Nov.), Fraga profoundly challenges the students to eventually become human artists or artists for life: that is, becoming human beings that do not live for the arts, but live as an art-form, whilst respecting themselves and their loved ones (Fraga 2009, pers. comm., 11 Dec.). Pinheiro, Corrêa e Castro and Fraga acknowledge the limitations of the students with regard to their talent, discipline, commitment and capacity to become performance artists; nevertheless, they argue that plumber artists, baker artists or carpenter artists require the same education. Fraga, in particular, uses different roles while visiting classes to submerge the students in the philosophical triangle, ranging from being a congratulator, a persuader, a joker or a witness. His role is related to the idea that Fraga and the teachers 'have the privilege to be the link to a possibility: a possibility of the power of art' (Fraga 2009, pers. comm., 11 Dec.).

The teachers come from two different backgrounds. One group comprises former students, and the other group comprises teachers selected through monitoring their national and international performances. The combination of *multiplicadores* (multipliers) – the former students educated at *Nós do Morro* – and teachers who bring their own techniques and styles – such as *l'École LeCoq*, Ariane Mnouchkine or Shakespearian – provide the school with a wide educational range. Fraga acknowledges that within a theatre company such as *Nós do Morro*, upper-class or middle-class teachers and leaders are necessary for students to understand discipline and organisation, because the students are not capable of learning these concepts on their own. It is useful to address this empirical observation by looking at Bourdieu's theory, in which he argued that all cultural needs and preferences are densely related to educational levels and social origins (1984: 1). His theory will provide a critical framework for Fraga's aesthetic choices and their consequences for the positioning of the theatre company. Bourdieu argued that people need capital to have influence or power in the field. The influence of formal education and family background differs according to the extent to which diverse cultural practices are acknowledged and

imparted by the educational system (1984: 66-69). Bourdieu showed how the ‘social order is progressively inscribed in people’s minds’ through ‘cultural products, including systems of education, language, judgements, values, methods of classification and activities of everyday life’ (2010: 473). These led to an ‘unconscious recognition of social differences and hierarchies [...] and to behaviours of self-exclusion’ (1984: 141). Fraga, however, uses the cultural capital of different classes to avoid the causes of inequality. By bringing different classes into one *field* (Bourdieu’s concept of structures of educational, cultural and intellectual connections) Fraga attempts to experience power equally rather than depending on which field the students are in at a given moment. Fraga uses two different leaders (upper-class/middle-class outsiders and insiders) to balance the main effects – environment and context – on *Nós do Morro’s habitus*. His goal is to provide the group with a sense of group identity. It is surprising that Fraga not only challenges class structures; *Nós do Morro* also inculcates its members into middle-class sensibilities, such as the appreciation of famous playwrights, theatrical texts and literature. The students are educated in middle-class habits and tastes, which is key to understanding the aesthetic-social practice of the company. Accounts of Bourdieusian principles would criticise this artistic decision, because socially deprived and less educated people would not be able to appreciate middle-class habits and tastes. This indicates *Nós do Morro’s* ambiguous position, and its artistic ‘choices’ inside the economic-social-cultural network.

Former students are offered the chance to stay as teachers because multiplication is an important concept for *Nós do Morro’s* artistic philosophy: by acting as a multiplier, the school’s philosophy will be transferred to others resulting in opportunities for students, new projects and more visibility in the cultural landscape of Rio de Janeiro. The teachers have years of experience creating theatre in a collective, which has an additional importance for the company’s aesthetic and its discourse. Although there is not a general mandate to conduct the work as a collective, this methodology is supported by the board. As Van Erven argues, Latin American ‘collective creation cannot be reduced to a single formula’ (2001: 131) and *Nós do Morro* has therefore developed individual techniques to suit their specific social and cultural conditions. That is, the teachers are convinced that there should be a final opinion and authority, especially in a training environment dealing with student actors with different backgrounds and levels of experience. The majority of the teachers use dramaturges to guard the storyline’s continuity and the meaning of the script. The collectiveness is based on common ground, technique and language, making sure that

everyone understands the aims. One teacher argued that the act of working as a team brings calmness and peace into the classroom and performance, which creates the artistic freedom to experiment (Cotrim 2009, pers. comm., 10 Dec.). The teachers' role is to respond to the strengths and weaknesses of the students, to balance their rhythm and to create an environment of trust and support. The collective also challenges individual students to add their own ingredients to the rehearsal process and the performance. It should be noted that the teachers all agree that they have to sacrifice democracy in order to produce quality on stage. This results in having more talented actors perform more often and other actors learning from them. This clearly signals the limitations of collective work and the importance of the end result. Thus, the collective process should not jeopardise the quality of the artistic product.

Bourdieu argued that educated people are able to understand and appreciate middle-class tastes better than less educated people (1984: 66-69). From a Bourdieusian perspective, in the case of *Nós do Morro* these two groups could be framed as the more talented students and the less talented students. Additionally, *Nós do Morro* prioritises aesthetic quality here and avoids any risks of reducing this quality, even if that means that less talented actors are offered less stage time and education. The landscape of social and aesthetic worth seems to immerse in a specific power dynamic and work as discipline. The definition of collective creation formulated in *Nós do Morro* appears in opposition way to the Nicaraguan case study, where the 'social' emphasis is prevalent. Here, collective creation is seen as an educational approach happening in an aesthetic realm.

Nós do Morro promotes theatre as a disciplined art-form – respect, rules and responsibility are perceived as vital parts of discipline. The students are expected to follow the rules of the school, as in professional and daily life. This also resonates in the artistic discipline of the classes, where the students are challenged to stay focussed and alert. They are expected to actively create the plot via improvisations and discussions, and to have a deeper understanding of the text. By defining itself as a school where human artists are being educated, it is necessary that the concept of discipline is imbued in all levels of the philosophical triangle: at home, at school and in the artistic environment (De Melo 2009, pers. comm., 16 Dec.). Fraga is convinced that this will help the students to evolve into trustworthy and respectful human beings. Among the teachers there is a shared feeling about the importance of democracy and communication, two concepts that co-exist in a

disciplinary environment. The rehearsals are a forum to discuss artistic choices: the foundation of a collective creation. The students perceive discipline as a social necessity. One student explained after a rehearsal that discipline teaches you how to be a human being: 'if you are not capable to be a human, you will never be able to act out another character. I would have never been able to play a guy from Leblon [Rio's richest neighbourhood]' (Santiago 2009, pers. comm., 13 Nov.). The students are taught when it is time to listen and when they can discuss their issues. One actress mentioned that discipline teaches her how to interact with other people, in particular because *favelados* – like herself – are very often misunderstood. Discipline has taught her how to be a complete human being with morals and values (Lima 2009, pers. comm., 5 Nov.).

The top of the triangle demonstrates the main strength – the need for culture in the community. The company's intention is to give voice and worth to people in the Vidigal *favela* by using theatre. Students perform in five theatre performances during their education within *Nós do Morro*. They are offered four different art classes annually. All the classes I observed were working towards a performance presented in *Casarão* (the company's theatre school) at the end of the year – an annual ritual for each individual to present their progress. The line-up in 2009 was *Twelfth Night or As you like it* and *Verona then, Vidigal now* by Shakespeare and *The Government Inspector* by Gogol. The performance *Twelfth Night or As you like it* was based on the techniques of *LeCoq* and *Théâtre du Soleil*, *Verona then, Vidigal now* was inspired by hip-hop and rap, and the last performance of 2009, *The Government Inspector* used classical text directing. *Nós do Morro's* financial director Zezinho argued that these artistic elements are not normally associated with theatre in a *favela* (Zezinho 2009, pers. comm., 20 Nov.) The 2009 line-up illustrates again the significance of aesthetics within the company: the use of classical theatre literature and adaptations, and the wide range of acting techniques and genres.

During the rehearsals the teachers focussed on the end product – the performance – but they also taught the students artistic vocabulary and classical theatre techniques. Transformation, concentration, focus points, high and low status, embodiment, dramaturgy, rhythm, imagination and dynamics are just a few examples of the vocabulary the teachers offered during their classes. The techniques included pronunciation without accent, voice, naturalistic play, deeper understanding and interpretation of symbols and characters, rhythm of plays and performances and styles of intelligent acting. Alongside the

classical artistic vocabulary employed by the teachers and the board members, other symbolic vocabulary was repeated frequently in every rehearsal room: terms like ‘joy’, ‘pleasure’, ‘humour’ and ‘spirituality’. This resonates with the role of the audience, which should be intrigued, moved, provoked and curious to know what the experience will be during the performances (Fraga 2009, pers. comm., 11 Dec.). ‘*Nós do Morro*’s artistic methodology consists of transformation and experimentation and it can create and change the quality and legitimacy of Brazilian society’, argues the board, ‘without paying attention to status, wealth or background, the importance of the capability to share universal feelings with respect’ (Board meeting 2009, pers. comm., 9 Dec.). The range of the students’ successes includes roles in Brazilian films, soap operas, modelling work and national theatre performances, and during the annual celebrations of *Nós do Morro* the alumni return to the roots of their success.

The feelings of ‘pleasure’, ‘joy’ and ‘happiness’ in the workshop rooms have been very important in the students’ lives. In interviews, many students defined *Casarão* as a safe and beautiful ‘haven’ where they ‘can freely grow as artists and human beings’ (Group interview actors 2009, pers. comm., 4 Dec.). As previously mentioned, Scarry’s (2006) claim that ‘beauty saves lives or directly confers the gift of life’ (2006: 25) can be explained by the perception of beauty as a greeting, people losing for a moment their capacity to harm. When people come into the presence of something beautiful, it greets them and welcomes them. Scarry argues that if you are welcome, people are pleased that you are there; it is not something that only you want, but something that the world you are now joining also wants (Ibid.: 69). Students of *Nós do Morro* state that the company has saved their lives; the theatrical encounters have prevented them from continuing their careers in the gangs of the *favelas*. The happiness and beauty they have experienced during their time at *Nós do Morro* have given them a reason to change their direction in life. This brings us back to Scarry’s theory about the educational strength of beauty, particularly in relation to social justice education. Scarry suggests that the reduction of pain is caused by beauty because it has a great effect of justice. In societies where there is no justice, Scarry argues, ‘beautiful things hold steadily visible the manifest good of equality and balance’ (Ibid.: 97). Thompson’s argument is that beauty only has a critical power in opposition or in critical relation to the circumstances. Beauty alone, by itself is irrelevant, but beauty in the midst of or in relation to opposition is powerful (2009: 138-140). In certain circumstances, like inside the walls of *Nós do Morro*, beauty has an effect.

The structure of the triangle clearly demonstrates the interconnectedness within the artistic and social landscape within the theatre school. The specific aesthetic-social relationship that is emerging here happens via immersion in beauty, middle-class habits and tastes, a specific kind of power dynamic and work as discipline. *Nós do Morro's* choices are embedded, determined and networked in a complex series of sometimes overlapping, sometimes competing social and aesthetic practices.

In order to understand the framework of these complexities, it is useful to describe a brief history and the current organisation of *Nós do Morro*.

The history of Nós do Morro

The Vidigal *favela* – *Nós do Morro's* base – has earned a significant place in Rio de Janeiro due to its magnificent location: it has its own private beach, looks over Ipanema and is based next to Leblon in Zona Sul. Vidigal with its 11,000 inhabitants is always targeted for possible real estate developments: luxury resorts and expensive new housing.²¹ The first layers of *Nós do Morro* were built during the 1980s at the end of the military dictatorship, when censorship still ruled the streets. Neither space nor freedom for artistic journeys were



Figure 2. Vidigal hill overlooking Ipanema beach. (Photo: Kirsten Broeckman)

allowed. In 1964, the military took over and a 20-year era of dictatorship began: the Brazilian population faced repression, censorship, torture and imprisonment of high profile politicians and artists. *Desbordar* ('renegade') was used as an artistic slogan, as this period called for resistance and innovative ways to use the arts. Vidigal attracted many artists,

²¹ In 1967 *Associação do Moradores do Vidigal* (AMV), the Vidigal Residents' Association, was established to strengthen the *favela* dwellers' political rights with regard to the demolition of housing and possible removal.

painters and filmmakers, including Guti Fraga, who worked as a journalist and a performer, and who immigrated to Vidigal from Mato Grosso, Goiás. The diverse artistic community in Vidigal mostly resided in apartments at the bottom of the hill, closer to the wealthier residents. In the actual *favela*, on the middle and upper slopes, the poorer dwellers used recycled materials to construct shacks following the organic flows of the hillside (Coutinho and Nogueira, 2009: 171). The community was a place where artists and the poorer residents mingled through the large amount of art on the streets. According to Fraga and Corrêa e Castro, the bar *Bar-raco* was the main meeting place. Here, Corrêa e Castro, a Vidigal *favelado*, met artists Guti Fraga, Fred Pinheiro and Fernando Mello da Costa, and a longstanding friendship evolved. It all started from the notion of neighbourliness, the disposition to be friendly and helpful to neighbours.

During a trip to New York in 1985, Fraga was intrigued by the small stages in Harlem with their provisional lighting, where talented actors performed short theatre pieces. Whilst observing the aesthetic quality of these performances, Fraga promised to create a similar form of theatre in Brazil. Upon his return, Fraga could not justify the fact that only the elite of the *asfalto* had access to classical theatre, whilst most Brazilian popular art-forms – capoeira, *baile funk*, samba and carnival – were rooted in the *favelas*.²² Fraga encountered many artistic talents in Vidigal and saw the opportunity to implement cultural activities to create access to art for the culturally ‘disadvantaged’ residents of the *favela*. He refused to develop a theatre company solely for and of famous actors. Corrêa e Castro and other *favelados* were intrigued by Fraga’s idea to create theatre with and by their own community. According to Corrêa e Castro, weapons did not yet rule the streets, and therefore Vidigal was a safe location to show street performances (Corrêa e Castro 2009, pers. comm., 1 Dec.).

The historical origins of *Nós do Morro* are similar to the radical social theatre movements that spread in Latin America at the end of 1980s. Popular theatre in Latin America was then closely linked to class struggles and strikes, and managed to work through collective creations. Brazil’s historical context of dictatorship meant that collective creation became a very distinct methodology, as opposed to countries open to the international community, being part of global reach, or accepting notions of human rights. The popular theatre

²² In Rio de Janeiro the social class divide is highlighted and separated by the usage of the term *o asfalto*, the asphalt, meaning the city centre. The hills or *favelas* are known for their steep muddy roads and associated chaos.

companies discarded the “star”-driven and playwright-based theatre models that dominated mainstream theatre at the time (Adler, 1991; Versényi, 1993: 163-166). Their performances travelled to rural communities that had never experienced theatre, and they involved audiences in different parts of the shows. Theatre was taken out of elitist spaces, and free performances were presented, focussing on the real-life political and economic conditions of the working class. The main difference of *Nós do Morro*'s philosophy is that political and economic issues never took precedence over aesthetic concerns. Although theatre is created specifically for the *favela* dwellers, the aesthetic notions have always been the company's main concern.

A distinctive dialogue

When in 1986 Fraga was invited to carry out a theatre project in Padre Leeb Cultural Centre in Vidigal, this project fulfilled the idea for a core theatre group that started off with 20 people.²³ A mutual exchange was formed between artists with theatre experience who were willing to assemble a theatrical *paraíso* ('paradise') in which artistic quality would be essential and the people from within the *favela*, who received, imbibed and contributed to the artists' ideas. The group's early successes were achieved through this dialogue; the *favelados*' engagement through their language, culture and traditions, and the artists' contributions through their artistic backgrounds and ideas. The group's main principles were based on recognition of and identification with the audience (Coutinho and Nogueira, 2009: 173). Fraga notes that other important principles were the space to experiment and devise classical plays from Brazilian and English literature, and the commitment to the high aesthetic quality of artistic expressions. The group gained full support from the *favela* residents. It could be argued that the origins of *Nós do Morro* were not developed through a movement from inside the *favela*, as the founders and the experience came from outside the *favela*; however, the key concepts and ideology could not have been assembled without the passionate contribution and openness from the *favelados*. As a result, this dialogue resonated within the themes and early performances of the group.

The first performance, *Encontros* ('Encounters') took place in 1987, written by Luiz Paulo Corrêa e Castro and Tino Costa, and was developed through improvisations in Fraga's classes. Two years later, Corrêa e Castro wrote the play *Biroska* ('Street bar'). Located in

²³ Founded by the Austrian Padre Humberto Leeb, the Padre Leeb Cultural Centre was set up in 1976 as a cultural centre in Vidigal.

front of a street bar, the play tells the story of *Neguinbo* (a diminutive meaning ‘black boy’), a *favelado* who strongly believes he has won money in the lottery. He treats his friends to beers until he realises it was a joke. The theme of winning the lottery – developed through theatre improvisations – and becoming rich overnight is a dream for any *favelado*. Lotteries are illegal and well-known amongst many poor Brazilians (Coutinho and Nogueira, 2009: 172). The dramatic ending of the story, the realisation of *Neguinbo’s* ongoing poverty, is handled with humour and not used as a space to discuss the problems of the community or Brazilian poverty.²⁴ *Biroska* involved 21 performers from seven to 79 years old. The actors sang and danced to samba rhythms, and the symbolic price for the show was the same as a beer. The lights were made of 50 recycled tin cans used as reflectors on a hand-made light table, designed by Pinheiro (Pinheiro 2009, pers. comm., 30 Nov.). Through these community symbols, the audience became engaged and the company won their support. Emphasising the meaning of *Nós* in the group’s name, the entire process involved a collective creation. Fraga’s approach to creative collection could be recognised within movements of popular theatre throughout Latin America. However, the distinctiveness of Fraga’s skills can be found in the transformation of the community’s themes into artistic material, his advocacy for aesthetic development, and the partnership between stage and audience. The foundation of *Nós do Morro* is in sympathy with the theory of Brazilian educator Paulo Freire.

In particular, Freire’s ethos has been a great example for Fraga. When Fraga started *Nós do Morro*, Fraga adapted Freire’s methodology and created his own version. As previously mentioned, one of the three significant theatre movements that have contributed to the development of twentieth-first century applied theatre derives from Freire. His key concepts have had a great impact upon theatrical practice in Latin America. As articulated in his book, *The Pedagogy of The Oppressed* (1970), Freire’s techniques were drawn directly from his discontent with the traditional and top-down methodology of literacy training (1970: 77). In Freire’s view, students were not ignorant but simply lacked the linguistic tools for reading and writing. Therefore, Freire suggested a dialogical exchange through which literacy trainers and students could learn about their lives. Through this process, the concepts and language could be mutually established.

²⁴ During my observations in 2009, humour was still a main ingredient for the performances, specifically those that dealt with sensitive subjects about day-to-day life in the *favela*.

Extending Freire's approach to the cultural sphere would define a relationship of empathy and can only be achieved by communication. It is not about conquering people or invading their lives; it is about gaining their loyalty (Ibid.: 163):

Cultural synthesis is the opposite of cultural invasion. In cultural invasion, outsiders come in to teach their worldview and values to the population. In cultural synthesis, outsiders come to learn from the population and the population learns from them. Cultural synthesis does not mean that the objective of revolutionary action should be limited by the aspirations expressed in the worldview of the people. If this were to happen [...] the revolutionary leaders would be passively bound to that vision. Neither invasion by the leaders of the people's worldview nor mere adaptation by the leaders to the [...] aspirations of the people is acceptable.

Freire argues that knowledge comes from learning to perceive social and economic contradictions and feeling empowered to take action against elements of oppression (Ibid.: 29). Many theatre practitioners have looked to Freire for a means by which they can create a form of theatre that communicates in a different way with the audience. Freire's ideas can be observed in Augusto Boal's theatre methodology, in which theatre is a vehicle to understand and change the world.

The similarity between Freire's theory and *Nós do Morro's* practice lies within the origins of the group: the significance of *cultural synthesis*. Two different groups, the *favelados* and the immigrants, are in a dialogical model of interaction, learning from each other, for example about the relationship between the two groups, the humbleness of learning, engaging with the community and neighbourliness. However, the meaning of *cultural synthesis* within *Nós do Morro's* philosophy differs from Freire's theory and can be found in the art produced: the theatre performances. The company sees art as an outcome rather than a vehicle to understand and change the world. In this context, the outcome means that the world has changed: *Nós do Morro* argues that the existence of art in the world creates a different world and provokes the dreams of the spectators. *Nós do Morro* stages international classic narratives, often portraying the *favela*, seen from an aesthetic viewpoint. The idea is that the moral of the classic stories performed on stage are related to daily lives in the *favela*.

Moreover, Boal's Theatre of the Oppressed framework is not welcomed within *Nós do Morro*. Boal's approach works towards a political intervention: the collective experiences of groups are used as forums, seeking to find solutions for the 'oppressed' that bring about transformations beyond the workshop. *Nós do Morro's* classes do not work towards political

intervention. The actors refuse to see themselves as oppressed people; they use theatre to flourish as actors. An intriguing comment of *Nós do Morro*'s actors about Boal's practice: 'We are not oppressed, we have carnival' (Ferra da Silva 2009, pers. comm. 6 Nov.). This actor implicitly articulated that artists need to move away from the assumption that socially engaged theatre consists only of Boal's practice. Ferra da Silva relates his argument here to the presence of Rio's carnival, which highlights his belief in the rich cultural context in which he lives and works. Richness, defined as an aesthetic and economic term, illustrates why Boal's social aims differ from the theatre school's goals. Heritage (1998: 154-176) also perceives differences between the two approaches; the creation of *Nós do Morro*'s theatre does not hint directly at its usefulness as commentary (Ibid.: 168-169). Where Boal prioritises the use of theatre, *Nós do Morro* emphasises the role of the user rather than its use.

The public identity of the company

In 1995, the first documentary about *Nós do Morro* by Estevao Cevata marked the beginning of its existence in the public domain. To achieve an acceptable public identity, a Brazilian theatre company has to win a prize or a theatre award. Until 1996 *Nós do Morro* did not have this public identity. The performance that brought a fundamental change for the company was *Machadiando – three histories of Machado de Assis*.²⁵ Theatre critic Barbara Heliadora praised *Nós do Morro*'s ability to create this show, and the company won the Shell Theatre Award in the 'special' category.²⁶ The purpose of these awards is to celebrate the contribution of artists in Brazil and to encourage less well-known artists and theatre companies to pursue their artistic dreams. Through winning a prize, artists and cultural groups receive free publicity and are able to attract spectators. Oil Company Shell argues (Shell, 2012) that these awards lose their power when artists ignore the attention and the expectations of the public. It should be noted that *Nós do Morro*'s main funder is another major oil company, *Petrobrás*. The position of *Nós do Morro* inside the economic-social-cultural network was enhanced by winning awards in the "special" category, emphasising its exceptional status of being the first *favela*-based theatre company to win these awards and to achieve a public identity via prizes and the funding of oil companies. *Nós do Morro*'s choices within this network therefore seem ambiguous. That is, the many other awards that

²⁵ Joaquim Maria Machado de Assis (1839-1908) was a Brazilian novelist, poet and playwright and has been seen as the greatest contributor to Brazilian literature.

²⁶ Shell Theatre Awards were established in 1988. For more information, see <http://www.shell.com/bra/environment-society/brazil-social-investments/theatre-awards.html>.

followed (including Prêmio Coca-Cola de Teatro Jovem, Prêmio Orgulho Carioca (awarded by the City Government of Rio de Janeiro), an Honourable Mention from the United Nations, and Carioca Merit of Human Rights from the Municipal Secretary of Social Assistance of Rio) illustrate that the company attained their identity mainly via prizes linked to social topics such as human rights, conferred by a mixture of global corporations and global political institutions. Moreover, their first public recognition only came via global audiences. This will be further discussed in the following part of the chapter.

Nowadays, by using marketing strategies and a casting agency, the company has given rise to talented actors in Brazilian films, television shows and soap operas. The actors are not typecast as black criminals coming from the *favela* as they would have been before; currently the actors are cast in a variety of roles. In the successful movie *Cidade de Deus* (City of God) (2002), Fraga worked closely with directors Fernando Meirelles and Kátia Lund for three months with hundred actors, and *Nós do Morro*'s actors played leading roles in the film. According to Fraga, the reason for the film's success was the concept of collective creation: the group was living and working without any form of hierarchy. In 2006 the group took part in the the Complete Works Festival in Stratford-upon-Avon, presenting *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*.

Nós do Morro's organisation

It is evident that this theatre company has been running for over 25 years. The organisation consists of a board with clear tasks: artistic director, financial director, dramaturge, coordinator, marketing/culture officers and teachers with a diversity of artistic backgrounds. The four friends gradually moved into specific artistic roles within the company: Fraga became the artistic director, Corrêa e Castro the group's dramatist and dramaturge, Pinheiro was in charge of the overall lighting, and since 1990 Zezé Silva has been the financial director. In 1996, *Teatro do Vidigal*, with a capacity of 80 spectators, became the home of the performances. And in 1998, *Nós do Morro* transformed *Casarão* from an old mansion into a cultural centre consisting of offices, workshop rooms, kitchens, a health centre, a library and a visual arts centre. *Nós do Morro* expanded its area of operation through the artistic success of its plays.



Figure 3: Rehearsal spaces at Casarão. (Photo: Kirsten Broekman)

The school currently offers a variety of classes including theatre interpretation, capoeira, voice, percussion, audio-visual techniques, improvisation, storytelling, art history and many more. The company has produced numerous major theatre productions presented in different venues in Rio de Janeiro, in other cities around the country and abroad. The list of plays performed include *Nights of Vidigal* by Gabriel Moura, *Machadiando – three stories of Machado de Assis*, *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* by William Shakespeare, *Carmen de Tal* by Luiz Paulo Corrêa e Castro inspired by the work of Georges Bizet, and *The Petty Bourgeois* by Maxim Gorky.

Today, the company is still creating art and the Vidigal residents still support Fraga. He acknowledges that the influence of upper-class leaders is necessary in a company like *Nós do Morro*, and they are individually recognised and accepted for their leadership and knowledge; however, their individual creativity is inseparable from the group. Fraga also emphasises the importance of using classical theatre literature and playwrights (such as Shakespeare, Gogol and Gorky), which is defined as ‘elitist’ and ‘high art’ in Latin American popular theatre. I am aware that this seems to expose a faultline in the company’s approach, based on Freire’s ethos. I argue, however, that an education in taste is not necessarily in opposition to Freire’s idea of *cultural synthesis*. Key to my use of the theories of Bourdieu and Freire throughout the chapter is to frame and understand what

the company is doing within the landscape of aesthetic and social worth. The Vidigal audience – consisting of *favela* dwellers and loved ones from different neighbourhoods – experiences the ‘genuine’ intention of the company during every show. The spectators demonstrate total attentiveness, great response and high appreciation for the spectacles. They see and enjoy plays by famous playwrights. Bourdieu argued that the distribution of high art will not be helpful because less educated people will not be able to appreciate it. Moreover, he suggested that taste is dependent upon capital and must be obtained, for example through education. Fraga demonstrates in his work that upper-class leaders are able to educate the students and audiences. The students’ and audiences’ cultural capital is developed through *Nós do Morro*’s education.

The company’s organisation and distinctive approach based on Freire’s methodology illustrate the interconnectedness of its social and artistic worth. The different aspects of professionalism – discipline, structure and creativity – are visible in *Nós do Morro*’s classes and meetings. The triangle of home, theatre and school is *Nós do Morro*’s aesthetic, which successfully transfers knowledge and artistic education to the student-actors.

The following part of this chapter will introduce the pivotal *economic* relationship within the debate about social and aesthetic tensions. The next subsection offers an understanding of these tensions and how the economic drivers govern the aesthetic notions here. I describe the segregation and exclusion in the Vidigal *favela*. It is the concept of this specific space that caused the most resentment regarding *Nós do Morro*’s recognition within the cultural landscape of Rio de Janeiro and the process of funding applications.

2.3. Theatre in an unwanted space

Social systems, such as the Brazilian authorities historically and today, in preparation for Brazil’s upcoming publicity for the 2014 World Cup and the 2016 Olympics, use processes of exclusion (for example by building walls and demolishing *favela* housing) in order to separate experiences, objects and realities that threaten a system of order. These exclusion processes have certain metaphors attached to them, broadly linked to debates about the poor, such as ‘the great unclean’ or ‘human dirt’ (Marmot, 2005: 1099; Scheper-Hughes, 1992: 61; Vambe, 2008: 3-5). The majority of global historical government policies around

slum clearance exercises, for example *Operation Murambatsvina*²⁷ in Zimbabwe, had a public health/disease control agenda (Harris, 2008: 40-42). Efforts to reduce the risk of the spread of infectious diseases in these areas – perceiving HIV/AIDS patients as the essence of moral ‘dirt’ – have been used to force out and make enormous sections of the urban deprived homeless. ‘Dirt’ is used as a metonym and metaphor linked to disease and infection, and this connection of the ‘metaphorical nexus was moralised so as to justify discursively the evictions as an act of ‘purifying’ the cities’ (Harris, 2008: 49). Moreover, the discursive justification of the forced removal of people, of human purging, has inhumane precedents in the segregation of social classes in Rio de Janeiro. *Favelados* from the Vidigal and Santa Marta *favelas*, including *Nós do Morro*’s students, use very similar metonymies. The *favelados* use terms like *unwanted* to express how they feel imprisoned through the urban developments of the city. They feel as if they are treated as *dirt*, excluded and segregated from the rest of society. The Brazilian authorities are setting borders and limits as to where and when the *favela* dwellers can come and go (Ferra da Silva 2009, pers. comm., 6 Nov). In addition, the international media²⁸ used metaphors linked to dirt and cleanliness in reporting the widespread national protests of June 2013. The demonstrations were against corruption, the inequality of wealth, and the rising costs of the 2014 World Cup and the 2016 Olympics.²⁹ The *favelados* were demanding for example schools to be built to Federation International de Football Association (FIFA) standards, relating the high demand for football stadiums in Brazil to the poor public education system (Blitz, 2013). Finally, metaphors of ‘dirt’ are also linked to the ways the *favela*’s social and artistic activities are discussed in the media, because these activities modify the hegemonic view, which gives the *favela*’s image a negative undertone.

The authorities, including state governor Sergio Cabral, claim that walls improve Rio’s inhabitants’ lives and protect *favela* dwellers from the drugs factions. Cabral uses similar terms of exclusion by expressing that the walls ‘help the city to deal with drug trafficking and vigilantes, by putting limits on uncontrolled growth’ (Phillips, 2009), and in 2007 he

²⁷ ‘Operation Clean-up’ as defined by the Zimbabwean authorities; however, another interpretation of *Murambatsvina* is ‘get rid of the filth’ (Harris, 2008: 40-42). This operation affected around 700,000 inhabitants, the UN states.

²⁸ See for example <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2009/jan/06/brazil-rio-slum-barrier>, last accessed 10 August 2013.

²⁹ Initially, Brazilians were protesting against the expensive transportation prices in the cities; however, demonstrations about corruption and world events took over.

called *favelas* ‘a factory for producing criminals’. [...] ‘O *asfalto*, fertility rates are at Swiss levels, [...] while in the *favelas* it’s like *Zambia*’ (Regalado, 2009). The usage of the term ‘*o asfalto*’ in Rio de Janeiro explicitly highlights the social class divide in the city. The *favelas* are only known for their steep muddy roads and the associated chaos, and real *favela* life and culture is neglected. Moreover, the image of the successful economic history of Brazil leads the country to wish to keep its strong position within the international community, but also drives it to deal with unwanted or dirty spaces that may pollute this position and image. In Brazil’s ethnic diversity, mixing seems to be toxifying, and walls need to be built to keep enemies and unwanted people out. *Favelas* are a constant part of popular imagination, somewhere between ideas of crime scenes, fear, dirt and deforestation, and a romantic haven for artists. Depending where a person sits within Brazilian popular culture, they will have a different idea of what the *favela* is. The metaphors ‘dirty’ and ‘unclean’ within the exclusion debates are nowadays part of the contemporary Brazilian social policy and the *favelados*’ responses. Although it should be noted that these terms are ‘performative’ and therefore contested and unfixed, the construction of politics around the terms ‘dirt’ and ‘cleanliness’ is helpful in understanding *Nós do Morro*’s aesthetic discourse: the terms assist in describing the public resentment of the company’s recognition within the cultural landscape and the process of funding applications.

This part of the chapter draws attention to the fact that applied theatre is embedded in global systems, economic flows of finance and the accompanying exploitation and destruction, which, like dirt, is something that everyone is aware of, but rarely comfortable looking into the face of. We are reluctant to be confronted with dirt and we often prefer others to deal with it. Social anthropologist Mary Douglas argues (1966) that the idea of dirt reminds us of two concepts: the care for hygiene and the respect for conventions. Ideas of cleanliness and dirt are often allied to notions of order on one hand and disorder on the other hand. As Douglas describes, ‘dirt is the by-product of a systematic ordering and classification of matter, in so far as ordering involves rejecting inappropriate elements’ (1966: 35). Thus, although we struggle to avoid dirt by being ethical, religious and decent, we are not only the generators of dirt – a mentality that results in instinctive responses like disgust and anxiety – but dirt is also a distinctive label of civilization, which shows the proof of economic and global development (Cox et al., 2011: 1-4). *Nós do Morro* is part of this set of assumptions and values that constitutes the way of viewing reality for the community that shares them, and the complex network of social, aesthetic and economic pressures *Nós do Morro* is caught within. Therefore, it is crucial to explore how its aesthetic

discourse is shaped by the politics of dirt and cleanliness. The following section provides an overview of the spatial elements within the social-geographical space of *Nós do Morro*, and describes how its relevant aspects – diversity, lack of control, hybridity – have influenced its aesthetic discourse. The dirt and cleanliness dichotomy will reveal the controversial position *Nós do Morro* has within global economic flows.

Divided city

The defects of the capitalist and globalised world are displayed in Rio de Janeiro (Coutinho, 2011: 79). In particular, the territory of the *favelas* has a long history as a space of exclusion and exception, and the struggle for control over this space has been a feature of Brazilian politics from the moment the army constructed the first *favela* in the last decades of the nineteenth century.³⁰ The lack of employment opportunities and enhanced processes of urbanisation led to the mass production of *favelas*. Inhabitants of *favelas* are confronted with numerous obstacles: many families live in communities lacking basic essentials like clean water, electricity and sewage systems. There is a lack of secondary education, social development, clinics and urban planning.

Brazil's military dictatorship propelled the nation towards rapid industrial growth and made it the Western world's eighth-largest economy. This economic explosion failed to filter down to the millions of workers in the *favelas* and only gave rise to a growing inequality of wealth (Perlman, 2010: 12-15; Reid, 2007: 13-22). At the beginning of the 1980s, the start of democracy benefited the *favela* dwellers with the construction of schools and sanitation.



Figure 4: *Vidigal favela*. (Photo: Kirsten Broekman)

³⁰ In 1897 20,000 soldiers returning from the Canudos campaign could not find anywhere to live in Rio de Janeiro, even though the government had promised free housing upon return. The country's first *favela* was built when the army decided to settle on the hillside of *Morro da Providência* (Neate and Platt, 2006: 9-11). The soldiers were familiar with the *favela*, a plant of the Caatinga region, capable of surviving long dry periods on the hills where they grew. They nicknamed their new home *favela*. Due to the city's widespread health and sanitation problems and the necessary demolition of housing, the poorest citizens also fled to the hills.

Nonetheless, the closure of industry and the rise in unemployment that came from restructuring the state, the privatisation of essential services and the unequal globalisation of trade resulted in the global phenomenon of ‘new poverty’ (Ramos, 2007b: 328-329). Distribution and sales of cocaine in urban centres from the *favelas* to the middle and upper classes reinforced the intricate nature of the relationships between the *favela* communities, drug gangs and the state (Skidmore, 2010: 185-190). The rival local drugs factions, functioning as highly organised criminal armies – *Comando Vermelho* (‘Red Command’, established in a Brazilian prison in 1979), *Terceiro Comando Puro* (‘Pure Third Command’) and *Amigos dos Amigos* (‘Friends of Friends’) – fought to control the most lucrative points for drug trafficking. The widespread police corruption and availability of weapons were also seen as a basis for violence and criminality.³¹

The young *favelados* responded by developing cultural projects and local initiatives for the mobilisation of young people in the peripheral areas. Although *Nós do Morro* was established before the rise of the drug factions, the state’s inability to provide basic facilities required the intervention of popular programmes. The company not only introduced theatre to the community; it also furthered a trend observed in other popular artistic presentations in which the central character of the work was the *favela* itself (Couthino, 2011: 88). Not only does *Nós do Morro* discuss the *favela* in their own productions, ‘they attempt to find ways to make the *favela* the creator of its own account’ (Ibid.). This then would hopefully force a change in the discourse of the mass media that constructs *favela* dwellers as indigent people vulnerable to joining criminal gangs. Janice Perlman uses the phrase ‘the myths of marginalisation’ (Perlman, 1976: 91-132), rejecting the belief that *favelados* are perceived as parasites or leeches on society and behave according to the culture of poverty (Perlman, 1976: 2). *Favelados* are not politically or economically marginal; rather, they are repressed and exploited. *Nós do Morro*’s financial director Zezinho agrees (Zezinho 2009, pers. comm., 20 Nov.):

It is as if the *asfalto* world does not want outsiders to know the *favela* communities. This reinforces the marginalisation. Those Rio people probably never set foot in a *favela*, but yet they have such fears. We all know that *favelas* have their own set of problems associated with the drugs trade, but it is not all dirt, poverty and misery in the *morros*.

³¹ Approximately 14,000 homicides were committed in the Brazilian *favelas* during the 1980s, including 4,000 of people between 15 and 24 years old (Souza e Silva and Luiz Barbosa, 2005).

The complexity of this viewpoint is that *favelados* have always been an ecologically defined group rather than being part of civil society or the wider social system. This did not change after the dictatorship; the government withholds from these areas any rights to development or growth. Although today *favelas*' educational and material conditions are improved, the violence, drug trade and death rates have nonetheless drastically intensified. Students from *Nós do Morro* – former gang members - described the attractive position of the drugs community (Santiago 2009, pers. comm., 13 Nov.):

It is not only because of the money, it has to do with status: the image of impressing girls, revolting against parents and not paying any taxes. In many cases, returning to the drug faction seems to be the only solution after coming out of the excessive judicial rollercoaster.

The *favelados* and students express that they are perceived as dirt and unwanted: the authorities attempt to improve their living conditions, but by excluding them from employment and job opportunities, the *favela* dweller is still out of space, excluded from the city. Douglas suggests that dirt is 'matter out of place' (1966: 35). The *favelados* clearly state that they feel that there is no place allocated to them and understand that they are out of place. Moreover, Rancière's concept of 'distribution of the sensible fabric', as I have indicated in Chapter One, is representative here as this concept discloses who can have a part in 'what is common to the community based on what they do and on the time and space in which this activity is performed' (2006: 12). Having a particular social, cultural or economic profession thereby determines the capability to take charge of what is shared in the community (Ibid.: 13). In informal meetings, the *favelados* explained that they are invisible in society; the authorities determine how much visibility the *favela* dwellers are allowed to have in the city centre. By excluding them from job opportunities, the *favelados* are not capable to take charge of what is shared in the community and cannot truly participate in society.

After nearly three decades of neoliberal reforms and globalising urban modernity, 50 to 70% of urban citizens are estimated to live in poverty, insecurity and exclusion (Koonings and Kruijt, 2007).³² The *favela* has also been a territory where artistic responses –

³² Due to host world sports events, the authorities realised in 2009 that they had a public relations problem after a series of violent confrontations across Rio's *favelas*. The law enforcement programme *Unidade de Polícia Pacificadora* (Pacifying Police Unit) (UPP) was initiated: police put up permanent stations to gain the trust of the local population and regain territories that were controlled by private militias and drug gangs. The UPP

community groups and organisations such as *Nós do Morro* – are working in conditions of deprivation. These creative responses attempt to perceive the city as more unified and less segregated, whilst confronting the history of exclusion in their performances. *Nós do Morro* stages international classical narratives often portraying the *favela* and highlighting the fact that life in conditions of poverty allows an individual to define, act and reflect on their artistic place in the world (Couthino, 2011: 86). This is illustrated by the presence of a strong aesthetic sphere *and* open aesthetic discourse within the classes and performances of *Nós do Morro*. Beyond the hegemonic discourse – traditionally portraying the *favela* in a harmful way – a new achievable discourse based on insider standpoints can be created. As Couthino puts it: ‘Far from being subjected to a reading from the “outside-in”, it is now the *favela* that is finding ways to present its own discourse from the “inside-out”’ (Couthino, 2011: 89). *Nós do Morro* can be defined as culture-keepers in an unwanted space. The landscape of the aesthetic and social worth of the company’s practice counter the economic and policy imperative to divide parts of the city, community and space into desirable and undesirable, or clean and dirty.

Clean the brand

Although the positive initiatives originating from popular settings in Rio de Janeiro are strengthening the community, the ‘outside’ Brazilian government has initiated the construction of high walls to encircle Rio’s *favelas* in preparation for its upcoming sports events. One of the containment walls is located in Rio’s Zona Sul, close to Vidigal, aimed at stemming the expansion of *favelas* behind the city’s richest suburbs. Around 600 houses were demolished and *favela* residents were relocated. The residents have been moved to peripheral communities far from the neighbourhood where they had been living for decades (interviews of NGO Catalytic Communities and *Nós do Morro*). The building of walls and demolishing of housing support exclusion and segregation, and refuses to acknowledge how embedded Brazilian society is in economic flows. The conceptual metaphor of building walls shows a resistance that everybody is inside of the discourse, and that the dirty and unwanted problems are seemingly always on the other side of the fence. *Nós do Morro* is part of this implicated discourse.

Human right activists such as Amnesty International have denounced the barriers and refer to them as the ‘Wall of Shame’, as the structures hide the aesthetically unsatisfactory view

programme has been enacted in eighteen *favelas* in Rio de Janeiro, including Vidigal. In some areas, violent crime has fallen, whilst property value has increased.

of *favelas*' violent life.³³ Moreover, environmental organisations have dismissed all claims that stopping *favelas*' illegal expansion will protect the Atlantic rainforest from deforestation and improve living conditions for *favelados*. However, the barrier has been very popular within the communities *outside* the *favelas*. During informal meetings, the Vidigal *favelados* stated that Rio's elite was trying to divide the city. The wall seems to act as a cleaning screen. 'Wall of Shame' is a literal description of the present state where the inequality of wealth has come to a critical point and where the Brazilian government is aiming to hide its guilty secret: the existence of these districts in a country that has the largest economy in Latin America.

Walls have always been part of civilisation, from the ancients to our contemporaries. They are built as artificial barriers for protection against wars, enemies and criminals, used as memorials or to mark borders. However, the usage of walls also segregates, separates, wipes away background noise, keeps out unwanted people or objects and obscures ugly or dirty situations, happenings or people. The building of walls and cleansing of areas bring us to Douglas's discourse (1966: 40) about what is regarded as dirt in a given society: 'dirt is the by-product of a systematic ordering and classification of matter, in so far as ordering involves rejecting inappropriate elements' (Ibid.: 35). Therefore, the Brazilian government defines and accepts the existence of the category 'clean', and determines what is allowed and not allowed in this category. It also returns to the urban slum clearance exercises from around the globe, for example in Zimbabwe. 'Dirt' here is used as a metaphor linked to environmental issues – moralised to informally justify the removals 'as an act of 'purifying' the cities' (Harris, 2008: 49), and for the land to be put to a more 'productive' use: that is, making sure that Rio de Janeiro has a one-dimensional image of costume parades, tanned beach bodies and large hotels as South America stages its first Olympics.

The building of the walls highlights marginalisation. Moreover, the socio-spatial elements around *Nós do Morro* influence the organisation and its aesthetic discourse. Janet Wolff states in *The Social Production of Art* that 'the view of the isolated artist may ignore the contemporary forms of employment and patronage for artists integrated and working on various levels of capitalist production and social organisation' (1993:12). Thus, art is not in opposition to any social group. Fraga frequently faces prejudice against the *favela* image –

³³ The expression "the Wall of Shame" – coined by Mayor of West Berlin, Willy Brandt, condemning the consequences of Berlin's Wall for dividing families, ideologies and religions – comes exactly 20 years after the fall of the Berlin Wall (Drechsel, 2010: 10-11).

the concept that art belongs solely to certain social groups – in conversations with theatre directors in downtown Rio. “*Como faz o teatrino, Guti?*” (‘How is your little theatre holding up, Guti?’): the diminutive for theatre suggests that *Nós do Morro* is merely a side interest for Fraga. It highlights the misjudgement that professional theatre is only possible outside *favela* spaces. Fraga continues to develop artistic creations and remains fully engaged in both the development of the Vidigal community during their exclusion due to decisions made by the authorities. These decisions, for example the building of the walls, reinforce the aesthetic sphere within the theatre company, rather than the social realm. That is, *Nós do Morro*’s location and global governance choices within the dirty and clean discourse strengthen the focus on the company’s aesthetic practice. As Fraga puts it (Guti Fraga quoted in Marques, 2012):

The only way to change stereotypes is through quality. That is the only way. One word that I do not want near my work is pity. Pity is an ugly word. People who have pity on us feel better about themselves and make us feel worse. First and foremost, you have to break through the emotion of pity with artistic quality.

Annually, *Nós do Morro* continue to produce professional performances, touring around the country and focussing on the visual, a high quality of acting and collective work. However, by remaining ‘aesthetic’ it has allowed the company to be used for different social agendas outside their control: I argue that *Nós do Morro* as a Brazilian export is ‘culturally necessary’ for Brazil’s positive image during the upcoming global events. During informal meetings with board members, they stated that the Brazilian authorities realised that the brand *Nós do Morro* could work to their benefit. Due to the company’s public identity, achieved via prizes conferred by a mixture of global corporations and political institutions, *Nós do Morro* has been invited to be involved in the sports events. This illustrates that not only did its first public recognition come via global audiences after becoming locally more popular, but also their more recent ‘cultural’ recognition came from a branding perspective of the authorities wishing to project an image of Brazil to an international audience. *Nós do Morro* does not offer a social agenda, therefore, has one to give to the authorities. This shows how *Nós do Morro*’s practice is embedded and networked in a complex series of sometimes overlapping, sometimes competing economic, social and aesthetic practices.

Moreover, the marginalisation also results in concerns by the directors of *Nós do Morro*, struggling with their image within the theatre landscape of the wider environment of Rio de Janeiro. During interviews, the board members argued that students are admitted only after

an intensive auditioning process – applying for a place within the company should be a conscious and serious artistic decision. Originally, the school was exclusively for *favela* residents; however, in 2003 *Nós do Morro* opened its doors to a wider public. Nowadays, students from other neighbourhoods are welcomed into the school. The majority of these students travel two hours or more to participate in the classes: some of them come from other *favelas* or states, whilst others come from upper-class areas of Rio de Janeiro. The board of *Nós do Morro* argues that cultural and social diversity increases the quality and development of theatre. However, the number of new students coming from other areas is limited to 15%.

The school, therefore, cannot be profoundly defined by its social purposiveness. The aim is to educate people through art and to challenge the students to find ways to work and live as artists. *Nós do Morro* refuses to be perceived as a heroic saviour of young drug users or gang members in the *favelas*; these youngsters should go to school. Its main difference from other professional theatre companies in the city centre is the lack of funding; nonetheless, *Nós do Morro* takes part in the professional theatre landscape. The company describes itself as a professional theatre company based in the Vidigal *favela*. The creation of professional theatre productions requires many resources and funds, because the art-form of theatre needs more time and effort to produce than carnival or musical spectacles. The board explains that in carnival performances and musical spectacles the performance is more important than the aesthetic quality. The professional art model of *Nós do Morro* is an artist-led approach that perceives the artist's inspiration and individualism to work with groups of young people to teach, inspire and encourage activity in their art-forms. The practitioners are there as artists, not as teachers or therapists. This model is completely different to the utilitarian applied theatre model, where the emphasis on theatre making is for a specific social purpose, with a particular audience in a unique context (Neelands, 2007: 306-307). In conversations with board members Corrêa e Castro and Pinheiro, they stated that the theatre company works hard to be perceived as an artistically strong figure from the *favela* within the professional theatre industry – the theatre group does not define itself by their its aims. It is also aiming to be a brand. This concerns the expression of Fraga's *teatrino*, the diminutive of theatre, which could be seen as an excuse, as social aims are not always appreciated in the professional theatre industry. Within the aesthetic arena of *Nós do Morro*, there is social advocacy in not concentrating on social advocacy. *Nós do Morro* therefore places itself both outside and inside the walls, ignoring or accepting the

economic flows that influence its artistic work. Today, Rio's economic development frames *Nós do Morro*'s aesthetic discourse.

This debate not only relates to exclusion and isolation, but also reflects the ongoing debate of the accessibility of high art, the difference between high and low art and questions about mass culture and popular culture. The following part highlights how global governance and funding impact on the aesthetic discourse of *Nós do Morro*. It highlights the influence of economic flows on the aesthetic notions of the company.

2.4. Circulation instead of Globalisation³⁴ - The cultural policy model

Canadian social activist Naomi Klein asserts in *The Shock Doctrine* (2007) that over the past decades, unpopular free market policies have come to dominate the world through the exploitation of people and countries in the aftermath of major disasters: wars, terrorist attacks, natural disasters or economic turmoil. Klein suggests that after a shock in society, privatisation and deregulation will usually take place, to the advantage of large corporations, corrupt governments and the wealthy upper classes. The next chapter will for example illustrate how Khmer Rouge leader Pol Pot named Cambodia 'Year Zero' – and brought the country back to the same year – after “shocking” the country. As a counterargument, Klein notes that markets need not be fundamentalist (2007: 20, *my italics*):

It is eminently possible to have a market-based economy that requires no such brutality and demands no such ideological purity. A free market in consumer products can coexist with free public health care, with public schools, with a large segment of the economy – *like a national oil company* – held in state hands. It's equally possible to require corporations to pay decent wages, [...], and for governments to tax and redistribute wealth so that the sharp inequalities that mark the corporatist state are reduced.

Nobel laureate Joseph E. Stiglitz (2002; 2007a) believes that neoliberalism has increased poverty and economic crises. As Stiglitz puts it (2007a):

Market fundamentalists never really appreciated the institutions required to make an economy function well, nor the broader social fabric that civilizations require to prosper and flourish.

³⁴ *Globo* is the famous Brazilian commercial television network – the second-largest in the world in annual revenue – reaching almost the entire Brazilian population due to the popularity of its soap operas.

Whilst working for the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank, Stiglitz came to understand that these organisations acted against the interests of deprived developing countries. In particular, Stiglitz experienced Klein’s shock theory in the IMF’s hasty ways of “marketing economies”, which failed to allow for the development of local commerce (2002: xii).

Nós do Morro’s place in the global free market of economic flows can be found in the funding policy of *Petrobrás*. Since 2001, *Nós do Morro* has been supported monetarily by one of the largest oil companies globally, and possibly the largest oil provider in the world by 2025: *Petrobrás*.³⁵ After 15 years working without funding, *Nós do Morro*’s financial support from *Petrobrás* is focussed on the costs of electricity for the school and theatre, and a minimum of eight months of staff salaries annually. Funding for theatre practice that comes from major oil companies and global corporations can be identified as ‘dirty’ money within the left-oriented political ideas of theatre. Within Marxist and socialist doctrines, private goods, private capital or private money from global corporations are not benign and are likely to be suspicious, that is, bad, or again ‘dirty’. Nitzan and Bichler (2009) describe how economists argue that capital is an economic classification attached to material certainty ‘in which the underlying processes of consumption and production derives from and reflects the monetary value of capital’ (2009:5). Marxists, however, ‘view capital as a social relation embedded in productive, material entities [...] the key issue is not the utility that the capital produces, but the social process by which capital itself gets produced’ (Ibid.: 6). From a Marxist perspective, the very nature of capitalism is that capitalists who do not work own the means of production, while workers who do not own the means perform the labour. It is within the economically productive sphere that class conflict is generated and labour is exploited. The ruling class – through the courts, the media, political parties, the church, and educational institutes – systematises ideas and develops an ideology to serve its purpose, which is to uphold its hegemony.

The complex position of *Nós do Morro* accepting oil dollars reveals the network of social and economic pressures the company is caught within. Oil dollars connect to flows of capital and finance in a neoliberal era. Countries – such as Brazil – fortunate enough to

³⁵ Brazil used the technology of drilling ultra-deep offshore wells in Brazil’s oil fields in the Atlantic Ocean. See: petrobras.com.

own this natural resource can build their development on oil (Karl, 2004: 661). Brazil's potential advantages are therefore increased government revenues to finance poverty reduction, improvements in technology, the economy and infrastructure, and support to related industries. Nevertheless, these advantages do not resonate with today's experience of the majority of oil-exporting countries (Karl, 2004: 661-662; Smith, 2004: 232-233). In contrast, the results of oil-led development tend to be harmful for these countries: the expected growth is slower; there are low rates of social welfare and high levels of corruption, poverty and unemployment. The countries that depend on oil are characterised by poor authority, often with destructive environmental and health results at local levels, and many occurrences of warfare and conflict (Karl, 2004: 662; Ross, 2001: 325-326). As Terry Karl puts it: 'countries that depend on oil for their livelihood eventually become among the most economically troubled, the most authoritarian, and the most conflict-ridden' (2004, 662). The metaphor 'dirty'³⁶ applies to oil dollars, due to the structures and incentives that oil dependence creates, not specifically because of the source itself (Karl, 2004: 671).

The contemporary equivalent of political theatre, people's theatre or activist theatre is theatre and performance inside anti-capitalist and global justice movements, who position themselves against global corporations and protest against the IMF and transnational corporations such as Shell and British Petroleum. There has also been a significant spread of 'performance activism' (Hughes, 2011: 3) within these movements, concerning issues like war, human rights and environmental pollution. These left-leaning activist movements might therefore perceive 'dirty' money as advancing hegemony. However, in the case of *Nós do Morro*, receipt of oil money does not contrast its counter-hegemonic principles and practice. Rather, the funding is applied to the improvement of the theatre company. Here, dirty money and dirty capital equals a clean aesthetic, that is, a clean performance: *Petrobrás's* funding results in artistic independence for *Nós do Morro*. Aesthetically speaking, *Nós do Morro* creates the artistic products (texts, genres and styles) that they desire. The deeply complex position of *Nós do Morro* within the economic-social-cultural network illustrates here that although the company's aesthetic remains 'clean', they are funded under the social department of *Petrobrás*. The complexity of the social agenda of *Petrobrás* will be discussed in the next section.

³⁶ The term 'dirty money' is used metaphorically for money laundering, driving the world's destructive activities such as crime, terrorism, drugs, prostitution and human trafficking (Lilley, 2000: 1-2).

Cultural policy

In Brazil, the Ministry of National Culture is the main organisation for cultural policy (Porto in Konijn, 2009: 23). The two models of funding are state-led subsidies and tax relief schemes. The country has three funding mechanisms within their cultural policy. Firstly, since 2000 the private organisation Social Service of Commerce (SESC) has carried out social welfare programmes, developed via commercial and service corporations' compulsory taxes. SESC's mandate involves the creation of permanent facilities focussed on healthcare, digital technology, tourism, social change and sports (Gilberto 2009, pers. comm., 1 Dec.). Secondly, the Law *Rouanet* is a tax-shelter system that allows companies to direct part of their revenue taxes to cultural production. Resources are derived from tax exemptions, and can be used for sponsorship and donations.³⁷ The Law grants a 4% tax discount for corporations. The Law started to be effectively used by companies, establishing itself as the predominant form of financing culture in Brazil.³⁸ *Rouanet* is the legacy of Brazilian president Fernando Collor de Mello (1990-1992), who revoked the Law *Sareny* due to a lack of transparency and control, and halted corporate funding of culture. *Rouanet* seemed less susceptible to corruption than its predecessors; however, the Law also attracted fewer companies to invest in cultural industries.

It could be argued that involvement of the government on any cultural topic is an intervention of the state into the freedom of artists; however, it also illustrates that the government indirectly offers incentives for cultural growth within its society and has not completely abandoned its population. Collor de Mello believed, however, that culture was able to survive in a free market economy without the intervention of government, and he did not foresee the possible negative consequences of this decision. Although the Law seems less susceptible to corruption, it has the potential to be corrupt. That is, companies with a negative effect on the public and which benefit from harmful effects on public health and the environment will have tax breaks, because they invest small portions of their wealth in the public good. Rio-based political activist and theatre director Marcus Vinicius

³⁷ Bearing the name of the then Minister of Culture, writer and ambassador Paul Sérgio Rouanet, who attempted to change the law.

³⁸ The Rouanet Law is a successor of the Sareny Law, promoting fiscal incentives by way of statutory provisions meant to stimulate cultural growth. The Sareny Law was the first law for creating funding for culture.

Faustini explains ‘that Law *Rouanet* is only beneficial for top-down people; for people and friends of employees from big companies’ (Vinicius Faustini 2009, pers. comm., 18 Dec.).

Collor de Mello considered culture as consumerism: creativity would give way to the rigidity of mass-produced art products. Collor de Mello ignored the fact that corporations would finance cultural organisations and stars with which they would like to be affiliated. Unknown (smaller) artistic productions were not expected to attract as much funding as performances involving popular artists or companies (Seabra in Konijn, 2009: 414-416). In addition, although the funding is money that the corporations would have had to pay as tax to the government, the corporations are still able to attach their logos to the project. The corporate money comes with a determination to shape cultural policy, as companies are only likely to sponsor certain kinds of work and ‘brands’. It could even be argued that it is a free advertisement for companies using taxpayers’ money. Naomi Klein outlines (2000: 39):

When the balance comes dramatically in favour of the sponsoring brand, the branding becomes troubling, stripping the hosting culture of its inherent value and treating it as little more than a promotional tool.

In an informal meeting in 2009, Paul Heritage stated that he supported the alteration of the existing funding mechanisms: here, neither the Ministry of Culture nor the state had any decision-making power over cultural projects. Now the private sector uses mostly public funds to support the marketing and corporate logic of the companies.³⁹ Heritage explained (Heritage 2009, pers. comm. 16 Mar.):

When a cookbook gets money from a TV chef and a private company, that means that tax-owned money sponsors TV commercial enterprise. [...] Money should not go to developing a cultural policy, the money should go to the government and then the government decides how to spend it.

Nós do Morro dramaturge Corrêa e Castro states that the complexities of public money and the role of the government affect the political viewpoint of the Brazilian authorities. He claims that cultural projects have been growing and developing but are still invisible to the authorities. The government merely sees *Nós do Morro* as mediators, civilized carriers of values in complex areas of the city and for the international community. The government is not aware of the artistic happenings and their impact on the Vidigal community (Corrêa e

³⁹ In 2009 and 2010 I interviewed Paul Heritage before and after my fieldwork and discussed a wide range of topics.

Castro 2009, pers. comm., 1 Dec.). The Brazilian government is a policy-making body that limits artistic freedom for *Nós do Morro*. This research demonstrates that – acknowledged by the artists – commercial monies, tax relief schemes, or ‘dirty’ money allow an artistic freedom for the theatre company, in contrast to ‘state’ or ‘civil society’ money, or ‘clean’ money (discussed in the following two chapters), which comes with strings attached in ways that serve neither art nor community. The profound ambiguities of the positioning of *Nós do Morro* here are the complexities around the term artistic ‘freedom’. Is there such a thing? In particular, what is the use of artistic freedom if it means the company becomes used for social programmes they cannot control? Bourdieu – as described above – suggests that artistic tastes are culturally and socially produced, so does ‘freedom’ exist? It could imply freedom to – occasionally – leap over Rio’s walls, but only if the ‘laundering’ operation is put into place first. Money for ‘social’ development produces middle-class theatre for middle-class tastes, and illustrates again the impact of global governance and funding practices on the aesthetic discourse of the company.

The third funding mechanism is *Editais*: calls for proposals for cultural projects, artists and companies in various dramatic arts. These proposals need to be approved by the Ministry of Culture, and upon approval, the applicant can seek sponsorship from citizens or companies. For their ‘encouragement’, the companies receive partial or complete tax relief of their sponsorship. The most important corporation using *Rouanet* for cultural sponsorship is *Petrobrás* (Seabra in Konijn, 2009: 417). Evidence shows that from 2002 to 2009 incentive laws injected almost 2 billion GBP into the Brazilian cultural system.⁴⁰ Of the 500 largest sponsors in 2007, 44% of the money came from only six companies, with 47.5 million GBP from *Petrobrás*. (*Eletróbrás*: 3.9 million GBP, *Banco Bradesco*: 5.6 million GBP, *Banco do Brasil*: 5.66 million GBP [...] (Ibid.: 418)). Therefore, *Petrobrás* is probably the most important cultural policy-maker in Brazil. The conscious policy here is that the kinds of works that get supported via Law *Rouanet* are often major companies and famous artists, with a smaller portion to unknown theatre companies and alternative artists interested in research and experimentation (Cultural Department *Petrobrás* 2009, pers.

⁴⁰ Evidence and data have been derived from interviews and literature from 2009 during my fieldwork observations. See www.braz.gov.br

comm., 9 Dec.).⁴¹ The shape of the cultural policy that *Petrobrás* is seeking will be described in the following section.

Petrobrás

Since 1981, *Petrobrás* has supported cultural projects providing artistic opportunities and developing educational activities for the Brazilian population via *Ronanet*. According to *Petrobrás*, it could be considered the most influential because it annually attempts to improve its policies of production and distribution of new shows and circulation and maintenance of theatre companies (Seabra in Konijn, 2009: 417-418). *Petrobrás* could be perceived as the only corporation involved in patronage because it surpasses the 4% of tax money it can contribute to culture, and contributes out of its own pockets. Its 2007 logo, *Sustainable Development and Citizenship*, demonstrates *Petrobrás's* contribution to national, regional and local development by guaranteeing productive and dignified conditions for people living in disadvantaged areas and by reducing poverty.⁴² This observation brings us back to Klein's argument about sponsorship that often employs images to associate products with optimistic cultural and social experiences (2000:29).

The cultural sponsorship of *Petrobrás's* projects is divided into two different departments: the social funding department, focussing on social art projects in disadvantaged areas, and the cultural funding department. *Nós do Morro* is funded by the social department of *Petrobrás*, excluding the co-production of *Two Gentlemen in Verona* performed in the UK. The cultural funding department sponsored this production. Regarding the funding policy of *Nós do Morro*, *Petrobrás* staff pointed out: 'Of course, you understand that we will never assign *Nós do Morro's* projects to the cultural funding department rather than the social funding department' (Cultural Department *Petrobrás* 2009, pers. comm., 9 Dec.). Here, *Nós do Morro's* artistic freedom is compromised, because the company becomes used for social programmes they have no control over. *Nós do Morro* has never claimed to have a social purpose and promotes nothing other than creating artistic expressions. They define themselves as a professional theatre company: the term 'applied theatre company' was never heard in interviews or observations. *Petrobrás* will not allow them into the cultural department, because for *Petrobrás* it is not about creating art. *Petrobrás* only gives 'cultural'

⁴¹ I conducted two extensive semi-structured interviews with two different executives during my fieldwork in Rio de Janeiro.

⁴² See: petrobras.com

money to support the *favela* a little when the international image is vital for the cultural department, for example funding the co-production of *Two Gentlemen in Verona* performed in the UK. In order to ‘clean’ the money and brand of the company, *Petrobrás* needs to see *Nós do Morro* as a social concern, contributing to the public good. It could be argued that in this case, the cultural side is a waste of money. The insistence on seeing money going into the *favela* as social rather than cultural is part of keeping the *favela* behind the wall, unable to be integrated into mainstream cultural flows until the *favela* and *favelados* have developed ‘socially’.

According to Fraga, the group has never sold misery. Fraga despises paternalism and artists who ask for money because they live or work in difficult social situations. However, Fraga had to acknowledge that funding is required to create artistic opportunities in the *favela*. After 15 years without funding, *Nós do Morro* can now employ teachers and directors. Returning to Schechner’s dichotomy that social theatre often includes aesthetic elements and aesthetic theatre may include instrumental elements, but that the two are seen as opposite ends of the spectrum (Jackson, 2007: 26), this suggests that social and aesthetic functions cannot be equally at work at the same moment in the same performance. It is the exception if the two are working simultaneously. *Petrobrás* has similar views on social theatre and aesthetic theatre - illustrated by its funding policies – and does not seem to perceive *Nós do Morro*’s theatre as a ‘landscape’ of social and aesthetic worth.

The theatre company does not receive sponsorship from the Ministry of Culture. *Petrobrás* is a semi-public company, belonging to the state of Brazil. In an informal meeting, Heritage questioned if it matters that the money travels from *Petrobrás* to *Nós do Morro* rather than from *Petrobrás* to the authorities and then to *Nós do Morro* (Heritage 2009, pers. comm. 16 Mar.)? Heritage reasons that the question arises whether an arts council or an independent organisation should decide on arts funding instead of the Brazilian authorities. The government is decisive about issues relating to healthcare, education and infrastructure. Should the role of the government in arts and culture differ from any other policy-making process (Ibid.)? During interviews, the board of *Nós do Morro* articulated that it would like to see *Petrobrás*’s money travel directly to the government. The authorities could then decide which company deserves support. The board argued that many global corporations are preoccupied with the international market and what sells, whilst it is the government’s duty to pay attention to cultural diversity.

In 2006 *Cirque de Soleil* came to Brazil for the first time and received around 2.5 million GBP through *Rouanel*.⁴³ Independent companies like *Nós do Morro*, *Tá Na Rua* and *Oficina da Cooperativa* require an annual income of around 87,000 GBP to create performances and events. Freddy Pinheiro, a board member of *Nós do Morro*, could not hide his annoyance when he explained that in 2006, the funding was cut due to the *Cirque du Soleil* production. In particular, the expensive tickets resulted in large profits. *Nós do Morro*'s artistic limitations – caused by the buy-out of *Cirque du Soleil* – resonate with Vázquez's arguments about the effects of capitalism on art, claiming that free creative activity loses its quality under capitalism. Artistic work under capitalism, regarded as merchandise, will be less free to achieve its creative goals in comparison to those that have to sell their work on the art market. Moreover, Vázquez argues (1973: 84):

The artist is subject to the tastes, preferences, ideas, and aesthetic notions of those who influence the market. Inasmuch as he produces the works of art destined for a market that absorbs them, the artists cannot fail to heed the exigencies of this market: they often affect the content as well as the form of a work of art, thus placing limitations on the artist, stifling his creative potential, his individuality.

It could be suggested that Vázquez's arguments are not specifically related to capitalist society exclusively; however, it is one way to emphasise the struggles of theatre company *Nós do Morro*, competing not only with theatre companies from outside *favelas*, international companies and corporations, but also with the direct consequences of the free market policies and capitalism involved in the production of art and the processes through which art is constructed.

Despite their disagreement about the *Cirque du Soleil* event, *Nós do Morro*'s board perceives *Petrobrás* as the 'good guy', although their funds are paid from the social department, rather than *Petrobrás*'s cultural funding department. Even *Petrobrás*'s social agenda is not *Nós do Morro*'s main struggle. The problem of Brazilian funding mechanisms is not *Petrobrás*; it offers *Nós do Morro* the opportunity to grow with dignity and quality, to experiment and travel. As arose in interviews with *Nós do Morro*'s board members, their awareness of the 'social' funding policy reinforces the focus on the aesthetic sphere within the theatre company, rather than the social realm. Their practice therefore emphasises the significance

⁴³ The approval of 2.5 million GBP by the Ministry of Culture (rather than the requested 6.2 million GBP) resulted in the production company responsible for *Cirque du Soleil* asking main sponsor Bradesco Bank for 2.5 million GBP: the amount of money that would have been paid in taxes to the government (Seabra in Konijn, 2009: 416).

of using the visual, a high quality of acting, and collective work. This questions Heritage's and Vázquez's claims that global corporations will cause reduced artistic freedom, while *Petrobrás* produces more artistic opportunities for *Nós do Morro* than before they were funded. Due to *Petrobrás*, *Nós do Morro* can now hire professional directors and teachers resulting in a range of educational possibilities for the students. In many cases artists need to adjust their works, and/or the final product may be affected by economic or social aspects, such as patronage or commission demands. This chapter illustrates that the patronage frames the aesthetic discourse; however, it does not directly affect the artistic product. *Petrobrás* makes no interference with artistic decisions, reception or production: 'We give, they create' (Social Department *Petrobrás* 2009, pers. comm., 9 Dec).

Social aesthetics versus artist aesthetics

2003's *Programa Cultura Viva* ('The Living Art Programme') Art, Education and Citizenship was an initiative of Gilberto Gil, musician and Minister of Culture during Lula's first presidency.⁴⁴ The Living Art Programme supports existing artistic activities previous falling outside public funding mechanisms and social creative projects in vulnerable communities. The programme combines three dimensions of Brazilian cultural policy: (i) culture as an aesthetic and anthropological symbol; (ii) culture as a right of citizenship for all; and (iii) culture as an economic asset or development activity (Heritage, 2008: 22; Ramos 2009, pers. comm., 7 Dec.; Sekhar and Steinkamp, 2010: 17). The main initiative of the Programme is the *Pontos de Cultura* (Cultural Points) – the central players in charge of the programme's implementation – which are flexible and respond to community needs. Gil defines the Cultural Points as 'anthropological tao-in' (Lemos, 2011), referring to the Chinese therapeutic massage that, when applied to the right spots of the body, wakes up its internal energy. Gil asserts that the appropriate encouragements and motivations can foster cultural practices in places that have frequently been abandoned. He believes that each citizen should be considered a producer of culture, not only a consumer. Based on ideas of empowerment and autonomy, the Cultural Points provide the necessary tools for free access to the arts and local culture, especially for those coming from impoverished or rural

⁴⁴ Caetano and Gilberto Gil created *tropicália*, one of Brazil's major artistic movements that was a direct response to the military dictatorship: songs of protest created with electrical instruments and divergent musical styles (Krich, 1993: 29-31).

areas. *Nós do Morro* is one of the host organisations that has received governmental support for over three years to implement and develop its audio-visual department and projects.⁴⁵

Various Brazilian practitioners, including Faustini, outline the shift from *social aesthetics* to *artist aesthetics* in the *favelas* due to their political history and cultural development. The social art projects established during the 1980s were supported and recognised through their social aims; hence, ‘social aesthetics’. The development of artists’ collectives and theatre companies institutionalised as NGOs created a new industry, shifting to what the artwork did rather than what the artwork was. Artists were defined as *people* working in social art projects lacking a true representation of themselves in the city, as a result of marginalisation. The Cultural Points gave rise to the shift from ‘social aesthetics’ to redefining aesthetics, the so-called ‘artist aesthetics’. The difference between the aesthetics of popular or community art and upper-class art, Faustini argues, lies in utilising art as a vehicle for community-building and enhancing its own goals, and as a presentation of cultural capital within upper-class art (Vinicius Faustini 2009, pers. comm., 18 Dec.). Faustini’s viewpoint is derived from Foucault, who examined the special status of the sovereign and the elite in ritual and art representations. Where the marginalised are underrepresented, they rely on the elite to tell them who they are and what their relationship is, since the elite can know both at once. In his explorations of power, Foucault understands the ways of those individuals and practices that are considered marginal, the fragile and imperfect ways that power is deployed by the upper classes and the elite (1995: 192).

This brings us back to Bourdieu’s ideas of taste (1984: 6):

Taste, defined as the capacity to appropriate a given class of classified and classifying objects or practices, is the generative formula of lifestyle, and aversion to different lifestyles is one of the strongest barriers between classes.

Bourdieu’s demonstration of art’s essential divisiveness elevates theory into sociological fact. Clearly insofar as judgements of value made between our preferences affect our position within society and will have consequences for both our economic and social position, it is important to address that this concept can take unexpected turns, including

⁴⁵ The critique of the Cultural Points is that projects’ growth is not constant: after three years the projects are meant to be independent; however, many disappear due to the lack of financial support.

with *Nós do Morro*'s actors. It has become vital for some actors from upper-class areas in Rio de Janeiro to audition and travel to the Vidigal *favela* for *Nós do Morro*'s artistic education. *Nós do Morro* has included itself within the educational aspect of the higher-class society, and through this the upper classes have started to understand the worth of poverty, of the *favela*. Whether the upper-class actors wish it or not, they are being educated about the *favela* and its culture. Their cultural capital acquired through the company's education adds to their cultural awareness. However, the emphasis on this aspect of capital results in a curious interest in the actual social statuses and processes through which capital is constructed. Poverty is worth something here. Obtaining capital includes being part of poverty and its (ab)use. The turn to Bourdieu's 'high art' both affirms and challenges aspects of the idea of *habitus*. The 'social' dimensions of *Nós do Morro*'s artistic practice arguably mean that the notion of 'art' can become more inclusive, diverse and pluralistic. This reveals the complex network of social, aesthetic and economic pressures the company is caught within.

Public Culture, Public Good

The Living Art Programme highlights not only the political and educational agenda of the presidency by supporting popular culture in Brazil, but also its belief in the capitalist economic model as the way for development; that is, the recognition that the market will play a role in contemporary cultural expressions (Heritage, 2008: 30). Most Brazilian popular art expressions are linked to poverty and marginalisation, and therefore very sensitive to political or commercial domination threatening the basis from which they have developed. The risk of this programme, and of developing social structures into new relationships with other systems, is that the ideology in which these art-forms developed might not hold. It is the involvement of the state in cultural activities and granting new social values in poor communities where the authorities have been historically absent. Consequently, it could be argued that capitalism has retained control in Brazil of how the cultural landscape should appear, and that the power of globalisation has strengthened the walls. The companies themselves and the different classes are also admitting that the problem is always on the other side of the fence, and the building of walls shows a resistance to the idea that everybody is inside the class debate.⁴⁶

⁴⁶ The view of the new Minister of Culture in 2011, Ana de Holanda, on cultural policy concerning international organisations, scholars and activists. See <http://oglobo.globo.com/cultura/ministra-da-cultura-vai-rever-nova-lei-do-direito-autoral-2906192>, last accessed 15 May 2012.

Heritage (2008) argues that the Living Art Programme has ideological links to the Theatre of the Political Left, looking to save art-forms that are marginalised by the mass media through particular political interests. In Brazil, *Globo* is the fourth-largest television company in the world, to which 70% of television sets are tuned. As Heritage argues, 'Brazilian Cultura Popular is the antithesis to mass culture, as its preservation is a form of resistance to the homogenising effects of globalisation' (2008: 30). A common expression at educational institutions, for example the University of Rio de Janeiro (UniRio), is *Globalisation*, the power and influence of *Globo* TV. Brazilian youth grow up with the continuous influence of daily soap operas shown on *Globo* TV – lacking any so-called “youth filters” – mobilising and encouraging their style of clothing, language and status. Some even define the network as an ideology, a way of living or a risky indoctrination that is developing itself as an educational tool for children. Here, Adorno's view, as I have indicated in Chapter One, is representative of the theory that the culture industry's production and distribution of cultural products through mass media manipulates the population. Mass culture, Adorno stated, is the reason for human passivity, even in the most horrendous economic situations. It adores instrumental reason, whereas genuine art is autonomous and is not to be appreciated and understood instrumentally (1975: 15).

Corrêa e Castro explains that (Corrêa e Castro 2009, pers. comm., 1 Dec):

This is recognised as a type of 'moneymaking', defined as 'fast food money' or Coca-Cola money – easy to access, fast in production and representation and not hard to swallow. However, the hunger for more food and perhaps more substantial food comes up quickly. The majority of the population unfolds itself as food addicts without taking the time to digest.

Corrêa e Castro explains that devising theatre performances takes time and effort. Even if this perception comes from *Nós do Morro*'s envy of other companies' funding successes, the accusation still comes from an elitist position that assumes that the consumption of art must be ignorant. It could be argued that *Nós do Morro* is an elite within the *favela*. Following Janet Perlman's view on how things look different from inside a *favela*, the classic mistake is thinking that there is only misery inside a *favela*. However, a wide range of social classes live in the Vidigal *favela*: middle-class people, working-class people and upper-class people. *Nós do Morro* ignores the fact that mass art does not result in passivity: people do not automatically engage passively with mass-produced art. To use Foucault's theory again: in his analysis of consumerism, he states that the significance of an identity could

turn into a consumerist demand (Foucault in Nealon, 2008: 12-13). Consequently, if we agree that there is marketability in identities, we must admit that identities are not discovered anymore but created and perhaps even *produced* according to commercialisation. This relates to economic utility, global flows and cultural systems.

2.5. Conclusion

This chapter has provided the foundation for the ideas that animate the entire research: exploring the meaning of aesthetics of applied theatre. It has illustrated the ways global economics influences discourse about aesthetics but not the actual aesthetics of the practice. The analysis of Brazilian theatre company *Nós do Morro* has illustrated the landscape of aesthetic and social tensions and connections that are generalisable to Cambodia and Nicaragua. Moreover, the landscape shows the way we understand aesthetics and how we understand its changes and transformations across different social and political networks.

The first part of the chapter consisted of a critical discussion of Bourdieu and Freire to understand the everyday practices of *Nós do Morro*'s aesthetic and social processes. The students are educated in middle-class habits and tastes, and Bourdieusian principles would criticise this: socially deprived and less educated people are not able to appreciate middle-class tastes. This indicates *Nós do Morro*'s profoundly ambiguous position and their artistic 'choices' within the economic-social-cultural network. The specific aesthetic-social relationship that emerges here happens via immersion in beauty, middle-class habits, tastes, a specific power dynamic and work as discipline. *Nós do Morro*'s choices are embedded, determined and networked in a complex series of sometimes overlapping, sometimes competing social and aesthetic practices. The aesthetic and social processes demonstrate an overarching schema that sees education as happening in an aesthetic – rather than a social – realm. I have argued therefore that an education in taste is not necessarily in opposition to Freire's idea of *cultural synthesis*.

In the second section, the economic relationship within the debate of social and aesthetic tensions was introduced. I stated that in order to create its brand, *Petrobrás* sees *Nós do Morro* as a social concern because it supports the public good. I argued that *Petrobrás*'s insistence on seeing money that goes into the *favela* as social rather than cultural is part of keeping the *favela* behind the wall. The metaphor of the construction of Rio de Janeiro's

walls shows that *Nós do Morro* as a Brazilian export is *only* ‘culturally necessary’ for the positive image during the upcoming world events.

This chapter has demonstrated that tax relief schemes or ‘dirty’ money offer artistic freedom, contrasting with ‘civil society’ or ‘clean’ money (discussed in the following two chapters) which comes with strings attached in ways that serve neither art nor the community. The profound ambiguities of *Nós do Morro*’s positioning here show the complexities around the term artistic ‘freedom’. Bourdieu suggests that artistic tastes are culturally and socially produced. This could imply that ‘freedom’ allows occasional leaping over Rio’s walls, but only if the ‘laundering’ operation is put into place first. That is, money for ‘social’ development produces middle-class theatre for middle-class tastes, and illustrates again the complex positioning and decision-making of *Nós do Morro*.

Finally, the statement ‘dirty money equals a cleaner aesthetic’ is obviously overstated. The politics of the terms ‘dirty’ and ‘clean’ has allowed the articulation of the implied position of aesthetic discourses for theatre happening in marginalised communities. The aesthetic of *Nós do Morro* can only be understood through the histories, globalising processes and economic flows that have a stake in the work.

The economic debate will become the framework of the next chapter examining Cambodia. Rather than examining ‘dirty’ money, the next chapter will analyse ‘good’ civil monies.

‘Entre chien et loup’ = The marketability of saving people through art

BANG KONG CHAR BONLEA (Shrimp and vegetables stir fry)

INGREDIENTES

500 gr shelled shrimps

2 carrots

6 green onion leaves

1 canned bamboo shot

4 cups chopped cabbage

3 cloves of garlic

1 tablespoon sugar

1 tablespoon oyster sauce

½ tablespoon soy sauce

1 tablespoon fish sauce

2 tablespoons corn flour

Salt and pepper

½ cup water

3 tablespoons oil

PREPARATION

1. Mix sauces, sugar, corn flour and water and set aside.

2. When the pan is hot, pour cooking oil, garlic, shrimps and salt.

3. Add carrots, cabbage and bamboo shot.

4. Pour the sauce mix over the vegetables and fish.

5. Add green onion leaves. Sprinkle with black pepper before serving with hot rice.

3.1. Introduction

Multidisciplinary arts school Phare Ponleu Selpak (PPS) is located on the outskirts of the city of Battambang in Northern Cambodia. A popular travel guide has provided me with more accurate directions than the various tuktuk⁴⁷ drivers outside my hostel. Evidently they have no idea where my destination is and I have been cycling for hours around town without any luck. The majority of the tuktuk drivers I have met so far prefer to politely lie rather than honestly explain that they do not know where I can find my destination. Being direct is rude in Cambodia. The famous travel guide conveniently advises me.

Cycle for sale. Wait here. The previous day I passed by this hand-written sign on a side road opposite Battambang's busiest tourist hotel. Curious and in need of transport, I decide to wait. I am not in a rush. After half an hour friendly Kazal shows up. For fifteen dollars I am the new owner of a small bike, or for ten dollars I can rent the bike for as long as I need. Moved by his negotiation skills, I choose the latter.

PPS is located on an extremely dusty and busy road. The end of this road marks the beginning of endless rice fields, hundreds of miles only inhabited by farming communities. The dusty road towards the arts centre is crowded from early in the morning until the breath-taking sunset arrives. People are eating noodle soup in the shadow of the palm trees, and cows and bulls rest in the middle of the road. Everybody covers their mouths when motorcycles or cars cause flying sand. Joined by many children on bikes too big for them, I cycle here every morning around 7am to observe the theatre awareness group's rehearsals.

After a few weeks of rehearsals the actors of the theatre awareness group invite the European theatre director (who is working on a performance of 'The Maids by Jean Genet at the arts centre⁴⁸) and me for a trip through the rice fields, ending up in a beautiful tiny bar in the middle of the fields. I slowly sip strong palm wine, whilst I amiably apologise for not eating two grilled rats. The ambiance is joyful, even though we are barely able to communicate with all the actors. Then, two Cambodians crash their motorcycle. The accident happens right next to our dead rats. The driver looks severely injured; nevertheless, his friend does not seem to care about him. He picks up the side mirror of the broken bike and checks his coiffure. An elegant Cambodian custom of looking away, sparing the other person public humiliation. The director asks the actors if we should help the driver, but the actors advise us not to look. Our friends get nervous and we leave the rice fields. The sunset has arrived.

⁴⁷ Auto rickshaw: common urban transport in South-East Asia.

⁴⁸ Details about this process will be explained in a later section of this chapter.

Wedged between two actresses on a motorbike, the younger one explains that this time of day, this light, is called 'entre chien et loup' (between dog and wolf) in Cambodia, because 'it is impossible to see the difference between a dog and a wolf in the distance.' It is the moment when the light is a bit dimmer than the usual florescent light of life.

How can we discuss the notion of aesthetics in applied theatre in a context where politeness equals looking away; even more so, in a country with a history of colonisation, civil wars and post-conflict situations, invaded by foreign armies, fragmented by civil conflict and subject to arrivals of foreign peacekeeping and international aid personnel? In a country where at least 1.5 million Cambodians, including 80% to 90% of artists, perished in brutal killings or executions, forced hardships and starvation during the horrors of the Khmer Rouge years (1975-1979)?⁴⁹ How can we find aesthetics in a country that has emerged following the end of the Cold War in a context dominated by international participants that remain 'fundamental in the post-conflict landscape in the setting of aid dependence' (Hughes, 2009: 5)? Consequently, how can we define aesthetics of applied theatre in a country in which an estimated 1,300 INGOs and NGOs are currently active today? What does aesthetics of applied theatre mean in a country undergoing a process of rediscovering, reshaping and at times reinventing its cultural identity? Finally, how can we define the terms 'aesthetics' and 'applied theatre' in this country: both terms coming from a foreign context with a different significance for Cambodia? How do this context and this history affect the sort of art that is being made, and the artists' artworks?

This chapter re-emphasises the complexities of defining aesthetics within the field of applied theatre in development contexts discussed through the case study *Phare Ponleu Selpak* (PPS), a Cambodian multidisciplinary arts school. It reworks the overall argument – the many ways in which economic and international players participate and intrude into the aesthetic and social constructions of applied theatre's artistic value – and expands on the previous chapter. Whilst in the Brazil chapter these players were manifest in tax-reduced sponsorships by global corporations and policies of national governments, here they will be depicted in funding decisions of international aid agencies.

⁴⁹ Although estimates vary from 740,000 to between 2 and 3 million, the most commonly used estimate is 1.5 million (Dy, 2007: 69).

The landscape of social and aesthetic worth explored in the Brazil chapter is completely reframed in the Cambodian context by the fact that the cultural life of the arts school – aesthetic and social alike – is subject to post-memory and to the vagaries of international aid agendas following the war. The aesthetic discourse of PPS are permitted and supported by the international aid industry following the terror and obliteration of artists and the arts during the war. Through five categories that arise from ‘moments’ of performance within the cultural ethnoscape, this progressively outlines how ‘state’ or ‘civil society’ or *clean monies* (in comparison to dirty money in Brazil) support an implicated aesthetic that serves neither art nor community. These categories illustrate that there is no secure Cambodian landscape of the aesthetic or social domain – everything is “development”, provisional, transitional and ad hoc. This shows in a series of clashes between the aesthetic and social discourses of the centre, the donors, the performances – and the context of the work. It was in these shocking clashes that my search for an aesthetic for applied theatre in Cambodia came to an end. I abandoned the search there, because I argue that any meaningful notion of aesthetics in applied theatre needs to serve both art and community, while in this instance, neither art nor community are served by the practice.

Non-governmental organisation and multidisciplinary arts school *Phare Ponleu Selpak* – translated as ‘the brightness of art’, or interpreted in Khmer⁵⁰ more literally as ‘the light of the arts’ – has its origins in 1986 in Site II refugee camp on the Thai border. Site II incorporated many older camps that had been invaded by the Vietnamese. This is where the civilian populations were transported after a period of violent Khmer Rouge rule. The workshops held for children in the camps’ orphanages developed the idea of a creative organisation supporting young refugees in the process of overcoming war trauma. This idea remained with the refugees after they returned to Cambodia, and PPS was created in 1994 in Battambang, Northern Cambodia. Today, the main activities of the arts centre are social, educational and cultural, combined with providing specific vocational skills for the youth of Battambang. The arts are used as an instrument to nurture expression as the children struggle with psychological and social problems.

⁵⁰ Cambodian citizens and language are called ‘Khmer’ after the great Khmer Empire that existed between the ninth and thirteenth centuries (Chandler, 2008a: 15-35; Ebihara, et. al.: 1994: 1-25). Information about PPS is derived from interviews and informal meetings with theatre directors, board members, circus artists and actors. Quotations are only used when drawn from literature or literal expressions used during meetings or interviews.

The chapter first introduces the ethnoscape as a theoretical and analytical framework mapping my analysis to follow the flows of cultural practice. Here, I will present the concept of ethnoscape and set out additional ideas around this terminology. This chapter then addresses all five categories within the cultural ethnoscape of PPS. The length of the five respective sections differs due to the diverse significance of the actors. Moreover, these participants are, I argue, intrinsically – at times unwelcomely, at times disruptively – interfering in the artistic process of PPS. Whilst the previous chapter laid out the significance of the role of international and economic players in the field, here the concept ‘ethnoscape’ is introduced to unravel the different groups involved in the complex community of the arts organisation.

Fieldwork plan

I arrived in Cambodia in January 2010, having just completed three months of fieldwork in Rio de Janeiro. I spent four weeks travelling across the country to visit Angkor Wat and various theatre performances within the three months of fieldwork. I conducted a total of 27 semi-structured interviews with practitioners, NGO staff and academics in Cambodia. I carried out observations over a period of six weeks, five mornings each week, at the arts school during rehearsals for the theatre performance of *The Maids* by Jean Genet (1947). These rehearsals would include a short tea break and lunch with all the artists. The rehearsals and workshops were all in Khmer, with translation available. Afterwards I would observe circus trainings, music trainings or drawing classes, as the school was open until late afternoon. During my time at the school, I observed eight circus performances, one performance of classical Khmer and western music and Genet’s *The Maids*. Outside the arts school, I observed two shadow puppet performances, one French/Cambodian classical music performance, one rural forum theatre play and three *Apsara*⁵¹ dance presentations. I visited the Royal School of Fine Arts (RUFA) observing classes in contemporary theatre improvisation, circus and *Apsara* dance. I obtained vital data on applied theatre, and the connections between aesthetics and economic flows, through visits to two detention centres in and around Battambang. I was introduced to the prisons by the executive director of PPS, who was assigned the task of developing a suitable social circus project (that I am reading as an applied theatre project) for these prisons. The wardens and the majority of the detainees were open to interviews.

⁵¹ *Apsara dance* (or royal ballet of Cambodia) is the Cambodian classical dance performed in the palaces (Burridge and Frumberg, 2010: 1-7).

3.2. Ethnoscape as a way of looking

The practice of applied theatre takes place within a complex set of communicative exchanges and ‘within a network which is historically and spatially located in a given system of action and behaviour’ (Mills, 1963, quoted in Melossi, 2001: 404). As analysed in the previous chapter, the concept of aesthetics within applied theatre is embedded in and part of these histories, systems and economic and global flows. This first discovery of the research raises the questions: to what degree is the practice *determined* by its culture or context? Are the participants able to influence the determination of the meanings that are typical within this culture? Or is such a determination inseparable; that is, the participants are not able to influence this determination? This chapter looks at these questions from Arjun Appadurai’s cultural anthropological standpoint, encapsulating this sense of “moving” cultural identity by introducing the term *ethnoscape* (1991). Ethnoscape is a useful theoretical framework for analysing the complicated flow of diverse actors, movements and systems that frame the aesthetics and aesthetic discourse of PPS. In the Cambodian context, this concept will be termed *cultural ethnoscape*, construed through all the different actors involved within PPS’s culture, including: (i) refugees, the arts school’s founders returning to their homeland after living in refugee camps on the Thai border for years; (ii) the company’s circus artists travelling to a range of countries for circus training; (iii) tourists; (iv) European international artists travelling to the arts school; and (v) an international cast of donors and organisations providing their services as goods. These are all ‘travelling’ individuals or groups that shape a fundamental characteristic of the aesthetic discourse and politics of PPS.

Significant for this chapter is the work of sociologist Anthony Smith (1996) who, following Appadurai, gives a pivotal précis of the term ethnoscape: he defines the concept as ‘the belief shared by ethnic groups in a common spatial frame of origin, the territorialisation of shared ethnic memories’ (Smith, 1996: 454). Shared memories attached to specific territories as a process can be found in many periods and countries (Ibid.). Cambodia’s colonial and postcolonial status has produced a condensed net of knowledge and status attributions, within which individuals are tangled in every sphere of their lives. As Smith states (Smith, 1981, quoted in Hughes, 2009: 4):

The symbolic content of this nation, building upon historical events, folklore, invented tradition, reinvented and reconstructed art-forms and cultural expressions,

creates a picture of the national character both unique in content and standard in form.

Following this, the aim of this chapter – which is to explore the aesthetics and aesthetic discourse of applied theatre in a new context – can be linked to how the mix of people, communicative exchanges, symbolisation, relationships and networks can change.

Smith proposes two important sites of territorialised memory, which are relevant for the proposition of this chapter: ‘miraculous or sacred sites’ (1996: 454) and ‘various fields of battle which marked critical turning points in the fortunes of the community’ (Ibid.). In the Cambodian case study, these can be described as the *sacred sites* of Hindu temple complex Angkor What and the genocide commemoration Choeung Ek Killing Fields, but also the *fields of battle* of colonisation, civil wars and most importantly genocide, which have affected the ways PPS’s students struggle with their cultural identity. Thus (Ibid.: 455):

The boundaries of nations and national states may be determined by military, economic and political factors, but their significance for their inhabitants derives from the joys and sufferings associated with a particular ethnoscape.

For the members of a nation such as Cambodia, it is not necessary to dominate or settle within their ethnoscape; it is sufficient for members to have a collective narrative related to a specific space (Smith, 1999: 149-159). Smith’s view of the ethnoscape offers an understanding of the different ways collective memory is passed on in Cambodia, that is, through commemorations, international tribunals convicting Khmer Rouge leaders, artistic productions and literature. The significance of the ethnoscape for my argument in this chapter will be spelled out in reference to several moments: one example is how Cambodian collective remembrance is compromised by opposing and conflicting agendas of the ‘government’s politics of reconciliation, Buddhist beliefs in karma, economic development, mass tourism opportunities, international law, and national historical narratives’ (Sion, 2011: 1).

3.3. Actors’ ethnoscares

‘Everything is fine in Cambodia, until it isn’t’ (Staff member Khmer Arts 2010, pers. comm., 9 Mar.).

This section describes the most important players involved within the cultural ethnoscape of PPS. All actors are introduced through a moment from an interview or observation that demonstrates the significance of the meaning of aesthetics or aesthetic discourse of the arts school, *and* outlines how ‘clean’ money supports an implicated aesthetic serving neither art nor community. ‘Civil society’ money – funded by the government rather than through private companies or donations – is defined as ‘clean’ money in comparison to oil/dirty money (Bell, 2001: 150), discussed in the previous chapter. Civil society money, including that from national governments, the United Nations, INGOs, NGOs and international donors, uses a set amount of public funds for the greater good, not to make a profit.

Ashley Thompson describes Cambodia’s artists tragically and poetically (1993: 519):

Characterized by their lacking situation – a situation of lack and a lack of situation – my very attempt to situate them, to ground them in a history, is an impossible but necessary task.

Thus, while this section is primarily a discussion about aesthetics and aesthetic discourse within a Cambodian arts school, it is also – almost inescapably – a brief exploration of Cambodian history during the Khmer Rouge years (1975-1979) and their aftermath. The arts centre discussed originated during the aftershocks of the country’s oppressive regime.⁵²

3.3.1. Refugees

*Very early in the morning I have planned an interview
with a progressive Cambodian theatre director
We meet at his small theatre
on stage
He sits opposite me without a shirt
big heart shaped eyes
The smell of last night’s performance is still present
props everywhere
I try to guess his age
but I fail to do so
The interview starts with some formal questions about*

⁵² The timeline of the research ends in spring 2010. I acknowledge that the arts centre’s structure might have changed since.

*my PhD, my research
the questions that are raised during my fieldwork
theatre in Cambodia*

*With no apparent reason he suddenly starts to talk about his childhood
during the Khmer Rouge years
I do not ask anything
His eyes fill with tears, however he does not drop his gaze
His voice shows no difference
He explains that he is the only survivor of four childhood friends
Two died of starvation and one was taken into the woods with him
Khmer Rouge soldiers killed his best friend with a bamboo stick in front of him
He was forced to watch
35 years ago
His friend was then eleven years old
my interviewee twelve years old
The tears coursing slowly down his face
even when he shows me the drums
he recently started to fabricate them himself
Drums in all forms and sizes
very impressed at the quality and care that had gone into shaping each piece
I buy one, a small one
I do not know why, I do not play drums
But the drums sound so differently beautiful when he plays*

This poetic vignette from an interview with a Cambodian theatre director taking place on day 48 of my fieldwork period in winter 2010, illustrates clearly the dichotomy of aesthetics in a place of horror. In Adorno's essay *Poetry after Auschwitz* originated in 'Cultural Criticism and Society', 1949, he suggested: 'To write poetry after Auschwitz is barbaric' (1988: 34). Adorno stated that it was inconceivable to produce any artistic work after Auschwitz, because that would reinforce the culture of cruelty and detract from its crucial disapproval. In Cambodia, the memories of traumatic events have lived on to "scratch" those who were not there to experience these events. The children of PPS – children of survivors – have inherited disastrous histories not through remembrance but through post-memory – 'an

inter- and trans-generational return of traumatic knowledge and embodied experience. It is a *consequence* of traumatic recall but [...] at a generational remove' (Hirsch, 2012: 6). Hirsch's definition of post-memory will be used here to understand the continuous impact and heritage of the Cambodian genocide by the Khmer Rouge between 1975 and 1979. This heritage affects and changes what kinds of art are produced in the country, and also how artists and spectators perceive these art-forms. Cambodia is still in the midst of a process of rediscovering, reshaping and at times even reinventing the country's cultural identity. This section describes the first actors of the cultural ethnoscape – refugees – originating in the aftermath of this brutal period. These are the founders of the arts centre, as PPS originated in 1986 in Site II refugee camp. As Fiona Terry outlines (Terry, 2002: 114):

The Cambodian refugee crisis along the Thai and Cambodian border, which unfolded in 1979, arguably posed the greatest challenge to the international humanitarian system of the Cold War [...] aid agencies had to confront the probability that their aid was reviving one of the most brutal regimes in modern history, the Khmer Rouge.

Colonised by France for a hundred years until 1953, Cambodia national changes led to the changing ideology. In April 1975, Communist Khmer Rouge forces captured Phnom Penh.



Figure 5: Music Performance in Khmer Rouge camp. From: Dy, K. *A History of Democratic Kampuchea* (1975-1979)

Led by Pol Pot (coded Brother Number One), the self-proclaimed Democratic Kampuchea forced about 2 million residents out of the capital, ‘including over a million wartime refugees, into the countryside’ (Dy, 2007: 14). Backed and influenced by China, the forces evacuated all cities and forced everybody to work on the land in agricultural projects in order to build a new country (Ibid.: 26). The regime destroyed property, the economic and education systems and the infrastructure. The ‘urban bourgeoisie’ was systematically killed, as they were perceived as evil elements that caused exploitation and corruption to Democratic Kampuchea. Statistics (Burrige and Frumberg, 2010; Chandler, 1999a; b; 2008a; b; Dy, 2007; Dy, n.d.) show that 80% to 90% of Cambodian artists died during this reign of terror, among them many dancers, actors and directors.

In 1979 Vietnam pushed the Khmer Rouge over the Thai border, leaving many Cambodians illiterate and in extreme poverty, including the artists of PPS (Depaul and Pran, 1997). With over a million people killed in the previous years, the entire Cambodian population was on the move: survivors travelled through Cambodia to find out who had

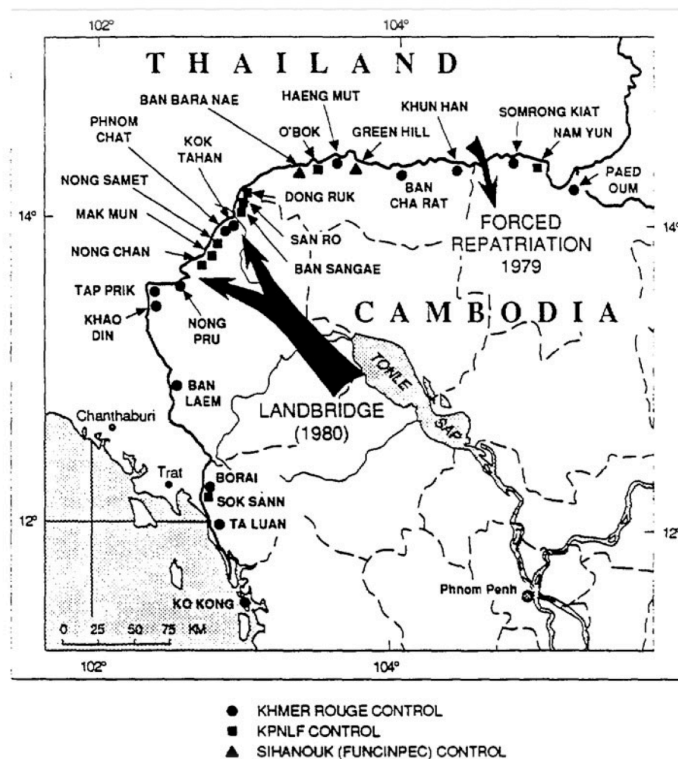


Figure 6: Map of Cambodian refugee camps, 1980. From: *Thai/Cambodian Border Refugee Camps 1975-1999*, 2006.

stayed alive (French, 1994: 13). Not willing or mentally able to endure more foreign invasion, tens of thousands of Cambodian citizens fled their country and became refugees. Since the Thai government prevented large amounts of refugees from crossing the border, Khmer border encampments were established along the Thai-Cambodian border, with civilians living together with soldiers and Khmer Rouge cadres. Almost immediately, the humanitarian aid system that developed here became a highly political issue (French, 1994: 18-19; Polman, 2010: 106-114; Terry, 2002: 122-133).

Site II camp, where PPS was born, consisted of various previous members of the independent Khmer People's National Liberation Front (KPNLF) and administered itself. Provisioning Site II as a whole, however, was the task of the United Nations Border Relief Operation (UNBRO), assisting the numerous illegal and unrecognised refugees (French, 1990: 50).⁵³ Between 1986 and 1991 the basis of PPS was created in an orphanage in this refugee camp. Having been part of an on-going civil war that engaged the interests of local, regional and international players, the founders of PPS were now surviving an internationalised INGO culture.⁵⁴ The refugees' first arts interaction came from a humanitarian project, that is, the on-site orphanages led by French NGOs used visual arts as a tool for children to express themselves and recover from their war trauma. NGO culture and French influence remains intact in PPS today: the French clearly created the basic aesthetic of the arts centre, and PPS was born out of this intervention. The longstanding (13 years) but ultimately temporary displacement of the PPS artists did not help their attempts to reconstitute their social and cultural lives in the aftermath of the war. In 1992 the artists of PPS returned to Cambodia. Afraid that the young artists would have to leave their country again, they settled in Cambodia's second city, Battambang, the closest city to the Thai border.

Between 1992 and 1993, the country was placed under a peacekeeping operation, United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia (Untac), supervising the administration of the country and opening the door to a significant number of non-governmental organisations. The so-called emerging liberal peace framework – strongly supported by this international

⁵³ See Dwight Conquergood (1988) 'Health Theatre in a Hmong Refugee Camp: Performance, Communication and Culture'; Lindsay French (1990) 'Displaced Lives: Stories of Life and Culture from the Khmer in Site II, Thailand' in IRC Oral History Project; and (Ibid.) (1994) *Enduring Holocaust, surviving history: Displaced Cambodians on the Thai-Cambodian border, 1989-1991*.

⁵⁴ Several educational and social INGOs were created at the refugee camps. Many of these projects still exist.

community of peace-builders – was perceived as an initial post-Cold War success for the UN (Richmond and Franks, 2007: 27-28). To many Cambodians, however, Untac was not regarded as a peace process because the Khmer Rouge was allowed to participate in the elections (Hughes, 2009: 1-5). In 2003, the Royal Government of Cambodia and the United Nations created a special court: ‘Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia for the Prosecution of Crimes Committed during the Period of Democratic Kampuchea’ (ECCC).⁵⁵ Since 2007, the ECCC has struggled to convict the remaining Khmer Rouge leaders and officials suspected of mass atrocities. Smith’s view of ethnoscape offers an understanding of the different ways the collective narrative in Cambodia passes on, for example through the United Nations international tribunal convicting Khmer Rouge leaders. However, Cambodian collective remembrance is compromised by limiting the trial to only two remaining defendants – Nuon Chea and Khieu Samphan – both elderly and in failing health. For many – including the founders of PPS – who lost their relatives during the Khmer Rouge years, this is a permanent defect of the collaborative system between warlords, politicians and the United Nations. The traumatic history of civil wars and foreign peacekeeping, preserving the country as aid dependent, has influenced Cambodia’s global position. Despite the many attempts of the international community, liberal peace-building in Cambodia so far has proven unsuccessful in many of its central goals (Richmond and Franks, 2007: 27), including the opportunity for collective remembrance. These developments all shaped the development of PPS. Cambodian culture was destroyed, which resulted in an uncertain Khmer aesthetic and social landscape – everything was provisional, ‘developmental’ and transitional.

Meanwhile, young adults from the orphanage arrived in their home country with many traumatic stories. In order to understand these experiences, including the post-genocide period on the border, eight young artists (including two who remained directors of the arts school in 2010) decided to make a change for the next generation. They (re-)started creative workshops in Battambang with support from the French former workshop leaders. During interviews, Cambodian director Det expressed that his positive experience with visual arts in the camp led him to believe strongly that arts could be used as a tool to overcome any sort of trauma, and he therefore chose to share this belief with other young people. Director Det and his colleagues first built a visual arts school for children. They

⁵⁵ The ECCC, composed of foreign and Cambodian lawyers, receives funds from the Cambodian government, donor countries and private companies such as Microsoft Singapore. See for example microsoft.com.

then constructed a library to engage children in reading and writing. The social aims of the company were clearly more important than the artistic outcomes; however, the arts were used to achieve these goals.



Figure 7: The visual arts centre and music school of Phare Ponleu Selpak in 2010 (Photo: Kirsten Broeckman)

The impetus behind the aesthetic discourse of theatrical practice within the arts centre is therefore mainly educational and social, supported by the international community. That is, firstly, the founders of the arts centre recognised that the Khmer Rouge had destroyed knowledge and awareness of Khmer cultural identity. Young children in particular had not been in contact with any form of Khmer culture since they were born. The deliberate targeting of educated people and artists during the Khmer Rouge era resulted in a limited base of nationals with practical experience surviving: ‘Performing arts don’t die, but performers do’ (Sam-Ang Sam in Ebihara et. al., 1994: 2). To a great degree, Khmer culture had vanished. INGOs in Cambodia interested in this *genocide narrative* were therefore willing to invest in the arts centre (Sidoit 2010, pers. comm., 22 Feb.).

Cambodians believe that traditional Khmer culture is not something you are simply born with; it is a kind of order, and is human-made. They believe that culture is something that is achieved, and that children should be raised and educated to become properly Khmer (Nee and McCallum, 2009: 21-23). Experience and morality transmitted by Khmer folktales are vital aspects of traditional Khmer education (French, 1990: 5). During the Khmer Rouge years, parents and children were forced into labour and to attend indoctrination lessons where they were told that education was an imperialist tool. The children of PPS carry their parents’ personal and cultural trauma through the actions and stories they remember from those they grew up with (Hirsch, 2012: 5). Correspondingly, education was not a prerequisite for the children’s parents, particularly not for those living in poor

conditions. Due to the absence of many artists and traditional Khmer folktales, Khmer culture was invisible for the majority of children in Battambang, and did not exist prior to initiatives such as PPS.

Secondly, French director Sidoit and Cambodian director Det clarified during interviews the educational and social aesthetic of the company's history. The number of children and the size of the organisation rapidly increased in 1998 caused by two different developments. On an educational level, 80% of the children in Battambang province were not receiving any form of education. Schools were too distant, too expensive, or not secure. After extensive meetings with the Ministry of Education, PPS opened its doors to 250 children. Due to its success, the arts school decided to expand its primary and secondary education and integrated psychological support for parents. Since 2003, PPS has been running free schooling from grade one to nine, providing free education to 1300 children.



Figure 8: The road through the rice and mine fields to Phare Ponleu Selpak. (Photo: Kirsten Broekman)

The second important development in 1998 had an artistic character. The majority of teenagers in Battambang are the first or second generation after the Khmer Rouge years. The elderly in Battambang were separated from their families for the duration of the brutal regime, and the young adults were not educated to raise their children or to understand their own traumatic experiences. Most of them had been part of military groups, forced to fight for or against Cambodia. In 1998, they were starting families and their children easily got involved in gangs (Sidoit 2010, pers. comm., 22 Feb.). For these children to grow up

with post-memory – an ‘inter- and trans-generational return of traumatic knowledge and embodied experience’ (Hirsch, 2012: 6) – it was troubling to focus on visual arts, at that time the only existing art-form at PPS. The children’s disconnection from visual arts forced the directors to develop a different art-form that required a more physical concentration. The directors motivated the children to practise martial arts to protect themselves and gymnastics to keep in shape. Both sports were the basis for the development of the ‘social’ circus school, and drawn from the social needs of the children coping with post-memory. The naming of applied theatre is different across the different research sites: in this case, the practice is called ‘social circus’. A social circus performance by *Phare Ponleu Selpak* in Cambodia may not seem to be applied theatre, but the context of the work within an educational performance and a community setting positions it as part of applied theatre work.

The Cambodian and French directors clarified that they first focussed on the freedom for children to play, but the directors’ desire was to professionalise the social circus school. After three months of successful circus trainings (from instructors of the RUFA) and performances, the directors realised that the natural behaviour of Cambodian children involved running, jumping and repetition of exercises. Circus was seen to be a suitable vehicle for teenagers with difficulties or homeless youngsters; a team-building activity in



Figure 9: The circus school in 2010 (Photo: Hanneke Smits)

contrast to the lonely life on the streets. Their capabilities and strengths were tested and limits were taught. Thus, the landscape of aesthetic and social worth as explored in the previous chapter is completely reframed here by the fact that the cultural life of the arts centre – aesthetic and social alike – is subject to the concept of post-memory. This concept initially framed the social constructions of the theatrical practice. The pictures above show a clear circus aesthetic based on endurance, strength, agility and flexibility. This aesthetic, however, is neither labelled nor discussed at the arts centre. The following categories of ethnoscape players will demonstrate that due to the absence of aesthetic terminology, aesthetic discourse has been lost inside the centre.

In 1998 many children in Battambang suffered from drug-related issues due to the prevailing gang culture. The children experienced major concentration problems, and the founders of PPS argued that theatre was easier and needed less concentration than circus. Therefore, the arts school organised a theatre show that toured around the country. Finally, the awareness theatre group of PPS was invented as a tool to reintegrate less competent young adults into the society.

In the past 15 years, PPS has produced numerous circus shows that are performed in various parts of Cambodia as well as abroad in Europe and South-East Asia. A few children have become teachers and professional artists, and the directors of PPS would like them to continue the creative activities as they give them the opportunity to support their families financially. The arts school has opened a professional visual arts centre in Phnom Penh, where students' artworks are sold. The exploration above demonstrates that there are specific dynamics at work within the social and aesthetic landscape. The struggles with post-memory, concentration, engagement and drug-use underpin the history of this landscape. Whilst the directors of the arts school attempt to engage the next generation, the ongoing trauma on different levels – the idea of post-memory – continues to generate a context of uncertainty and transition. The social and aesthetic are not just connected, but also un-pinnable, decentred, and related to crisis management rather than progressive 'development'.

PPS in 2010

The only theatre activities taking place in 2010 were sporadic theatre exercises on a wooden platform outside during warm afternoons. With the Khmer theatre director out of the

country, no theatre rehearsals were held. The children joining these exercises varied and the number could be counted on one hand. The workshops took place for a maximum of two hours, two or three times a week. The exercises had no structure and were not thematically organised: the theatre students were constantly sniggering beside the platform. The assistant of the theatre awareness group led the short workshops; however, he was not always present. In the first few weeks of my fieldwork I observed only these exercises. Due to the lack of theatre activity at the arts centre, my focus was on observations of the school, the social circus troupe and their tourist performances, and understanding the arts centre's structure. The difference between the aesthetic rhetoric and practice of the arts centre – reflected in my writing – gives a balanced idea between what the centre promotes and which art-forms the centre executes in reality. The aesthetic rhetoric of the arts centre differed greatly from the actual activities taking place at the school. The virtual advertisement did not align with the reality. It was clear that the school's image for the virtual world is very important.

I found that an executive director and management team lead the school, the core team consists of finance management, the communications manager, the head of the music school, the social circus school director, the manager of the theatre awareness group and the head of the visual arts school. The non-formal education team entails the administrative executive, library, leisure centre and social services centre. This centre currently takes care of former street children that live on the compound of the school and are unable to trace their families. The outreach community project involves parents and carers in the school's projects. The coordinator also frequently visits families in rural areas. Non-formal education plays a vital role in the arts centre and is in a constant state of crisis management rather than progressive development. This creates a transitional situation: in 2010, there was still no secure Cambodian aesthetic and social domain – everything was provisional.

During several informal meetings, PPS staff members emphasised that the company's aims were to reconstruct children's identities and to rebuild their cultural habits and knowledge. Several questions were raised, such as: What is your (cultural) identity in Cambodia? Is it solely based on the atrocious past? Although the past is inextricably part of culture, what is the past today and what is the past tomorrow? What is the value of Angkor Wat today? Is it

still part of Cambodia's cultural identity?⁵⁶ The staff members explained that the children are taught to speak about their cultural identity and their traumas. Two workshop leaders in this project are genocide survivors, one of S-21 camp and the other an artist who fled the country in 1975. PPS directors recognised that the genocide would definitely take more than two generations to overcome.

Staff members stated that one of the reasons why this process would take time is the imposition of the *genocide narrative*. Cambodia has a very young population, of which 32% are between one and 14 years old (World bank, 2012). Many are too young to remember the years of horror, and others do not believe the stories of violence and terror. The younger generation sometimes views the Khmer Rouge history as a myth: this generation questions and doubts these factual scenarios (DC Cam, 2012).⁵⁷ The children of PPS have inherited their ancestors' confusion: it is not well-defined who is a former Khmer Rouge soldier and who a victim; in particular, why certain families were killed and others were not. But the foremost question is how the Khmer could impose such violence and suffering on their fellow Khmer. This confusion is a clear example of post-memory observed, and was mentioned in several interviews, including the one at the start of this section.

Furthermore, the constant change of ideology throughout their lives has left families confused: many Khmer Rouge survivors have witnessed five regimes, if colonisation is defined as a regime. After returning to their homeland in Battambang, close to the Thai border, where many former Khmer Rouge cadres reside, the artists and the perpetrators of violence live together. Growing up, their children cannot always identify if their friends are offspring of victims or perpetrators. The confusing post-memory narrative is part of all the families living close to PPS and their children who visit PPS. Their frustration that only two remaining Khmer Rouge leaders will be prosecuted for the genocide feeds the impression of the injustice of the international tribunal. Although tribunals are answering the questions of the genocide, the staff of the arts centre argued that artistic practices have been helpful in communicating about the massacres. Within the genocide narrative, 'the gaps in healing that cannot be addressed through tribunals could possibly be addressed through art' (Hawkes, 2006). The French director's viewpoint about healing from genocide

⁵⁶ These questions and many others were raised during hours of interviews with the Cambodian and French directors.

⁵⁷ Recent history is not mandatory in Cambodian schools. In 2009 the first textbook discussing the Khmer Rouge was distributed to schools.

is, however, derived from the international academic arena (Ibid.). ‘Appropriate’ ways of healing trauma vary by culture, and are not all necessarily applicable to Cambodia. At PPS, the children are therefore in the middle of clashes between the social discourses of the arts centre and the international community.

The influence of international discourses around genocide on Cambodian cultural practice were also visible during the specific moments when the interviewees talked about their traumas – described at the beginning of this section – only taking place *outside* PPS. The topic came up only when the interviewee started the conversation and when the interviewee had lived through the horrors of the Khmer Rouge. These meetings were always very emotional: the older artists cried about their past and described how they use the energy of their past in the creation of their performances. They use the medium – the body in theatre, shadow puppets in shadow puppetry and paint in visual arts – to create good energy, to forget their past and the deaths of their loved ones, the so-called ‘way’ to Buddhist *nirvana*.⁵⁸ This stage – the extinction of all suffering and longings – leads them through their artistic processes. The artistic final product, the actual performance or painting, generally does not consist of genocide narratives nor Khmer Rouge-related props or sets. The artists only use the negativity of their past to their advantage by transforming this energy into an artistic product. The shows are very popular in Phnom Penh. This illustrates the dichotomy described earlier of aesthetics in a horror motif – the aesthetic practice in a post-genocide setting. In this setting there is direct remembering of the horror that happened, but not elsewhere. This signals the impact of international discourses around genocide on Cambodian cultural practice. Linking to my opening story about looking away from the tragic during the road accident, Cambodian culture prefers to deal with history and tragedy in a different matter to international discourses. The latter aesthetic is contrary to the artistic products I observe at PPS.

As an outsider who does not speak Khmer I was aware that many conversations and meetings happened outside my awareness at PPS. Although the French director mentioned the importance of contemporary cultural identity for the new Cambodian generation, during my observations I did not witness any workshops where children were asked about their cultural identity, nor discuss the traumas of their families’ past. The project led by

⁵⁸ Theravada (Teaching of the Elders) Buddhism is the strongest religion in Cambodia. Its definite goal is *nirvana*, exterminating all suffering and longing to reach the ultimate stage of reincarnation.

genocide survivors mentioned earlier was only brought up during interviews. In contrast, I observed constant *silence* about the children's and their families' horrific past. During interviews, different translators emphasised avoiding questions about the interviewees' past, specifically the deaths of family members during the genocide.

This silence becomes 'deafening' during the weekly circus performances. A specific scene for a public show, directed by a French artist, exemplifies this silence and shows the impact of the visualisation of the genocide on PPS's artists and spectators. The scene starts with the circus artists entering the tent, each wearing a blue and white patterned scarf called a *kerama*. Imposed by the Khmer Rouge Central Committee's cadres in Phnom Penh, the blue scarf was 'a symbol of classification, signifying that the person need not to be seen as an individual person but as a member of a class, determined by race, religion or education' (Stanton, 1987: 4), and was predominantly used to mark people for extermination. Stanton states that the scarf is one of the clearest pieces of evidence prosecutors have gathered of the Khmer Rouge's intent to commit genocide (1987: 4-5). The circus scene portrays how Cambodians wearing the *kerama* were taken away and separated from their loved ones. With intense emotional and physical expression, the circus artists demonstrate the despair of fatal separation.

Observing this scene a few times during the weekly tourist shows, I noticed the elderly and older adults in the audience always turned their faces away during this emotional moment. Many historians, scholars and survivors (Burrige and Frumberg, 2010; Chandler, 1999a; b; 2008a; b; Conquergood, 1988; Dy, 2007; Dy, n.d.; Nath, 1998) and some interviewees describe how Khmer Rouge survivors were forced to look at atrocities without dropping their gaze. Loved ones were tortured and killed in front of survivors, and if they showed emotional or physical reactions they would be next. Looking away is a typical Cambodian custom. Elegantly looking away in uncomfortable situations is a form of politeness, a gesture to make the other person feel at ease. When a Cambodian suffers, others will look away so as not to emphasise the sorrow or grief of the other. Several times in different settings in Cambodia I observed this gesture (including during the road accident) to avoid shame. During the circus performance it seems that the apparent representation of the past made the elderly turn around and avoid the images on stage, to look away. The spectators are confronted with situations they do not want to be reminded of: neither with the

suffering nor with visual images of the past's atrocities. The Khmer Rouge horrors may have increased the necessity of the polite habit of looking away.

At an average tourist show, the audience consists of tourists, children and a considerable number of elderly from nearby neighbourhoods and villages. The consequence of this mixed audience is that the circus artists can clearly perceive the moment when several spectators turn their heads and look away. In certain forms of therapeutic tradition arising from Euro-American practice, the sufferer's grief and sorrow is acknowledged. Nevertheless, Cambodians are used to looking away and are taught to do so. Here, the French artist forces the Cambodian audience to turn away after looking at a horrific situation (reminding the audience of their suffering), therefore dominating the decision for them at the sensate level. The artist strongly dominates the aesthetic – the sensation-based aspects of the practice. Consequently, this does not only affect the artistic engagement and aesthetic quality for the spectator, also it affects the spectator personally. In addition, it negatively affects the artist and the representation of their artwork on stage. Looking away is clearly a sign that what is shown is inappropriate; the people are visibly uncomfortable. The artistic quality vanishes as audience members turn their heads – the product has failed without the 'presence' of the audience. Khmer and 'Western' aesthetics clearly clash in this example. There is clearly not any room in Khmer aesthetics for this kind of uncomfortable material. The different players and their aesthetic imperatives makes it very difficult to locate the aesthetics of applied theatre in this context in a way that is 'traditional' in discussions of aesthetics (through the definition of the art 'product' alone, via reference to ideas of beauty, affect and the senses, and not linked to instrumentalism), as introduced in Chapter One through Levinson's foci of aesthetics (2003: 3-4). The cultural ethnoscape players all bring different forms of aesthetics. Appadurai's ethnoscape reveals here that any cultural expression has external influences: ideas of imposition or natural growth are both simplifications of intricate processes. It is an oversimplification to argue that the aesthetics of PPS is merely imposed, because this argument completely denies the agency of many Cambodian artists. Similarly, it is unreasonable to state that PPS is totally home-grown, as this ignores the flow of international money and practices.

It does, however, exemplify Thompson's (2005b, 5-7) argument that applying theatre to development settings needs to be translated to make it both understandable and meaningful in that place. It must develop its own theoretical markers, its own local

reference points, if it is to be believed, employed and settled in (Ibid.). The danger is that practitioners struggle to avoid compromises and hold onto the ‘artistic integrity’ of their own ‘Western’ aesthetic. The external power could then impoverish local theatre practices. As Thompson accurately notes (Thompson, 2007: 302):

The belief that there is a global threat to local cultural practice will be more justifiable if knowledge and practice brought to the country is not properly understood as culturally particular with little immediate currency beyond the place of their inception.

The presence of the French artist – the director of the show – is, however, vital for the survival of the circus group to link to powerful donors (which will be illustrated in the next section). Funding for post-memory initiatives has grown rapidly since the genocide. Here is an example of a shocking clash between the social discourse and the aesthetic of the centre, the donors, the performances – and the context of the work. The aesthetic discourse could become an imposition if there is an assumption that practice brought from Western settings *automatically* translates into the Cambodian context.

Moreover, Smith’s statement that shared memories are attached to particular territories as a process can be found in Cambodia on different levels. The significance of the boundaries of nations for their inhabitants clearly derives from the joys and sufferings associated with a particular ethnoscape, even though ‘they are determined by military, economic and political factors’ (Smith, 1996: 455). Opposing agendas of international artists, commercialised tourist shows and international donors giving money for genocide shows compromises Cambodian collective remembrance in the circus scene described. The next section serves an understanding of these agendas and how international and national governmental organisations intensify the framing of the social circus’s aesthetic discourses.

3.3.2. *International interveners*

‘Doing nothing is not neutral’ (Redmond 2011, pers. comm., 19 Jul.).

During one of the warmest days of the year the French executive director of PPS invites me to lunch. The purpose of this meeting is to understand the history and aesthetic dimensions of the centre and how the school is embedded structurally and financially within the field of INGOs. The French director and I have lunch at his house. While we indulge ourselves with typical Cambodian delights such as fried mice and unidentifiable burned vegetables, he invites me to visit two prisons where new social circus projects will take

place in future. PPS has received 175,000 euros from the European Union to introduce social circus to Khmer prisons as a form of artistic leisure for the detainees. The idea is to train the school's third generation of circus artists to lead this project. The director explains that the project will focus on detained children aged seven to 12 years old, with drug addictions.

Upon arrival at one of the prisons, I immediately notice that there are no children held in the prison – only men around forty years old. The guard points out that the prisoners have been convicted for major drug crimes. The detainees are terribly thin and pale and have no energy to stand. The prison has neither beds nor mattresses on the stone floor. Six guards accompany me inside the small low-rise building. The prisoners are forced to try to stand up, and start repeating Buddhist rhymes ten times as a way of welcoming me. Lacking any windows or ventilation, the temperature is above 45 degrees. After meeting the detainees, I am invited for a formal meeting with the main warden, the person in charge. He explains that the prisoners' favourite sentences of the Buddhist rhymes are: 'Don't drink, don't smoke, don't use drugs and don't do drug trafficking. Angry children always give misfortune to their parents, whilst gentle children give happiness to their parents'. He clarifies that the detainees receive 25 dollar cents a day for food, which means a bit of rice and porridge once a day. When I ask the warden why he has accepted this arts project while he is aware of an urgent need for proper food portions and better living conditions rather than circus tricks, my translator refuses to translate my questions.

This scene in February 2010 during my trip to one of the designated detention centres for PPS's new social circus project gives a glimpse into the intricate nature of international donor funding, and describes the second player of the cultural ethnoscape: international interveners. Following Hughes (2009: 1), the term I use here for international donors, the United Nations and INGOs is 'international interveners' working together with local political players. The aesthetic, economic and social discourses clash in this example, as the scene demonstrates how PPS as a non-governmental organisation is pulled into the flows of economic capital of international donors (in this case the European Union), showing that both the arts centre and the international donor have little factual knowledge about the designated locations and the target audience.

This situation also demonstrates how seemingly little research PPS has undertaken to judge the (most optimal) possibilities and risks of this artistic project. The initial funding application for this project, including the information I received about it beforehand, written by the French management of the company, entailed a completely different vision

of the artistic project. The terms ‘aesthetics’ and ‘social circus’ that were used in the funding application clash in this context, because both terms clearly come from an alien cultural context and do not carry the same resonance in Cambodia. The French management explains that the initial project focusses on social circus activities for *young* detainees, combined with training skills for PPS’s circus artists. However, the project clearly does not follow the aims of PPS.

Firstly, the initial project target was interaction with *children* in Cambodian detention centres; however, PPS artists are now forced to work with *adults*. Secondly, the project does not concentrate on the significance of rehabilitating the artists’ cultural identity and history as part of the organisation’s mission. On the contrary, the project’s emphasis is mainly around the wellbeing of the detainees and *their* psychological and social needs. The workshop leaders in this project are fairly young adults, mainly circus artists, recently recovered from drug addiction.⁵⁹ These artists will be spending a considerable amount of time each week with detainees, of which the majority are being forced to try to overcome their addictions. During project meetings the potential consequences for the artists regarding the sensitive “addictive” situation in which they will work are stressed and noted. The risks and dangers the young artists may encounter are also discussed, albeit briefly, and considered. Nonetheless, the arts centre originally devised the basis of this artistic project and has now accepted the economic capital of the donor. By agreeing to take the monetary support, the project will have to be executed by PPS.

This section demonstrates how international interveners prioritise their social agenda whilst (ab)using PPS’s art-forms and therefore restricting the arts centre’s aesthetic dimensions and social agenda. In this manifestation, neither art nor community are served by social circus. This section first describes how aid’s ineffectiveness is decreasing cultural and economic growth. I will set out the debate internationally, followed by detailing how this is reflected in Cambodia.

International aid effectiveness

From a broad perspective, the effectiveness of international aid on developing countries’ cultural and economic growth today is in the middle of intense academic and public

⁵⁹ As described earlier, the circus artists partially consist of the generation that arrived at PPS in 1998 as young children. Others came from UNICEF’s human trafficking programme, which will be discussed in more detail later.

discussions involving policy-makers, scholars and artists, polarised along several topics (Passant, 2009: 2). It could be argued that the international aid community has significantly grown over the past twenty years and that today's international players are experiencing a crisis of identity that raises dilemmas for safeguarding aid's efficacy (Ibid.). Since the 1990s the issue has been subject to sustained analysis (see for example Ahmed, 2002; 2006; Barnett and Weiss, 2008; Baulch; 2001; Djankov et al., 2006, Edmondson, 2005; Polman, 2008; Rieff, 2003; Stoffels, 2004; Terry, 2002; Walzer, 2006; Weiss, 2009; Westad, 2007). This debate over the last decade provides a largely negative view, that fostering cultural and economic growth through foreign aid is unsuccessful.

The current international debate focusses on many different complexities, but I would like to draw on three in particular for the significance of this case study. The first complexity is the lucrative *marketability* of international aid. Fiona Terry (2002) and Linda Polman (2008) describe Henri Dunant's paradox of humanitarian action in today's conflict and development zones. At the birth of humanitarian action, Florence Nightingale rejected Dunant's proposal to relieve human suffering unconditionally by creating a civilian medical service, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). Nightingale was convinced that aid failed in its purpose if the different war parties used it to their own advantage (Polman: 2008, 3-7; Terry: 2002: 46). Dunant's voluntary efforts would only extend wars and the victims' suffering: it would become easier for local political players to be involved in wars for longer and more often (Polman: 2008: 5; Terry: 2002, 45-46). Terry argues that aid has become integrated into the dynamics of conflict in regions that were off-limits to international interveners before the end of the Cold War. International aid may not seem *lucrative*, Terry argues, but aid organisations have become a resource of abuse by different local organisations and rebel leaders (2002: 14-15). This raises questions of responsibility, accountability and about the purpose and limits of foreign aid. Polman and Terry both argue that everything depends on how aid is received. Even if international interveners hold onto the ICRC principles – independence, neutrality and impartiality – it serves no purpose if the recipients exploit the aid for their own causes. Then it becomes about doing harm rather than good (Terry, 2002: 25). Theatre scholar Guglielmo Schininà (2004a; b) describes how cultural integration activities in war zones only receive sponsorship when these activities are suitable for larger NGO strategies (2004b: 27). Schininà questions how social theatre practice is serving to change things, rather than merely being abused for 'its strategic usefulness' (Ibid.). Scholar Laura Edmondson (2005) explored the concept of

marketability in Northern Uganda. Despite the UN's repeated declarations of the area as experiencing one of the most disastrous humanitarian crises globally, poverty was intensified due to the world's compassion favouring victims of 'natural' disasters rather than African civil wars (2005: 456). Although arts therapy played a crucial role in performances, Edmondson suggests that it was merely assessed as a means to 'market trauma' (2005: 457).

The second complex problem around international aid is *unequal distribution of power*. Former Assistant UN Secretary General Jan Pronk (2003) questions how international aid can catalyse sustainable development (2003: 391):

There is an unequal distribution of power not only within recipient countries, but also between donors and recipients. [...] The dichotomy of foreign aid: how can something which is itself a function of inequality serve to diminish that same inequality?

Pronk argues that the internal conditions of the recipient country and the international setting are significant when providing aid (2003: 392). Moreover, international relations reform is necessary to develop ownership policies for aid-receiving developing countries. This will then ensure the access of the poor to the benefits of such reorganisations (2003: 390). Additionally, Hughes (2009), writing about contemporary politics in post-conflict *aid-dependent countries* such as Cambodia, emphasises the significance of the active conduct and behaviour of citizens in dependent communities. The most successful are those who 'can coopt international power in public while maintaining discretionary room to manoeuvre politically out of the glare of international supervision, thus avoiding rentier status and awarding themselves local power' (2009: 3).

Thirdly, the impact of these kinds of developments is shown through *the current economic climate*, which presents a new set of challenges. Donors and governments are cutting their budgets; as a result, NGOs are forced to compete for their position. Simeon Djankov, Jose Montalvo and Marta Reynal-Quero (2006), following Klein and Harford in 2005, state that international aid and donors can be perceived as a market, where donors compete to deliver funds for the international aid market (2006: 22). This could imply that more competition would enhance the market; however, this does not work for special cases like the aid market (Ibid.). When donors are very fragmented, Djankov, Montalvo and Reynal-Quero state, coordination problems could reduce aid's effectiveness. This clarifies why it is

so difficult to find a positive result of international aid for cultural and economic development (Ibid.). Polman and Terry fear that the lucrative part of foreign aid, in particular in an aid-dependent country like Cambodia, is taken into account by INGOs in order to continue their practice, or because the organisation must find ways to use the monetary support for their own causes.⁶⁰

The three complexities of international aid resulting in cultural decay are applicable in Cambodia. This was exacerbated when the country was placed under the peacekeeping operation Untac, an order of international supervision and assistance according to international standards by international specialists rebuilding civil society (Hughes, 2009: 5-9): their intention was to ‘build a new country’ (Akashi, 1992: 34, 68-69; United Nations, n.d.).⁶¹ UN Secretary General Boutros Boutros-Ghali articulated the concept of peace-building in 1992, arguing that there was a need to ‘identify and support structures which will tend to strengthen and solidify peace in order to avoid a relapse into conflict’ (Boutros-Ghali, 1992: 11). This reflected the trend of post-Cold War liberal peace (Fukuyama, 2005) and arguably signalled a new state-building role for the UN. The history of Cambodia and the narrative of the Khmer Rouge tribunal has attracted large amounts of monetary funding from international donors for NGOs (Nee and McCallum, 2009: 11-12), evolving from post-conflict rebuilding to development and increasing Khmer ownership. Nevertheless, by the early 2000s, some international donors felt a lack of political and economic change in Cambodia, and many started to question their support for NGOs and the effectiveness of NGOs in fast-tracking reforms (Ibid.). It had been complex to promote ‘liberal democratic governing systems and market-oriented economic growth – both core elements of the prevailing liberal peace building model’ (Paris, 2010: 337), as they caused destabilising side-effects, including more aid dependency in Cambodia. Sophal Ear argues that in Cambodia international aid results in a large inequity of income and expenditure, because it permits the authorities, regardless of financial shortfalls, to be involved in human rights abuses and corruption (Ear, 2013: 11). The country justifies

⁶⁰ The literature written about international aid and its effectiveness has resulted in several suggested solutions and alternative approaches. See for example Thomas Weiss’, *What’s Wrong with the United Nations and How to Fix it?* (2009) diagnosing the international organisation’s ills and their palliatives, and Joseph Hanlon, Armando Barrientos and David Hulme (2010) *Just Give Money to the Poor*, which suggests reducing poverty and monetary aid problems by giving money to the poor. Critics argue however that even though international aid might have failed, that is only because poor countries abuse the funds. The solution for the developing world is discipline and ‘strict “good governance” conditions on aid’ (Burns, 2010).

⁶¹ For more background information see United Nations, n.d. *United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia*.

corruption as a standardised structure, in which international donors recognise it as evil without putting any effort into rebuilding a new political culture (Ibid.).

The scene of the new artistic project of PPS located in detention centres demonstrates the narrative of the Khmer Rouge tribunal and the country's horrifying past – as well as the indication that at least one of five Cambodians are living in extreme poverty – attracts different international interveners, some with their own agendas and others their own causes. Of the total number of 4,000 NGOs, an estimated 1,300 NGOs are currently active (CCC, 2012), whilst there is only one NGO actively providing psychological services to trauma victims (Nee and McCallum, 2009: 12-13). Even the Killing Fields of Choeung Ek are internationalised and privatised: a Japanese company now controls the commemoration site. The international aid sector in Cambodia has seen substantial changes since its inception in 1992; it still gives the impression that everyone wants something for Cambodia, but not everyone wants what is best for the country and its citizens. Staff member of Documentation Centre - Cambodia accurately states: 'Foreign aid needs other considerations of more important concepts, which are currently not included. Developmental aid ignores consequences of ethnic, language and cultural complexes' (DC-Cam staff member 2010, pers. comm., 12 Mar.). Furthermore, the government, which has tried to reject international business in the past, is now keen to benefit from new opportunities such as the increasing oil resources resulting in 9% economic growth annually (World Bank, 2012).

The consequences of international intervention, as Redmond's comment at the start of this chapter reflects, are highly ambivalent in Cambodia, in particular within PPS. The international sphere in Cambodia can offer several opportunities to local players – in terms of employment and infrastructure – but it can also function as a political tool, limiting the potential emergence of a sanctioned independent nation, as well as PPS's potential to become a strong community with moral authority. Ultimately, as this study argues, the prize of foreign resources occurs in return for a decline of control, authority and sovereignty, which serves neither the aesthetic notions of the company, nor the community and audience members. This is not to suggest that all interveners' influence results in destructive and harmful situations. Nor does this one example stand for the general trend. The scenario of the detention centres offers just one example of the ways in which the ideals of sovereignty and community suffered a decline in the process of becoming a strong

community. The person who frames the agenda is simply “he who pays the piper, calls the tune”. However, this analysis shows that the piper is the visiting or local artist, whose work is shaped by the financial structure. The INGOs have the funds and set the agenda. The tune of the piper seems to be important, but not indispensable. It is a show. The term ‘show’ is both theatrical and evaluative, and the verb ‘showing’ is linked to notions of accountability. That gives a clue as to where social circus fits into this analysis, because it is about proof. When receiving large amounts of money, PPS has to show a visual image in return. Moreover, the arts school has to show that the money is used appropriately. The study illustrates that the complexity is about the relationship between suffering, saving people from suffering, and showing people that you are saving people from suffering: hence, the *marketability* of saving people through art.

Concentrating on performance politics and aesthetics in post-conflict sites, Thompson’s ideas are of direct interest to my writing here. Rancière’s theory used by Thompson offers a place to suggest that social circus practices in detention centres are already politically engaged because of the place of the participants within this distribution (Thompson, 2009: 174). Rancière’s ‘distribution of the sensible fabric’ is also significant here, as I have described in Chapters One and Two, because this concept unveils who can have a part in ‘what is common to the community based on what they do and on the time and space in which this activity is performed’ (Rancière, 2006: 12). Not having a particular cultural, economic or social profession determines the capability to take charge of what is shared in the community (Ibid.: 13). The international interveners determine the agenda and the visibility of PPS. By excluding them from community-building, the arts centre is not capable to take charge of what is shared in the community and cannot truly participate as ‘sovereign’ in society.

Thompson’s arguments have demonstrated the significance of compassion and sensitivity, which support my observations of social circus’s failure in Cambodian detention centres. The absence of passionate engagement in these centres has reduced the caring capacity of the political passion, resulting in a lack of quality in the aesthetic sphere. These arguments relate directly to the discussion of connectedness within the landscape of social and aesthetic worth; that is, the international funders clearly fail to recognise engagement, sensitivity and affect in this example. Consequently, this diminishes the compassion to care

and reduces the quality of aesthetic aims. In this case, the landscape of aesthetic and social worth is minimised and does not serve any aim.

The organisation and board of PPS during my fieldwork period in 2010 was mixed Cambodian/French, whilst the majority of staff were French. The French staff members emphasise the importance of fundraising and networking, both crucial for international acknowledgement. Appearing on international agendas with international qualifications is a great aspiration for the arts centre, the French staff stated. The French staff also argued that the artists should not only overcome the war but also their borders. The survival and international future of the school depends on monetary and artistic resources from outside. My observations of discussions in which the significance of international recognition was articulated are significant in calling attention to the ways these ideas affect politics within PPS. I noticed the level of monetary dependence and the influence of international interveners on the theatre awareness group and circus department. The Khmer artists and staff members were clearly dependent on the guidance of international staff.

Although the circus division has been financially independent since 2006 and the circus group raises money through weekly tourist shows and hotel performances, monetary resources are still necessary for the survival of the school and the opportunity for international acknowledgement.⁶² International interveners are willing to donate because of the historical origins of the company and their social aims, particularly their interest in the genocide narrative. The fairly lucrative practice of fundraising for utilitarian arts projects used within PPS raises questions of accountability and representation. These questions are – as mentioned before – important for debates about intervention. Although the poor, the community, the less privileged and the detainees are targets of assistance, the extent to which they have any kind of say over the assistance they receive and how much adequate assistance they receive is questionable here. Douglas considered who or what is in the place allocated to it and who or what is out of place (1966: 35). The example here identifies that the community, the less privileged, have little allocated to them: their support, including the content of the aesthetic practice, is determined for them and they cannot voice their needs or concerns. The international project goals do not meet their needs, instead further enforcing their invisibility and marginalisation.

⁶² PPS lost a considerable amount of funding in 2009, resulting in the decision to hire professional fundraising specialists.

It should be noted, however, that the Cambodian staff believes in the ability of their international colleagues to deliver structure and organisation. For example, the Executive Director of PPS (in 2010), French humanitarian Sidoit, brought some crucial changes to the arts school.⁶³ Sidoit created a social project for educators with aid agency *Médecins Sans Frontières* to use circus as a tool. In 2004 Sidoit left Cambodia for one year, and until his return to the school's management, little arts activity took place. Sidoit was acquainted with the importance of active management to receive funding from international donors and private companies. He therefore decided to get more involved in the management of the arts school to ensure financial flows.

Although the Cambodian staff members shared their beliefs in the interveners' ability to increase fundraising contacts, international contributions were no longer regarded as necessarily excellent. During interviews I observed the Cambodians' appreciation for their international colleagues who had been residing in Cambodia for many years, and who were accustomed to their culture and language or were willing to return frequently. Nonetheless, I also noted their weary annoyance at short-term and temporary international interveners, offering as their centrepiece hopes for development, aesthetic solutions featuring the reform of aesthetic notions, and overcoming Cambodia's past. Following independence from colonial rule and five ideological regime changes, Cambodian people – as I observed during meetings – have a more cautious perspective and a need for 'normality', in the sense that they would like to move on from the genocide narrative after decades of conflict and violence.⁶⁴ The Cambodian staff members of PPS admitted that the genocide narrative had been repeated for many years, and that their development, particularly their artistic development, was at times conceptualised and depended exclusively on the country's past.

Finally, the overall concern of dependence, the meaning of the global market and the unequal distribution of power, and how this all interacts within the aesthetic dimensions of PPS is demonstrated through the involvement of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), which supported PPS between 1999 and 2002. This specific instance highlights

⁶³ Sidoit was introduced to the circus school when circus activities had been running for six months. He immediately organised a national tour, including official circus performances in front of Angkor Wat. This was unique, because Cambodians say: 'seeing Angkor Wat in your life is to be blessed for life' (Sidoit 2010, pers. comm., 22 Feb.). Today, the performances at Angkor Wat are a tradition.

⁶⁴ Documentation Centre Cambodia, located in Phnom Penh, has a slightly different take on this: remembrance in the form of archives plays a significant role in nurturing elements essential for Cambodia's recovery, that is, accountability, truth and memory. See DC-Cam.org.

how global funding practices impact upon the aesthetic arena of PPS. The initial financial assistance of UNICEF depended on PPS's agreement to include young victims of human trafficking within its circus and theatre projects. PPS agreed, as the arts centre welcomes any child no matter what their past or current issues are. Furthermore, the children were first invited to observe, so that the decision was theirs to participate.⁶⁵ UNICEF donated in total 19,000 US dollars (including the teacher's income), and demanded a substantial increase of the amount of children for the programme – even though 60 children had already joined the programme. The directors of the arts school feared for the quality of their work due to the increase in the amount of children. The project's costs would immediately be transferred to providing food and drinks for the children rather than to their creative development. By decreasing the amount of children, PPS argued, the participants would all be given sufficient food and beverages *and* adequate artistic education.

Several PPS directors illustrated this tension (Various directors PPS 2010, pers. comm., Feb.):

We constantly had to show on paper that the money was well spent. In four years partnership, they only came to visit us once, and suddenly their contribution stopped. For us that is typical UN. Every four or five years the organisation of UN changes, which means that you have to show off and come up with new proof of your organization's successes to stay on their agenda.

The directors stated that PPS has been putting effort into building a sustainable partnership with UNICEF and other UN organisations; however, the same work ethic did not exist on both sides. The UN's artistic agenda prioritises the flow of funding. The arts school perceives themselves as a provider of educational shows and projects, one of UNICEF's agendas. So far, however, UNICEF has not included PPS in its long-term vision. The French staff members have also realised that war education is a vital segment of UNICEF's work; however, PPS is not monetarily supported via this mandate. The directors argue that UNICEF focusses on designing and performing shows that include the genocide narrative, rather than on circus training. This links to my central argument because UNICEF – 'clean' monies – decides the appropriate aesthetic and social dimensions for the arts school. This not only clashes with the aesthetic ideals of the arts centre, but UNICEF also dictates the most appropriate aesthetic arena for the artists and thus for the spectators. In this example,

⁶⁵ It should be noted that the circus school's current artists are partly from the UNICEF programme and were trained in 2010 to work in the detention centres programme.

a discursive prioritisation of social objectives changes the aesthetics of practice. An aesthetic remains – focussed on endurance, repetition and strength – but the aesthetic is affected through the international funders. The mandatory thematic content focussing on Cambodian history and the inclusion of more participants are only two examples illustrating how the aid agency’s aims clashed with the arts school’s goals.

UNICEF’s involvement directly causes limited independence for the arts centre, due to the power relations between the two key players. UNICEF illustrates patterns that reflect underlying and highly unequal distributions of power. Its effect is profound on the weakest group – the children, including victims of human trafficking – for whom the project is actually intended. These children are the target audience. It does not serve those who have any kind of say over the assistance they receive (the artists and the community in Battambang), nor does it serve the artistic quality of the educational projects. Arguably, the international interventions I observed attended to neither affect nor effect, but only required de-contextualised ‘evidence’ of efficacy, if that. Winston’s and Thompson’s ideas resonate through my argument about international intervention: ‘By failing to recognise affect – bodily responses, sensations and aesthetic pleasure – much of the power of performance can be missed’ (Thompson, 2009: 7). Thompson therefore claims that applied theatre is ‘limited if it concentrates solely on effects – identifiable social outcomes, messages or impacts – and forgets the radical potential of the freedom to enjoy beautiful radiant things’ (Ibid.: 6). It was in these shocking clashes that I realised that my search for an aesthetic of applied theatre in Cambodia had come to an end. I abandoned the search here because for me, any meaningful notion of aesthetics in applied theatre needs to serve art and community. I had to end my attempt to find the meaning of aesthetics in applied theatre here, not as a result of language barriers or the very different cultural milieu within which this case study was located, but because the search was so deeply affected and blurred by the different players and their aesthetic imperatives, helping neither the PPS’s community nor its artistic practice. It was impossible to locate any meaningful notion of aesthetics in this case study. This study attempts to understand and describe the *determining factors* of the aesthetic of applied theatre, and the aesthetic discourses *surrounding* applied theatre in particular contexts. The ethnoscape offers a suitable model for broad, multi-layered and deep kinds of analysis to assist in describing these factors and discourses.

Appadurai developed the term ‘ethnoscape’ to understand the fluid shapes caused by human groups and their cultural expressions linked to flows of international capital. As described by Hughes (2009) and Ear (2013), aid dependence seems to develop more and more as a condition arising from global structures and markets, rather than only from local shortfalls. While aid itself is most of the time well-meant, aid dependence encourages social and moral looseness in recipient communities such as PPS, and is executed by international interveners as a means to exercise power. Moreover, international capital directly interferes with the aesthetic vision of PPS. The Khmer staff devotes large amounts of time to manoeuvring to capture aid resources while deeply resenting the hierarchies of (human) power and obligation within which they are required to participate. I argue therefore that to a certain extent the aesthetic notions of applied theatre remain a dependent ‘by-product’ of funding with restricted artistic and social rules for those who require international support. The following section talks about the influence of international forms on Cambodian practice and analyses how travelling circus artists participate in the cultural ethnoscape.

3.3.3. Social circus artists

‘Help us to allow these young and talented artists to access quality trainings, and then to get out of poverty’ (Circus Students World Press, 2011).

This virtual advertisement posted on the Circus Students World Press website celebrates the six circus students of PPS that were accepted to the National Circus School in Canada in 2011. Four other PPS students were mentioned with honour because they were leaving Cambodia to study graphic design in France. The pitch of the advertisement, however, was to engage the global public to support the ten talented students’ scholarships through the slogan at the start of this section. The third actor within the cultural ethnoscape is the Cambodian circus artists and circus directors of PPS who travel to several countries specialising in circus skills (China and Russia), or circus artists resident with links to PPS (France). Here, there is a sense of positive international exchange.

The fluid movement of Cambodian artists travelling abroad is for several reasons, but in particular to enhance artistic knowledge and learn new techniques. This largely originated during the Vietnamese regime from 1980 to 1991. Central to the struggle to conserve

Khmer culture after the genocide was *Vietnamisation*.⁶⁶ Cambodia's neighbouring country not only controlled all its arts archives, of which the majority were destroyed during the Khmer Rouge years, but Vietnam would also send masters of circus and ballet to Russia and Vietnam to study modern dance and circus techniques (Gleeson, 2010), even though Angkor Wat's temples illustrate that Cambodia has had circus arenas for centuries. The Vietnamese government strived to rebuild the arts as they had been before the Khmer Rouge, and also modernised the country by catching up with other growing Asian and socialist countries after the Cold War. The Khmer Buddhist Research Centre doubted whether at the time Cambodia was becoming 'the real Khmer country or a second Vietnam' (Khmer Buddhist Centre, n.d., quoted in Hughes, 2009: 29).

The RUFA, nonetheless, developed a sacred disciplinary school. Political meanings of the arts were obvious to many artists and students; nonetheless, the Vietnamese regime censored any possible propaganda while the masters were outside the country. The Vietnamese also sent experts to teach artists of the RUFA, imposing their models (Sam-Ang, 1990) such as 'wearing of shoes and sandals on stage, using piano for dance accompaniment, new modes of plucking stringed instruments, and so on' (Ibid.). Khmer artists rejected these impositions, because when the masters returned to their home country, Khmer culture was defined by its traditional arts. The artists remaining in Cambodia did not embrace the modern masters' visions and influence, because the remaining artists desired to preserve their own culture, particular in the context of Vietnamese oppression.⁶⁷

In the early 1980s, as testified by some PPS teachers during discussions, the Vietnamese even proposed banning Apsara dance because they realised that the art-form no longer had a function within Cambodia's new political system. A folk art such as Apsara or circus may seem a comparatively insignificant event to trigger the clarification of the meaning of cultural nationalism within a Cambodian arts centre; nevertheless, it is for Cambodians a self-conscious representation of their authentic national culture. That is, national circus techniques or dance are perceived as an aspect of pride; these art-forms were absent or

⁶⁶ American President Richard Nixon initially used the term *Vietnamisation* during the Vietnam War demonstrations (Trueman, 2012). Khmer people use the same term to illustrate the impact of the Vietnamese regime on their culture.

⁶⁷ Excluding some sporadic contemporary arts exhibitions from masters, the artists wanted to return to more traditional practices.

intentionally transformed during the Khmer Rouge and the Vietnamese regime. The art-forms had to be rebuilt and reinvented, at times refined through travelling back in time to the great Khmer Empire. All my observations confirmed that after the Vietnamese, Cambodian art-forms returned to the period before the Khmer Rouge years. Apsara dance and circus techniques are classical and disciplined, resulting to a certain degree in a *museumification* and memorial form of the art (Gleeson, 2010). The Cambodian people were constrained during several oppressive regimes, and Khmer art was the only concept the oppressors could not touch or take away from the Khmer people. In contemporary Cambodia, artists are facing the same narrative with the presence of vast numbers of NGOs.

However, since 1999 new groups of artists have been deploying contemporary circus and dance styles. In particular, six years ago the Khmer arts saw a modern shift, demonstrating that Khmer artists are capable of speaking the international language, as Gleeson (2010) highlights in her paper about the presence of the past in Phnom Penh. This shift has developed through the interconnectedness and technological development of the globalised world: Cambodians are now exposed to the world through the Internet and television. The artists are no longer isolated; although geography is the Cambodian cultural national concept, *again* it is not directly a sign of a cultural mark for the ethnoscape. This can also be perceived in the willingness of PPS to send its students abroad and to teach them about the international language of art and opportunities outside Cambodia. Director Det has travelled more than once on invitation to France to observe European circus techniques and to enhance the company's international contacts. Det decided to educate two of his most confident students by sending them to France; both of them now work as artists and circus trainers at PPS. Det states (Det 2010, pers. comm., 23 Feb.):

In France I received a proper training from which I gained lots of knowledge. It opened my eyes about solutions for a child's development. This school is not only focussing on circus tricks, but also on the wellbeing of the child. We offer both. First, the work of the circus troupe was only restricted to the knowledge of Vietnamese teachers, however, by introducing social circus again, other generations can develop the liveliness of the circus again.

Det fears that if the art of social circus is not shown in many countries or preserved in international literature, it may disappear and need to be reinvented. Social circus is evidently now interrelated with the global market, its audience and its social intentions,

following the fear of reinvention after the war. Circus is the only art-form the oppressors did not take away from the Khmer, and its cultural preservation is important for Khmer artists (Det 2010, pers. comm., 23 Feb.). It is the only stable movement and positive international exchange within their cultural ethnoscape. In contrast, in the next section, the international artists travelling to the arts centre will be described.

3.3.4. *European artists*

Nobody is in charge of or leads the Cambodian art-forms, that is why the arts are so scattered. We (as in Khmer) prefer to follow, rather than leading. We fear to lead, fear to initiate, we are afraid to make mistakes (Chang 2010, pers. comm., 12 Mar.).

During that delightful lunch with the French executive director of the arts centre, I am intrigued to hear about the collaboration between PPS and Ariane Mnouchkine.⁶⁸ The French theatre director is quoted as saying ‘I am in the present and only the present matters to me’ – while PPS’s main focus is on Khmer cultural identity and how that relates to their past and possible future. Moreover, the “fourth wall” is not Mnouchkine’s ultimate restriction in the theatre: Mnouchkine’s shows frequently consist of the actors getting ready in front of the spectators. The shows of PPS, however, are very traditional and always use the comfortable fourth wall. The moment I ask the director what the effect is of Mnouchkine’s work and how ‘theatre for theatre’ influences the aesthetic dimensions of the company, a very young girl walks into the room. She holds a dead cat in one hand; obviously it died a few seconds ago. With my poor knowledge of the Khmer language, I understand that she killed the cat in the rice fields. She explains that she was very hungry.

This rather controversial “spectacle” explicitly describes how my attempt to measure effect was turned on its head. While I was trying to measure the effect of Mnouchkine’s work in a social arts centre in an interview with the executive director, the ‘dead cat’ interrupted that. Rather than researching the object, the interview itself became the object. It was a *performative* moment in itself. The dead cat unpacked the effect and painfully showed the realistic situation of the life of an actress at the arts centre. My debate with the director about the measurable effect of ‘art for art’s sake’ suddenly seemed pathetic in contrast to the basic needs within the arts centre. This section illustrates the impact and power of the fourth player within the cultural ethnoscape: European artists travelling to PPS.

⁶⁸ Ariane Mnouchkine of *Le Théâtre du Soleil* has often been perceived as one of the most significant theatre directors globally. She has created more than 20 productions over the past 48 years (Dickson, 2012). *Le Théâtre du Soleil*’s initial activity in 1964 was based on collective work with global influences.

The arts centre occasionally invites international artists to Cambodia; for example, Vietnamese artists regularly come to PPS to make the teenagers aware that the Vietnamese are not ruthless, as represented throughout Cambodian history. African artists also travel to PPS, educating the young people about racism. The interviews during my fieldwork continuously show the French director's emphasis on the significance of peace-building, striving for respect and identity. Although I did not observe any workshops focussing on peace-building, the directors highlighted their attempts to stimulate the children's pride in themselves and their country. By giving the children the space to create their own identity and use the support network of international artists, the directors aim to strengthen the new Khmer generation in Battambang. Through this approach, the directors envision that the newer generation will not easily be manipulated. The directors push young people to explore and to talk about manipulation with other cultures.

Other international artists travel (mainly from Europe) on their own initiative to Battambang to temporarily work with the young artists at the arts centre. The artists stay at the centre between eight weeks and six months. Several artists return regularly to the centre. Observations during my fieldwork show that these artists all have their own agenda and reasons to visit the arts school; some desire to join groups with like-minded people for good causes, some have long-lasting relationships with the country because of their previous travel experiences or country of origin, and some arrive in this remote arts centre wanting to offer *the Other* the hope for change, cultural modernity and artistic solutions that feature the reform of aesthetic notions. In more extreme cases, these artists at times try to counter this by using strategies to manufacture dependence beyond the control of the arts centre or international interveners. This section interrogates two examples of European artists travelling to PPS caught between the mechanisms of global governance and cultural misperceptions. The examples are interesting cases in that they form a bridge between the many difficulties players in the cultural ethnoscape face in terms of aesthetic notions in the context of a globalising 'moving' world.

The first example illustrates how European discourses of social and aesthetic worth clash and therefore fail in their purposes. Since 2008 the arts school has been working in partnership with Ariane Mnouchkine's Parisian company *Le Théâtre du Soleil*. The rationale of Mnouchkine's new peace-building project is the play *L'Histoire terrible mais inachevée de Norodom Sihanouk, roi du Cambodge* ('The terrible but unfinished story of Norodom

Sihanouk, King of Cambodia'), staged in Cambodia and France with 29 musicians and actors from PPS. In 1984 Mnouchkine and Hélène Cixous⁶⁹ were confronted with the refugee camps on the Thai-Cambodian border while traveling, and both realised that 'neither feelings of suffering nor dreams of hope are ever completely satisfied' (Cixous, 2011: 26). Inspired by this trip, with *L'Histoire terrible mais inachevée de Norodom Sihanouk, roi du Cambodge* in 1985, Mnouchkine began staging contemporary texts written specifically for *Le Théâtre du Soleil* by Cixous. This specific play centres on the double meaning of the French word *histoire*: between art and reality, between non-fiction and fiction. The story has an epic Shakespearian ancestry that explores a contemporary tragedy: the descent into Cambodian genocidal hell until the Vietnamese civil war and oppression (Thompson and Prenowitz, 2011: 24). The play engages what Cixous calls 'a *poethics*: it is an act of witnessing and memory, it takes a stand here and now as history is being made, yet it is political only insofar as it is poetical' (Thompson, 2006: 199, my italics). The play suggests the intricate nature of authority roles in Cambodia; 'the story of the history is terrible, genocidal, tragic, but it is unfinished' (Ibid.: 198).

Ashley Thompson (2006), who has researched Cixous's theatrical texts of *Le Théâtre du Soleil* and is actively involved in the refugee camps on the Thai-Cambodian border, argued that it would be refreshing for new Khmer generations to actively reclaim and reflect on their horrific history by staging this play. Thompson acknowledges that translating the epic theatrical text into Khmer involved high artistic and political risks, in particular, organising the Cambodian *mise en scène* 'in a socially and politically morbid context' (Thompson and Prenowitz, 2011: 24). However, Thompson expected that the spectacle's themes of memory, forgiveness, presence, absence, life and death may assist the new Khmer generation giving meaning to these complicated themes. By taking this performance on a European tour, the organisers hoped that this project could offer a different perspective on Cambodia and the ECCC within the current Western discourse in the process of globalisation. The social and political outcomes are mainly focussed on the global image of Cambodia.

Although this specific project in Cambodia claims to reconcile, within an aid-dependent arts centre like PPS, this project appears from my perspective as profoundly coercive. Firstly, the 29 students from PPS noted the immense challenge of studying the complicated

⁶⁹ Hélène Cixous is the University of Paris 8's emeritus professor and *Le Théâtre du Soleil*'s playwright.

theatrical text and becoming accustomed to a foreign but very familiar piece of writing. The Cambodian directors explained during interviews (Cambodian directors 2010, pers. comm., 22 Feb.):

The project with Mnouchkine is important, because it is a unique chance for the artists to work with people in terms of understanding what theatre is, in particular, because it is the first time that the arts centre is working with “theatre for theatre”. The students enjoy this form of theatre, however, they had to overcome two major thresholds. Firstly, we had to assure the young artists that the police would not harm them when the artists would talk about theatre. Secondly, we had to introduce them to theatrical texts, and again convince them that they would not be punished for reading theatre literature.

It should be noted that the students were to a certain extent forced to overcome their fears (in the sense of discussing and reading theatrical texts) for Mnouchkine’s causes. I doubt that these emotional processes should be part of applied theatre practice, in particular with regard to the vulnerable mental state of the artists. The Western ‘aesthetic’ was prioritised over the social state of the Khmer artists. As the problem of Kant’s theory, described in Chapter One, has shown, successful evaluation of artworks requires a specific vocabulary to be learned. Winston – agreeing with Geertz – notes, however, that this is an entirely Western notion, because ‘in all other cultures beauty is commonly understood by attending to the broader cultural concerns that it serves’ (Winston, 2010: 26).

Secondly, Mnouchkine’s creative process is based on collective creation, similar to the Brazilian and Nicaraguan theatre companies. Here, however, the artistic democratic search in which the entire group is involved is framed in a transnational process. Thompson is convinced that this project is a transcultural contribution that does not impose; rather, Mnouchkine’s methodology creates artistic freedom for the participating actors (Thompson and Prenowitz, 2011: 25). Mnouchkine’s process also involves remembrance questions to make the young artists think about their pasts, including the French colonial period, such as: ‘What is memory? What is your memory of the last years, what is the memory of the country, including the colonial period?’. The French executive director of PPS laughed infectiously when he explained: ‘Perhaps we think this is very important, because I am French myself?’ (Sidoit 2010, pers. comm., 22 Feb.). This could indicate a forced social impact on the Khmer artists. As mentioned above, the ways to remember and to heal differ greatly between cultures; therefore, the French approach could clash with Khmer ways of remembrance.

Thirdly, this specific project failed because of the abrupt departure of *Le Théâtre du Soleil's* actors. Due to insufficient funds from PPS, the actors of Mnouchkine's troupe could not receive salaries for their work. Therefore, PPS staff members were forced to pay the wages of *Le Théâtre du Soleil's* artists, followed by their sudden departure. Even though the PPS staff members (and possibly Mnouchkine's troupe) share the value of learning from like-minded people for good causes, this project in itself had a highly disempowering effect upon the organisation of PPS. As a result, participatory decision-making and democratic sovereignty within the arts centre became much more difficult. In particular, by forcing the arts centre staff to donate a substantial amount of their salaries for the wages of *Le Théâtre du Soleil*, this international project promoted a politics that was confining, in the sense that it attempted to redefine borders focussing on individual artists, rather than on public and collective action. The project highlighted the unequal distribution of power. That is, prioritising the individual need over PPS' collective needs undermined relations of solidarity and the arts centre's main goals. It could even have led to the promotion of increased dependence on top-down resource approaches for PPS. The social intentions of this artistic project were about peace-building and reconciliation; however, the social outcomes caused a greater dependence for the arts centre. For my wider argument, this illustrates the top-down approach to development – 'often seen as an alien expression of hegemony and domination' (Rittberger and Visher, 2008: 57) – through for example the use of dependency creation (Ibid.).

The second example in this section of European artists travelling to Cambodia is the European director of classical theatre performance *The Maids* by Jean Genet.⁷⁰ The account offered here is drawn from six weeks of intensive study, five mornings a week, at the arts school during the performance's rehearsals. The European director had previously worked in South-East Asia and had visited Cambodia numerous times. Moreover, he had also performed this specific text on several occasions in different countries and was convinced that this was a suitable text for Cambodia's current situation. During auditions in the autumn of 2009, the director had chosen three actresses from the theatre awareness group (and three musicians from the music school) for his performance. It should be noted that a theatre performance of Jean Genet's *The Maids* by *Phare Ponleu Selpak* in Cambodia may not

⁷⁰ The European director prefers to remain anonymous. He is therefore referred to in this thesis as the European theatre director, the European director or the director.

seem to be applied theatre, but the context of the community setting positions it as part of applied theatre work.

Controversial French playwright Genet – orphan, prostitute and thief – transformed his life through literature and writing plays in which he turned normal morality upside down, desiring to be the spokesman of the oppressed. *The Maids* tells the story of two sisters, Claire and Solange, the maids of the so-called Madame. They admire their Madame, her independence, wealth and wardrobe, but they also despise her. The maids feel imprisoned and humiliated. They decide to pour poison into the Madame's tea, but their attempt fails. In the final scene, Solange, 'playing' the maid, forces her sister Claire, 'playing' the Madame, to drink the poisoned tea. Claire then shows courage and drinks the tea in the role of the Madame. Clearly, there is a playing-out of scenarios here – a deadly experiment with 'showing' and play-acting – in the play.

After rehearsals, the director expressed that he hoped intensely to open up space in the hearts and minds of the spectators by showing situations that would resonate with their own daily lives. The director had some expectations as to how the audience would respond to the dramaturgical text. Firstly, he anticipated that the audience would easily follow the story and would identify themselves with the maids. The Madame would symbolise upper class people pretending to take care of their servants but never offering the maids the life they hope for. Secondly, the director imagined that the audience would laugh at the attempts of the two maids to free themselves from the Madame, because of the naïve and humorous way the actresses would play the maids as two little children. As a result, the audience could have sympathy with the revolt of the maids, longing for some wealth and respect. The audience would agree with the outbursts of hatred towards the world that seemed to have abandoned the maids from the day they entered the Madame's house, but would also realise that hatred could fade. Finally, the play would give the audience a way to reflect on dependency and truthful collaboration. The director described *The Maids* as a metaphorical story of the path people choose to walk to become independent and free, which becomes easier if people are not forced to walk alone, but rather in the company of others.

Throughout my fieldwork period at PPS, continuous and structured rehearsals took place only when the European theatre director was present. The rehearsals started on time and

worked through five hours of intense practice with two breaks. The director worked with different Khmer translators, meaning that the stage directions of the director never travelled directly to the actresses and musicians. The second Khmer interpreter quickly took over the role of director in the sense that he gave stage directions himself and instantly hushed the actresses and musicians when in his opinion they made too much noise. It was obvious that the director was struggling to position the translator, and sometimes attempts to clarify his role as solely an interpreter failed. I would like to draw on one significant moment whilst observing the rehearsals, demonstrating the mechanisms of cultural slippages and the ways in which this player in the ethnoscape faced several difficulties in terms of aesthetic notions and discourses. The moment occurred when the European director was rehearsing one of the first scenes of the play: the Madame is out and the sisters build their own fantasy world. They open Madame's wardrobe: one sister plays the Madame completely dressed up, and the other sister acts as the maid. While the sisters were performing a game of 'snobby Madame and servile maid' to express their anger and to escape from the ties of dependence (again, there is a playing-out of scenarios here), the director asked one of the actresses to spit on the floor to provoke an exaggerated example of the role of the maid.

During this moment, when the stage direction was an exaggeration of the maid's role, the actress refused to spit on the floor. When she continued to resist making this gesture, tensions between the director and translator ran high. "Could you please try to spit? I would like to see how it looks," the director amiably tried. "Spit!" the translator shouted. "Could you please ask her [the actress] to try it, so I can at least see how it looks?" the director asked the interpreter in a friendly manner. "SPIT!" the translator yelled. For a while, the intense conversation between the men continued, ending with a strong statement in which the director once more elucidated the interpreter's sole role as a translator. The actress then explained that spitting on the floor is an unacceptable and very disrespectful gesture on stage. Although the director attempted to persuade her that this gesture would be perfect for her role as a maid – particularly now he knew why she had refused – the actress was not convinced.

On the opening night, three weeks later, the actress spat. A little bit. With hesitation. I realised that the theatrical situation was implausible. The stylised and imposed aesthetic of the director led to a forced scene, in which the actress reluctantly followed the director's

instructions, lacking both artistic understanding and appreciation. In a fairly formal interview, the actress admitted that this creative process was hard, and through this process she had noticed the absence of a theatrical aesthetic vocabulary within the arts centre. At times she also doubted that the translation from English to Khmer was correct and nuanced, both in the text and via the interpreter. Moreover, she struggled with ideas and feelings about her character, as her ideas were not similar to the director's ideas, and did not suit the story. Due to the absence of an aesthetic terminology and reliable Khmer translation, the aesthetic discourse was lost during the rehearsals.

Observations throughout the rehearsals and the performances illustrated yet again Khmer people's difficulties in watching, and the motif of looking away. Sensitive or passionate moments brought about *despite* the European director produced instants of silence, of the artists slowly walking away, of spectators and artists in the audience turning around, looking away. As mentioned previously, looking away is an aspect of a conditioned response to avoid shame and to make sure that the other person does not feel ashamed. In numerous informal meetings, the European director discussed his struggle with this concept of cultural politeness and described the ways his Western theatre colleagues responded (European theatre director 2010, pers. comm., 13 Mar.):

Theatre is firstly observing or looking, and subsequently feeling the emotions. Experience theatre is never looking away, theatre is wanting to crawl into it. Creating theatre wants others to look and to observe. Being explicit. Inelegantly being explicit. Wanting to be seen. Is it possible to create theatre in Khmer culture? Is 'not looking and showing' then already the first social theme – independently of the theatrical text or the story?

This demonstrates the European director's awareness and sensitivity about the work's 'territory', but also illustrates the sometimes unfeasible artistic situation for both parties: the Khmer artists and the European director. More importantly, this is about theatre aesthetics in Khmer culture: looking (*thea-*) is at the root of European theatre, and seemingly not at the root of Khmer performing arts. This clash is a vital part of my analysis, because it shows that this European aesthetic intervention clearly interfered with and differed from the Khmer aesthetic. The Cambodian artists and audience were expected to understand and work with a completely new aesthetic. This aesthetic is 'imposed', whilst the existing circus aesthetic of the arts centre is overlooked and unclear due to the lack of aesthetic terminology.

It could be argued that in both examples, Mnouchkine and the European theatre director, another struggle derives from their work: that is, their expectations of the audience and the young artists. As mentioned, both well-known directors had explicit expectations about coming to Cambodia: the ways they would work with the artists, how their work would contribute to the young artists' traumas and pasts, how the audience would respond and contribute, and how the show would possibly 'heal' the people. I argue here, however, in Thompson's rhetoric, that the admiration focusses more on 'the skill of the lion tamer, rather than the performance of the lion itself' (2004a: 63). Intentionally or unintentionally, the international artists travelling to Cambodia decide on the issues and aesthetics in their performances on behalf of the people. As Ahmed (2002) argues regarding theatre for development, the issues do not come from the people themselves (2002: 5). Unfortunately – although not in every case – one is then still left with a troubled perception, because it is not an accident that 'all these issues can be grouped under sectors which attract foreign donation (Ibid.)'. This has consequences for the cultural ethnoscape of PPS. The aesthetic dimensions of the arts centre are imposed even if these notions conflict with the interests of the Khmer artists. Another example in which this is visible involves the next player in the ethnoscape: the tourists.

3.3.5. *Tourists*

This story is about a Khmer girl whom I will call Botum.

Botum keeps silent. She does not give an answer when I ask her opinion of the general Cambodian beauty image. Botum, the European theatre director and I are sitting in the restaurant, which seems to be the only somewhat cooler and mosquito-free space inside PPS. Unfortunately the two cooks do not notice our presence. Tonight the circus school will perform another tourist show and the cooks must prepare countless three-course meals, all included in the package deal. 45 minutes of complicated circus tricks plus a rich traditional meal is what you could call a bargain. While I am trying to understand Botum's judgements of her country, the school and herself, she immediately begins to talk about her appearance. "I am not pretty, I am very ugly, but I try to compensate for my ugliness through my inner beauty" (Botum 2010, pers. comm., 4 Mar.). She explains that she will never get married. She will reside here – within the walls of PPS – for the rest of her life. Her girlfriends talk about boyfriends, getting married and other ideals. "You [pointing at me] constantly tell me that I am beautiful, but Cambodians will never agree."

Botum is physically disabled, like many other children at PPS, due to malnutrition, caused by poor living conditions or drug use, to the heavily mined areas around the arts school or perhaps to psychological trauma.

Botum has difficulties moving and using the left side of her body. The three main PPS directors know exactly what has happened to Botum and treat her problems confidentially. Botum is also illiterate. However, this does not hold her back from claiming the role of the Madame in 'The Maids. She learns the large amount of text by listening to her father's voice and imitating his lips movements. Botum's story is not unusual in this regard.

The final section only briefly describes the fifth player in the ethnoscape, tourists, because the actual final actors are the disabled artists of PPS. The group of disabled individuals within the arts centre is treated as a minority as a direct result of the presence of *tourists* and the consequences of the globalised world. The two stories that illustrate this result embedded in the pain and suffering of disabled Khmer people are Botum's story, and Miss



Figure 10: The Madame in Jean Genet's The Maids, March 2010. (Photo: Kathy Barnhill)

Landmine 2009. After briefly describing the tourists, followed by Botum's and Miss Landmine's situations and the conditions of their daily lives, I argue that the last actor in the ethnoscape explicitly demonstrates why this case study serves neither the community nor the art-form of theatre.

Today, around two million visitors travel through Cambodia annually. However, tourists avoided the country for decades until the mid-1990s. As tourists have returned after the civil war and the Khmer Rouge atrocities, the country has transformed fourteen locations – including the place where Pol Pot was cremated – into tourist sites specifically relating to the genocide (Buncombe, 2010). The director of the Genocide Documentation Centre states that this development will victimise Cambodians: ‘it has taken a long time for the Khmer population to become something else’ (South East Asia Tourism Monitor, 2012: 4). PPS is also a tourist attraction, explicitly advertised in the Lonely Planet (Ray and Robinson, 2008: 243) and ranked ninth of all of Battambang’s 31 tourist activities by Lonely Planet travellers (2008). The arts school puts on social circus shows for eight dollars admission two or three times a week, depending on the season. These shows change regularly. Before the circus performances the tourists are invited to visit the visual arts centre and potentially buy one of the young artists’ works. The tourists can have dinner at the compound for an additional six dollars.

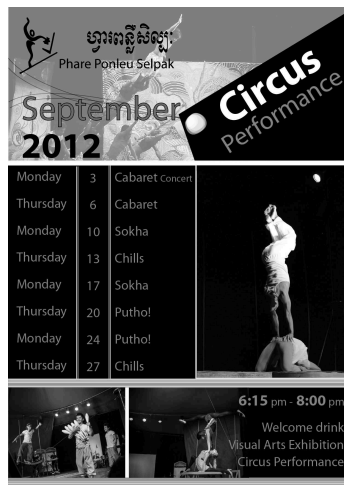


Figure 11: Monthly tourist advertisement website in Battambang and other areas. (Photo: Phare Ponleu Selpak)

I will start with the Miss Landmine competition to sketch out the general Cambodian and global vision towards landmine victims. Norwegian film director Morten Traavik, creator of Miss Landmine, felt a moral obligation to put his idea of a beauty contest for mine victims into action after seeing the enormous amount of landmines in Angola (Film Miss Landmine Cambodia, 2009). Traavik argues (Ibid.):

The main problem with us whites when dealing with perceived exotic cultures are that we are either totally disrespectful or far too respectful. Both stem from

ignorance and a fear of dealing with people as just people, which has, for me, worked splendidly so far. [...] However, the most obvious difference so far is that very few Angolans or Khmer understand why there are Western feminists being outraged on their behalf for taking part in Miss Landmine.

That is, he states, because participating women are fully aware that their function in this competition is to be employed in a campaign to influence attitudes, both outside and within themselves. The competition is therefore much more than a beauty pageant, Traavik argues (Ibid.).

I meet Dos Sopheap, Miss Landmine Cambodia 2009, at the arts centre with her mother. By coincidence, the winner of the beauty pageant lives close to Battambang. She is not allowed to meet me alone; her mother is her spokesperson and she responds directly in line



Figure 12: Miss Landmine Cambodia 2009 with mother and translator. (Photo: Kathi Barnhill)

with Traavik's vision and ideas. At the age of five, Dos had a landmine accident; she and her father became physically disabled and both lost a leg. The Miss Landmine website gives all the details: the mine was a PMA-2 anti-personnel landmine, worth ten dollars. The pressure release of the mine only needed a weight of 8kg, and the mine was produced in

the former Yugoslavia.⁷¹ Dos answers a few questions and explains that before the Miss Landmine competition, nobody accepted her friendship and every villager would bully her after school. She always felt a lack of beauty and a lack of presence. Now Dos feels more complete. Her mother emphasises that finding a well-paid job in Cambodia is impossible for landmine victims, with the exception of NGOs and other non-profit organisations. Miss Landmine Cambodia won a thousand dollars in cash, a crown, a customised prosthetic leg and a stole with *Miss Landmine* written on top of it. The cash has been used to invest in a new house; Dos does not use her new leg. The Miss Landmine project exemplifies the impact of the globalised world on the local people in Cambodia. It also illustrates how Traavik's educational ideas partially failed. The marketability of ongoing post-memory continues to generate a transitional context in Cambodia: the connections within the social and aesthetic landscape remain related to crisis management rather than progressive 'development'.

Botum's story is similar. Although the European director and I were not acquainted with the specifics of Botum's disability, the young actress was treated as a 'special' person, and at times even as an outlaw by the other artists of PPS. Botum was the only disabled actress in *The Maids*, and she insisted on playing the Madame against the wishes of the centre's directors. The arts centre's management preferred three circus artists or at least actresses without physical disabilities. Botum always had to take care of the lunch during the rehearsal's breaks, as the other young artists were convinced that job was meant to be for Botum. The other actors did not notice when I decided to prepare lunch; however, Botum was clearly embarrassed and showed that she did not appreciate the gesture. On opening night, Botum received great applause when she entered the stage dressed in a yellow evening dress. There was complete silence when Botum slowly removed the veil covered with embroidery, revealing her face.

During my time at the arts school, I was not able to find out which young people belonged to the theatre group and which did not. The theatre group was invisible to outsiders, and without a translator it was not possible to tell who was an actress or an actor. It was not until I heard Botum's story that I realised that the majority of the theatre group consisted of disabled children. Their disabilities varied and were not necessarily visible. I also became

⁷¹ <http://miss-landmine.org/cambodia/index.php/miss-battambang.html>, last accessed October 5, 2012.

very conscious of the lack of materials and rehearsal space for the theatre group as opposed to the luxury circus department. Throughout the interviews and observations I identified a pattern: the artists participating in Mnouchkine's project, the artists invited to travel abroad for training *and* the artists challenged to work at the detention centres all belonged to the circus troupe. The arts school almost completely reflected an able-bodied circus and disabled theatre troupe. The different directors of the arts school emphasised that circus "sells" and theatre does not. The circus division works independently: they are able to survive from the money they earn from the tourist shows. Since all circus performances are physically challenging and at times even fairly risky, the directors cannot *afford* to let disabled children participate in their popular tourist shows. This signals a worrying distinction between the disabled artists and the circus artists. The arts centre's aims have always focussed on inclusion and equality; however, the agenda of support from *tourists* is now prioritised. The disabled children are only accepted within certain parameters. This illustrates how tourist and economic flows have influenced the politics of the arts agenda, all in favour of the international image rather than the wellbeing of the children.

The decentred connections within the aesthetic and social landscape of the arts centre due to the agendas of the international interveners, the influence of the French staff and the significance of the global image confirm the overall argument of this thesis. It also ratifies and extends what I argued in the previous chapter: the many ways in which economic and international players participate in the aesthetic and social constructions of applied theatre's artistic value. Whilst in the Brazil chapter these players were manifest in tax-reduced sponsorships from global corporations and policies of national governments, here they are *intrusively* depicted in the funding decisions of international interveners. This research, which has tried to locate an aesthetic of applied theatre, concludes that in this chapter, 'clean' monies come with strings attached, meaning that neither art nor community are served. It was here that my search for an aesthetic for applied theatre in Cambodia came to an end. I abandoned the search because I argue that any meaningful notion of aesthetics in applied theatre needs to serve art and community. Truly locating the origins of the aesthetics of applied theatre here was very complex because the search was blurred by international influences and ideologies, helping neither PPS's community nor its artistic practice. From this moment onwards, my research attempted to describe the *determining factors* of the aesthetics of applied theatre, and the aesthetic discourses *surrounding* applied theatre in particular contexts.

3.4. Conclusion

This chapter has attempted to articulate how the complex Cambodian historical context affects the sort of art that is being made at the Northern Cambodian arts centre PPS, and how this influences the artists' work. The cultural ethnoscape has proven to be a suitable framework for these complicated questions. The individuals and groups that make up the "moving" community at PPS – refugees, international interveners, artists travelling abroad, European artists travelling to the arts centre and tourists – affect the aesthetic dimensions and discourse of the arts school. The complexities of aesthetic dimensions within PPS's globalised community, rather than one restricted by geography, mean that these dimensions are influenced by each of the cultural ethnoscape's players, all carrying their own history and background. At the same time, they all attempt to interact with the diverse histories around them.

The origins of PPS highlight that due to the horrors of the Khmer Rouge, Cambodian culture was obliterated prior to initiatives such as the arts centre. The impetus behind the aesthetics of theatrical practice within the arts centre was mainly educational and social. The aesthetic and social landscape as explored in the Brazil chapter is completely reframed in the Cambodian context by the fact that the cultural life of the arts centre – aesthetic and social alike – is subject to post-memory following the war. Moreover, international interventions for psycho-social resilience rapidly grew due to the genocide narrative, and have caused shocking clashes between the aesthetic and social discourses of the arts centre, the donors, the performances – and the context of the work.

Moreover, aid dependence in Cambodia seems to be developing more and more as a condition arising from global structures and markets, encouraging social and moral looseness in PPS. This dependence is used by one of PPS's ethnoscape's players – international interveners – as a means to exercise power: international capital directly interferes with the aesthetic dimensions and vision of the arts centre.

The only stable movement within PPS's cultural ethnoscape is circus. It is the only art-form oppressors did not take away from the Khmer, and its cultural presence is therefore important to preserve for Khmer artists. In contrast, European artists travelling to Cambodia determine the issues to be taken up in their shows on behalf of the recipient community. This has consequences for the cultural ethnoscape of PPS – the aesthetic and

social dimensions of the arts centre are imposed, even when these conflict with the interests of Khmer artists.

Finally, the worrying distinction between the disabled artists and circus artists at the arts centre has shown that the agenda of tourists' support is nowadays prioritised. The disabled children are only accepted within certain parameters at the arts centre. This illustrates how the importance of the global image has influenced the politics of the arts agenda.

The five categories that arose from 'moments' of performance have shown us that the Cambodian aesthetic and social landscape is not secure, and that there are clashes between the aesthetic and social discourses of the centre. Opposing agendas of international artists, commercialised tourist shows and international interveners donating money for genocide shows all affect the aesthetic dimensions of the arts centre. INGOs and NGOs have intensified this intrusion.

This also echoes my concern about the creation of the Brazilian wall in Rio's favelas where the theatre practitioners are working with notions of purity and exclusion. These can be linked under the framework of dirt and cleanliness, and I will consider this controversial theory in more detail in the conclusion. Moreover, having looked at ways in which players in the cultural ethnoscape interfere with the aesthetic notions of a Cambodian arts centre, I will now examine a Nicaraguan example where this phenomenon occurs. This will illustrate that ethnoscaping can be models for multi-layered and deep analysis to assist in understanding the position of aesthetics within the field of applied theatre, which will lead to the final conclusion.

‘Nicaragua, Nicaraguita’: ⁷² The revolutionary motion
between the aesthetic and the social

GALLO PINTO

INGREDIENTS

1 bag small dried red or black beans

7 garlic cloves

Vegetable oil

1 medium yellow onion

200 gr long-grain white rice

1/2 l water

1/2 seeded green bell pepper

Salt

PREPARATION

1 Place rinsed beans in a large pot: water should cover beans. Soak for 30 minutes.

2 Bring to boil and simmer beans for 30 minutes. Turn off heat, cover beans, and rest one hour. Bring beans back up to boil. Add salt and garlic, and simmer until beans are tender, 30-60 minutes.

3 Heat oil in saucepan over medium heat. Add 2/3 onion and cook until softened.

4 Add rice and cook until grains are shiny and for two to three minutes. Add water and salt, increase heat to high and bring to boil. Place bell pepper on top of rice.

5 Boil rice, reduce heat, cover and cook. Do not remove lid for 15 minutes. Remove and discard bell pepper. Fluff rice, then refrigerate for one day.

6 Heat oil in saucepan on a medium-high heat until simmering. Add remaining onion and cook until softened for five minutes.

7 Add rice and beans to skillet and cook until rice is evenly coated. Continue to cook to allow flavours to melt and mix for ten minutes. Cover and cook over low heat for an additional ten minutes.

⁷² ‘Nicaragua, little Nicaragua’ – a popular song by famous Nicaraguan singer Carlos Mejía Godoy.

4.1. Introduction

In the one and a half hour night-time taxi ride to my final destination in Nicaragua the cowboy rules are simple. You never stop. Not for a red light. Not for an ambulance. Never. At night the country quickly loses its liveliness. In particular, the highway from the international airport in Managua to the more rural areas is infamous for its carjackings and violent assaults. The pungent smell of cinnamon incense fills the air of the taxi. The driver proudly shows his solution for eradicating people's odour in his taxi: a car freshener spray called 'Verry Strawberry'.

For four extended periods (between 2001 and 2009), my residence is in León, a colonial student city on the South-West Pacific coast. In the least densely populated country in Central America the streets have no names. The address of my home is therefore fairly unusual: "From where the Old Theatre was located, two and a half blocks down". I always wonder how the postman delivers mail to the right place without addresses. How, for example, would he know where the Old Theatre used to be if it is not there anymore? And how would he know which way 'down' is? The inhabitants use their own logic: 'down' means 'west', because the sun goes down in the west. It does not have a geographical meaning.

The taxi driver easily finds the small house with a tin roof, in which the furniture consists of four red plastic chairs and one rocking chair. Cardboard walls almost reaching my height divide the small rooms. Privacy exists on its own terms. Every night around the same time my Nicaraguan host brings out two plastic chairs, his dog, cat, and sometimes a radio. While enjoying the glorious sunset, I observe my host. Every year I push myself harder to copy his quietness. He sits, looks at his neighbours (all doing the same) and gazes. For two, three hours. During the boxing season, he might listen to the radio, but more often he prefers the silence. Just like his neighbours.

The longer I reside in Nicaragua, the profounder the country and its people nestle into me. Like its privacy, they exist on their own terms: easy to love, simple and resonant. It is a country where people are at peace with boredom, heat and insufficient food.

Every week I travel three hours to the coffee cultivating town of Matagalpa in the Northern Highlands to work with theatre company Libycayán,⁷³ partly originating from Movimiento Teatro Popular Sin Fronteras (Movitep-SF) ('popular theatre movement without borders'). In a colourful privately-owned American

⁷³ The name *Libycayán* is a neologism made of two native root words referring to 'Chispa' (lily) and 'hill' (cayán); combining both terms gives us the location of the theatre company in Chispa – the area of the theatre company – positioned on the top of the hill.

school bus protected by 'We love Jesus' stickers, the 65 miles through the mountains is a true journey. The bus is filled with couches: four to five people share one, as well as chickens, piñatas⁷⁴ and buckets filled with tomatoes and peppers. The theatre company is located in the Sembrando Esperanza ('Planting Hope') library in La Chispa, a fairly dangerous area outside the city of Matagalpa.

The combination of the long bus journey and the liquid I drink to deal with the extreme heat causes an immediate need for a toilet every time I arrive. The first time, my Nicaraguan colleague amiably asks the library's neighbour if I can use their toilet. That is no problem. The hole in the garden behind the house shielded by a shower curtain is all mine. The daughter brings extra napkins and the little son follows me. He sits next to me and looks at me. After a few weeks going through the same routine, I do not knock anymore. I walk into the living room and go to their garden with their little son next to me. Upon my return I drink a quick coffee with the family.

In silence.

This chapter presents the realisation of the overall argument. From my exploration of the landscape of social and aesthetic worth within three applied theatre contexts, I argue that economic and international players (tax-reduced sponsorships by global corporations, policies of national governments and funding decisions of international aid agencies) participate and intrude in both the aesthetic and social constructions of applied theatre's artistic value in these settings. The debates in the previous two chapters about the landscape of social and aesthetic worth and the relationship between the international community and local sovereignties resonate, albeit differently, within the case study of this chapter, non-profit arts organisation *Movimiento Teatro Popular Sin Fronteras* (Movitep-SF). The chapter examines the push and pull movements between local sovereignties and the international aid industry and shows how this interaction occurs on a micro level between the commissioning and execution of cultural projects and theatre performances within Movitep-SF. Following the previous, fairly pessimistic chapters, here the sustained 'popular' activism and the practitioners' understanding of their national context coming through the interviews illustrate hope for the aesthetics of applied theatre. The practitioners execute a more politicised, historicised kind of practice in which they maintain more autonomy around their aesthetic decision-making. In this context, the practitioners' understanding of their history is a source of strength that engages more fluently with global

⁷⁴ Colourful paper forms full of sweets and toys, usually broken while blindfolded during celebrations.

and national policies in articulating an aesthetic. I argue that the entry of INGO money has gradually defined *teatro popular*⁷⁵ – an artistic practice that developed in Nicaragua through social ideology and political commitment – from politically motivated ideologies to unsuccessful social agendas. This attempt to conform to agendas of social change means that the artistic quality of the theatre suffered. Movitep-SF has been able to work within the Nicaraguan cultural landscape throughout this process by adapting its aesthetic frameworks to the contingencies of the economic contexts. I will illustrate the ways in which the global market has had an effect on the aesthetic and social aspects of this artistic expression.

This chapter looks at how players in the cultural ethnoscape in the Nicaraguan example of Movitep-SF (co-)exist and have changed the aesthetic dimensions of the non-profit organisation over the years. The movement of these dimensions has resulted in conflicting interests between practitioners, international interveners and local communities, and in battles with regard to the artists' social intentions and outcomes for the community. Ultimately, the Nicaraguan case study offers the opportunity to explore the clash between the notion of a 'democratic political *popular*' versus economic agendas closing the aesthetic practice down, in contrast to the idea of 'rehabilitation and development' discourses in Cambodia and of 'artistic' discourses in Brazil. The former two examples and this case study all show the consistent shape of the problem – posed by the economic and international players – between the aesthetics of three very differently-framed examples of applied theatre. Finally, this chapter illustrates the ways in which the concept of the ethnoscape can offer a theoretical framework for investigating the determining factors of aesthetics within applied theatre practice. In order to understand aesthetics in applied theatre, we cannot detach from the *ethno*, that is, something attached to the "human" shapes and flows of life through economic, social and cultural channels.

Movitep-SF was formed in 2000 by five artists, but has its origins in Nicaragua's popular theatre movement of the 1980s. When the Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN) took power in February 1979, they devoted time to search for a national culture. The Sandinista revolution allowed for an explosion of popular artistic expression: hundreds of theatre companies and theatrical exchanges emerged, which historically was a peak of artistic activity. Within this, *teatro popular* occupied a vital position, characterised by the

⁷⁵ A more detailed description of *teatro popular* will be given in the next section.

slogan “democratisation of theatre”: ‘*teatro del pueblo para el pueblo*’ (‘theatre for and by the people’) (Rodriguez Silva quoted in Pulido, 2008: 60; Wellinga, 1983: 115). *Teatro popular* was an art-form intended for and owned by the people, and its focus was on engaging members of a community in a theatrical practice addressing their current issues. *Teatro popular* is an art-form that developed through the social ideology of the Soviet Union (Von Geldern and Stites, 1995: vi-xx), but also built its aesthetic foundation through the numerous political movements in Latin American nations; ultimately, it survives only through international donor funds.

Over 12 years, Movitep-SF has attempted to promote artistic creations focussing on Nicaragua’s history and culture. The organisation’s goals are to create an understanding of the reality in which the Nicaraguan people work and live (Movitep-SF, 2013). The promotion of collaborations between local theatre companies, international troupes and social NGOs is to enhance their artistic and social development (Ibid.). Some of Movitep-SF’s major activities include artistic and financial support for nine theatre for development companies, international exchanges – such as with the Dutch group *Monsterverbond* in 1999 and *IDEA* in 2007 – multidisciplinary arts projects, site-specific festivals, drama teacher mentoring and experimental projects in video and visual arts (Ibid.).

The chapter starts with the origins of Movitep-SF from the Nicaraguan revolution in 1979 up to 2010. The first part highlights the meaning of *teatro popular* and its aesthetic methodology *creación colectivo* (‘collective creation’). The chapter then presents the organisation’s structure and aims and its founders’ aesthetic concerns in 2004, illustrated by the different actors within the Nicaraguan cultural ethnoscape. Following this, the chapter looks at the same players in the ethnoscape of Movitep-SF six years later, and shows the shift from the founders’ aesthetic concerns to social concerns. By examining the differences between Movitep-SF’s aesthetic notions in 2004 and 2010, I am able to interrogate the fluidity of the cultural ethnoscape. Building from autonomy, political culture and aesthetics, the ethnoscape has allowed me to ‘historicise’ the ‘scape’, and therefore the historical evolution of aesthetic notions, discourses and practices are important for understanding aesthetics in relation to applied theatre.

Fieldwork plan

I arrived in Nicaragua during earthquake season in August 2010, staying in León for six weeks. I visited 35 theatre practitioners and facilitators around the country. Due to the limited amount of time I planned my fieldwork consistently, divided into two parts. Firstly, I visited all the practitioners whom I had met and worked with in 2004 and in earlier years to interview them again about their position within the field of *teatro popular*. Secondly, I worked as a practitioner in two theatre companies, *Lilycayán* and *Fuerzas de la Naturaleza* ('Powers of Nature'), originating from or still part of Movitep-SF. I chose these specific theatre groups based on two criteria. Primarily, my aim was to observe a *teatro popular* company that I had not worked with before to develop a more objective perspective, and to work with a well-known company. This, I expected, would increase my knowledge about the aesthetic, social and economic changes over time within Movitep-SF. Secondly, the theatre group I was less acquainted with, *Fuerzas de la Naturaleza*, was located close to my residence in León, which gave me the opportunity to travel frequently to their workshop space. I conducted observations during the rehearsals of both companies over the complete period of six weeks, two times a week for four hours a day. As the interview list was adjusted once more based on the interviews carried out previously in Brazil and Cambodia, the Nicaraguan themes I used included: the economic situation for artists in 2010; characteristics of aesthetics within the field of *teatro popular*; and expected outcomes of performing *teatro popular*. The workshops and discussions were all in Spanish.

During my limited time in Nicaragua, I could only observe six *teatro popular* performances: four performances of the *Teatro Popular School*; one presentation by *Lilycayán* in La Chispa; and one educational children's performance, 'How to brush your teeth', in the basement of the National Theatre in Managua. I also participated in the United Nations Population Fund's Health and Environment School festival focussing on 2010's Year of Environmental Issues.

4.2. The origins and aesthetic notions of *teatro popular*

The theatrical tradition of *teatro popular* that my company has helped to establish has always existed. Anyone who disagrees with this claim of continuity stands on the side of US imperialist who denies a Nicaraguan culture (Alan Bolt⁷⁶ quoted in Westlake, 2005: 117, my italics).

⁷⁶ Alan Bolt is a famous Nicaraguan playwright and theatre director. The theatre company *Teatro Universitario Estudiantil* run by Alan Bolt became involved in FSLN's revolt and eventually became part of the guerrilla movement to continue their work. After the victory in 1979, Bolt became the director of the theatre

Nicaraguan theatre director and playwright Alan Bolt expressed in 1990 (Arian, 1990) that *teatro popular* is intrinsically rooted in Nicaraguan culture. The revolution in 1979 merely introduced the era in which theatre had the opportunity to grow through continuous government support. During the 1980s, many political developments made an impact on *teatro popular* and its funding policies, bringing changes for the practitioners' social and artistic intentions. This historical introduction aims therefore to identify the critical themes and players that I am considering in my analysis of the interviews, observations and the ethnoscape; that is, the influence of the international community, the heritage of anti-imperialism and anti-interventionism, and the revolutionary political determination of the *teatro popular* practitioners. This will ultimately illustrate that their history is a source of strength that engages more fluently with global and national policies in articulating an aesthetic for their practice.

After a history of colonisation – Nicaragua became independent from Spain in 1821 and gained full independence in 1838 – Nicaragua has suffered from natural disasters, civil wars and dictatorships (Federal Research Division, 1999). Nonetheless, Westlake (2005) argues that the Nicaraguan population has always articulated inclusion primarily through *mestizaje*,⁷⁷ that is, 'where Europeans create nationalist sentiments out of constructions of racial purity' (2005: 44), the unification of Nicaraguans comes from solidarity between races. Moreover, Nicaraguans articulate the rejection of prejudgments of foreign interveners and imperialists, in particular the United States (Ibid.: 29). In *The Global Cold War: Third World Interventions and the Making of Our Times* (2007), Arne Westad examines the Third World uprisings and what pushed the USSR and the US towards international intervention. International interests have "succeeded" over national interests: in particular, the US's intervention in Nicaragua's economic, social and political dealings has resulted in numerous populist responses (Federal Research Division, 1999; Westad, 2007: 339-342). Likewise, and arguably more optimistically, the ideology of the USSR has manifested itself through the creation of *teatro popular* in Nicaragua. After the Communist Revolution of 1917 in Russia, the main goal of the Communist Party was to widen access to education for the masses, not exclusively for the upper classes or the bourgeoisie. The Party changed

department of the Ministry of Culture (Martin, 1994: 72). After disagreements about politics, Bolt left for Matagalpa, where he took over the National Theatre Workshop and theatre collective *Nixtayolero*, one of the five projects of *Movimiento de Animación Cultural Rural* (MACRU) that Bolt developed (Ibid.: 94).

⁷⁷ *Mestizaje* is a 'deliberate blending of the black, white, and indigenous identities of Latin American nations' (Westlake, 2005: 44), perceived as a successful creation of ethnic and cultural mixture.

cultural policies: it supported the arts and recognised artistic expression as a tool for the entertainment of the masses (Von Geldern and Stites, 1995: vi-xx).⁷⁸ Social realism was encouraged: the Marxist movement supported the didactic use of the arts to help people become more critical and to *see through* bourgeois ideology, in particular consistently *seeing* the reality in which they lived. Numerous scholars and artists then strived for a popular form of theatre accessible to the people and transforming society through social theatrical messages (Ibid.).



Figure 13: Sandinistas triumphant after their victory, driving into Managua in July 1979. (Photo: unknown)

The enmity toward the United States was shared by the main leaders of the *Frente Sandinista de Liberación Nacional* (FSLN) that took over Nicaragua after the revolution in 1979 (Westad, 2007: 339).⁷⁹ They named the ‘front’ after socialist guerrilla Augusto César Sandino, killed in 1934 by the US-supported National Guard (Gambone, 1997: 19-24; Huysegems, 1998: 13; Westad, 2007: 339). Nativist Sandino claimed that the US control and interventions were responsible for Nicaragua’s political problems (Westad, 2007: 84). Members of the Somoza family ran the National Guard. Strongly supported by the US, Anastasio Somoza García established a new constitution to grant himself more power. As

⁷⁸ A strong example is that they supported the Bolshoi Ballet and drastically decreased the ticket prices for the shows.

⁷⁹ For a more detailed overview of the Sandinistas’ history, see Dennis Gilbert (1988) *Sandinistas: The Party and the Revolution*; and Matilde Zimmerman (2000) *Sandinista: Carlos Fonseca and the Nicaraguan Revolution*.

long as the US contributed to Somoza's dictatorship, they were assured of their interests in Nicaragua. Managua suffered a disastrous earthquake in 1972 and Somoza used the chaos to divert considerable amounts of financial and material aid. This resulted in more resentment from the working classes as well as the upper classes and business classes; it also caused the US to withdraw their support (Gambone, 1997: 19-24; Mercx and Van Lieshout, 1993: 23-27).



Figure 14: US President Jimmy Carter greets Daniel Ortega at the White House in 1979. (Photo: Charles Tasnadi)

With half a million people homeless and a completely ruined economy – caused by the war leading to FSLN's victory and by Somoza's terror – on taking power, FSLN's main aim was to rebuild the country through nationalisation and land reform to reduce extreme poverty. After an election victory by the Sandinistas in 1984, Daniel Ortega became president and the first Nicaraguan parliament was established. Moreover, literacy and health campaigns were launched, and thousands of families' land was redistributed (Mercx and Van Lieshout, 1993: 28).

Many international volunteers travelled to Nicaragua to rebuild the country. One of them was Els van Poppel, Dutch theatre scholar and practitioner, who reached Nicaragua in 1982. 18 years after her arrival, Van Poppel and four other artists established the non-profit organisation *Movitep-SF*. The role of a Dutch practitioner in setting up a non-profit organisation illustrates my overall argument about the impact of internationalised applied theatre companies. International and local interactions are not new; French NGO workers

established the multidisciplinary arts centre *Phare Ponleu Selpak* in Cambodia, and practitioners from the *asfalto* founded *Nós do Morro* in Rio de Janeiro. Moreover, my position as a *Dutch* theatre practitioner and scholar reveals how I came into contact with Nicaraguan *teatro popular* more than ten years ago, and why it was fairly easy to access the theatre troupes around the country. The obvious bias towards the familiarity of Nicaragua should be noted here, and I have taken this into consideration. However, these relations all signify the motif of the overall argument: the many ways in which international players participate in the practice of applied theatre and its aesthetic sphere. This research demonstrates that the aesthetic of the practice in all three contexts has external influences, all impacting the aesthetic of the 'local'. This makes it very difficult to locate any traditional or original aesthetic. This chapter will describe this implicated aesthetic discourse and analyse its influences and determining factors through the ethnoscape.

'Massification' of culture

The FSLN believed that art and politics were inseparably linked and therefore built numerous cultural community centres to create free spaces for dancing, painting, photography and theatre. The new government also established a Ministry of Culture in which theatre occupied a crucial position, offering financial support to any group that wished to form a theatre group. More than two hundred troupes – professional and amateur – used this programme, first and foremost using theatre as a voice and a weapon (Mercx and Van Lieshout, 1993: 23-24). Theatre existed within multiple groups and communities, for example in women's organisations, the countryside, the army and hospitals. The art-form was perceived as vital aid for numerous causes, from domestic violence to agricultural issues, but most importantly as a medium to resist the enemy. The massive involvement of the population in theatrical activities showed the understanding of theatre's power that many Nicaraguans felt. Independent Nicaraguan theatre director and journalist Cesar Paz explained in 2006 (Paz 2006, pers. comm., 30 Jan.) that in the 'massification of culture', Nicaragua experienced a turning point. This mass phenomenon resulted in practitioners making theatre out of collective social consciousness.

Van der Velden (1998) translates Erwin Piscator's quote in *Strijdtoneelen, Erwin Piscator en de geschiedenis van Das Politische Theater* ('Battlegrounds, Erwin Piscator and the history of political theatre') to describe the same phenomenon, but in the context following the First

World War in 1918 in Europe (Piscator quoted in Van der Velden, 1998: 150, Piscator's italics):

The civil generation of 1914 and the pre-war society associated notion of the human individual perished in the confrontation with the material reality of the war. Instead, *in der Esse des Krieges* – in the forge of war – a new kind of collective identity emerged. Embodied through the army of 1918 returning in Germany, this strongly felt collective described themselves, as a “new, great I”, in which the individual identity of individual veterans fully merged. The joined ‘carriers’ of this new identity were also the veterans that reflected the future “socialist human being” [...].

Van der Velden explains that war or oppression in a country can intensely affect the emotional acts of people. This will release and prioritise the collective above the individual. Despite the radically different geographical and socio-political historical contexts of 1918 Europe and contemporary Nicaragua, this can be applied to the traumatic experience of the Nicaraguan people – after decades of oppression under Somoza – through which people opted for a collective identity. After years of dictatorship, the inhabitants finally felt they had the space to express themselves, resulting in a ‘united cultural nation’. The individual oppression that people had experienced was less important than the collective experience. The performances were presented in any public place: the only condition was that the public and the actors reached a consensus on the positions taken within the theatrical themes of oppression. A collective theatrical identity arose. It should be mentioned, however, that within the rhetoric of the *popular*, there is a risk of uncritically reporting a romanticised revolutionary history. Arguably, *teatro popular* was a state-led socialist cultural intervention, at times also grassroots-led, but also closely controlled by the top of the political pyramid that had conflicting monetary and power interests towards the US and Cuba.

Various Nicaraguan theatre directors explained in informal meetings that the National Theatre Workshop – led by Alan Bolt – was very active during the Sandinista years before and after the revolution. Bringing plays to various villages and communities in war zones, the actors involved would split up and live among the people to understand the problems the community was facing. They would talk with and learn from the different target groups and find solutions for the issues in the communities. The art of theatre was never the main goal in itself, despite the physical training, music, singing and dance classes, improvisation, and other exercises and techniques. Partly due to the revolutionary determination after the dictatorship, but mainly inherent to the art-form, the impetus behind the aesthetic of the theatrical practice of *teatro popular* was therefore social and political. The actors would

return to the troupe and work with the themes of the community. Finally, provisional stage designs were set up and the workshop would perform stories in which the audience members could see themselves and their lives. Thus, the practitioners would actively assist in developing the people's critical consciousness and opening channels to find solutions to problems (Pulido, 2008: 6-8; 2010: 20-27; Royaards, 1982: 83-94). The artistic responses to the war and the revolution were socially engaged – theatre was used as a social and political tool.

Teatro popular

The majority of the theatre groups turned to Latin American *teatro popular* for the same reason that revolutionary artists refused to use art for art's sake: their aim was to show the struggles of society and the problems in local communities by using theatre as a tool. Here, the main problem with Kant's theory with regard to applied theatre - that it is possible to isolate aesthetic judgements from political and moral concerns (Levinson, 2003: 45) - exemplifies that in participatory community practices the appreciation of the aesthetic is rarely separated from political, cultural or moral values. As Van Poppel argues, 'in the 1980s Nicaraguan theatre's vision drastically shifted from *un teatro cerrado para unos pocos, a un teatro abierto para todos*' ('From a theatre available to only a few, to a theatre available to everybody') (Van Poppel, quoted in Pulido, 2010: 11). The few pre-existing Nicaraguan theatres, previously only used by theatre companies like *Comedia Nacional* with "star" actors like Doña Socorro Bonilla Castellón, were made accessible to all layers of the population. As a result, the main professional theatre companies were performing for an audience mainly belonging to the middle class.⁸⁰ Similar to defining aesthetics, a comprehensive delineation or origin of the concept *teatro popular* is not easy to find; this artistic practice originated in different eras and through numerous political and social movements. Vroomen (1994: 7) uses a broad and helpful description for *teatro popular*:

Members of a community (determined for example by social class, political preference, gender or religion amongst others) that participate in a theatrical

⁸⁰ Mentioned during interviews: these theatre companies also toured various cities and throughout the countryside. Revolutionary theatre companies like *Nixtayolero* and *Justo Rufino Garay* toured in many European countries, but they also helped to establish amateur groups in the so-called popular culture houses in Nicaragua. The following cultural organisations played an important role in these developments: Ministry of Culture, *Movimiento de Expresión Campesina Artística y Teatral* (MECATE) ('The artistic and theatrical farmers' community expression movement'), and *Asociación Sandinista de Trabajadores de la Cultura* (ASTC) ('Sandinista association of cultural workers').

practice in which they address the community's problems. They research, investigate and try out different solutions for these issues, in other words, the practice focuses on emancipatory, participatory and educational aspects and is a form of 'self-motivation'.

A specific example of a *teatro popular* performance with aesthetic criteria is included at Appendix 4. The process and the end product of *teatro popular* is a representation of the actors' and spectators' lives. Although the practice is not easily to delineate, the 'popular' in *teatro popular*, nevertheless, is defined not only by its methodology and themes, but also in the sense that a broad audience appreciates the art-form. This notion precisely translates the adjective 'popular': folk-related, and liked by a broad public. Following this, the concept *teatro popular* refers to the location of people, that is, the local communities, such as villages, neighbourhoods or tribes; subsequently, the term can also signify the targeted groups, for example farmers' communities, homeless people or women. Here, it describes what the members of the *ethno* share and are embedded in, that is, their environment and their culture: the authentic or the total ways of thinking and ways of life of a community, including the community's tangible products, such as visual and plastic arts, and its intangible products and practices, such as performing arts. This provides once more a theoretical justification to embed the multi-layered ethnoscape as a framework for understanding the determining factors of the aesthetics and the surrounding aesthetic discourses of *teatro popular* practice.

The more immediate Latin American origins of *teatro popular* can be found in the various forms of 'counter-cultural, radical, anti- and postcolonial, educational, and liberational theatres of the 1960s and 1970s' (Erven, 2001: 1). Moreover, due to the repressive political character of many Latin American countries during the late 1950s, their inhabitants started to become more interested in addressing political messages on stage (Royaards, 1982: 25-28; Merx and Van Lieshout, 1993: 49-56). During the 1960s and 1970s, political student and resistance movements in the context of global left revolutionary developments (China, Vietnam, Cuba) intensified a strong desire for economic and political independence from leading nations, and revolution of their own societies (Epskamp, 2006: 1-2). The theatrical activities during the 1970s contributed to the downfall of dictatorial regimes in the Philippines and Nicaragua (Ibid.: 1). Theatre activists who used certain forms of *teatro popular* such as playwright Ngugi wa Thiong'o (Kenya) and Augusto Boal (Brazil) were exiled from their countries (Boal, 2003: 121; Epskamp, 2006: 1). The tendency in Nicaragua toward social and political advancement through the means of theatrical practice

has two parts: a nationalist and an ideological character. That is, the artistic practice was based on the *ideology* of supporting and empowering the people and improving their living conditions, by using *local and traditional folklore* in the communities (Epskamp, 1994: 134) as a means of discussing their issues and giving them the opportunity to come in contact with theatre. The majority of these communities would otherwise never be able to visit theatres or see any theatre performances. The practitioners of *teatro popular* very often originate from similar communities as the audience members; consequently the practice speaks the same language as its audience. During a range of interviews, the members of Movitep-SF explained that *teatro popular* could be perceived as a popular recreation of reality in which everyday life is discussed *and* the audience is subjected to several alternative solutions to their problems. Nonetheless, it is important to note that the practitioners did not believe that *teatro popular* could actually dramatically change social conditions (Talavera, Hernández, Cordonero 2010, pers. comm., 14 and 18 Aug.).

Creación colectiva

The theatre returned to the people, to local communities, mainly through a new aesthetic methodology: *creación colectiva*, enforcing *teatro popular* and social change (Erven, 2001: 11-12; Epskamp, 1994: 134). The aesthetic methodology – the artistic method used to develop and create performances – was based on social equality and political response. That is, the Nicaraguan *creación colectiva* was – similar to several other Latin American countries – a response to imperialist influences on the arts (Epskamp, 1994: 138). The typical Latin American theatrical working method includes more than the English translation ‘collective creation’ implies. Evidently, the group process is – like the process used by *Nós do Morro* in Chapter Two – collective, in which each member of the theatre group equally participates in choosing a theme for the performance, improvising, writing the dramatic text and directing. In Nicaragua, a collaborative product is created without any of the group members specifically being in charge, in contrast to the more Bourdieusian approach in *Nós do Morro*. The concept *creación colectiva* also implies and could be perceived as a political choice (Pulido, 2008: 6-8; 2010: 20-27; Royaards, 1982: 23-35; Mercx and Van Lieshout, 1986: 120). The Nicaraguan practitioners argued in 2004 during my earlier period of research that the colonial and imperialist impact detached the arts from social reality and removed the arts more and more from the public. The arts were merely elitist practices and were alienated from their original base. The Nicaraguan practitioners reasoned that *creación colectiva* would be the dialectical answer to imperialist influences: the methodology was

created and employed for the masses and not for a small elite. The practice was comprehensible and it established a clear link between the social realities through its messages. As the practice was presented in public spaces, in contrast to theatres or expensive artistic institutions, it would bring people closer together. Moreover, the practitioners stated that the participation of all actors during the staging and development of new ideas led to less Western performances, and more performances about the daily lives and histories of the country's diverse communities were put on stage. Because the actual process looked and felt this way, the methodology had an aesthetic in itself. This clearly illustrates the strong interconnections within the landscape of social and aesthetic worth. Moreover, it demonstrates how the heritage of history resulting in anti-imperialism has caused the strongly social construction of *teatro popular's* artistic value.

The *teatro popular* practitioners perceived *creación colectiva* not only as a methodology, but also as an ideological movement open to the constant fluidity of the social reality of the *ethno* in society. The *creación colectivas* in Nicaragua were not concerned with issues about the unconscious, not because they were unimportant, but merely because they were convinced that theatre as a tool should first and foremost answer the practical issues associated with imperialism. That is, it responded to the current situation of the communities, often in close cooperation with the FSLN and other popular cultural organisations that would request specific solutions to social and economical problems for the *ethno* (for example land reform).

Throughout the revolutionary period in Nicaragua, the 'aesthetic' of the popular fitted this description. Due to the artists' lack of experience and theatre education, high artistic standards were compensated by the commitment and determination of collectives. The transitional state of the country meant that the social and political construction of *teatro popular's* artistic value in this setting was vital. During informal meetings, the practitioners stated that the common political cause was the greater good, and this detracted from attention to artistic aspects. The stylisation of the performances focussed on traditional folklore: songs, ritual dances, masks and costumes. Then repertoire or text-based theatre did not exist (Van der Veer, 1984: 7-8). Alan Bolt stated that *teatro popular* reflected and represented the Latin American way of thinking, in the sense that the plots were neither rectilinear nor logical, without cause and effect: 'the only certainty in our lives is the uncertainty and that is what we reflect in the theatre' (Bolt, cited in Arian, 1990). Moreover,

the adoption of Nicaragua's traditions 'included making familiar forms strange by decontextualizing them [...] seeking to re-familiarise and thereby linking divergent cultural experiences in Nicaragua' (Martin, 1994: 93-94). The aesthetic of the plays involved absurdist elements rather than linear stories of the revolution and the war (Arian, 1990). Nicaraguan popular singer Carlos Mejía Godoy argued that (Baxter, 1991):

The proliferation of acting and poetry workshops led to a higher form of culture, [...] in contrast to that existed under the Somoza dictatorship when [...] "Miami kitsch" was the Nicaraguan cultural ideal.

Many practitioners argued during informal meetings that theatre practice had clearly led to new 'aesthetics' in the country, in contrast to the previous US-orientated culture imposed by the Somoza regime. At the beginning of the 1980s, four major theatrical social movements coming from the main cultural organisations were actively engaging all levels of the Nicaraguan population: farmers' community theatre, formation theatre, repertoire or text-based theatre and community theatre.⁸¹ *Teatro popular* developed through farmers' cooperation theatre, community theatre and formation theatre.

The need for INGOs

Ronald Reagan's clouds, however, obscured the optimistic growth of these theatre movements when he authorised the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) to finance anti-Sandinista guerrillas, of which the majority were members of Somoza's former National Guard (Westad, 2007: 345). Reagan took action to the "threat" of the Central American leftist revolutionaries and trained 15,000 men as part of a counterrevolutionary military, collectively known as the Contras (Merx and Van Lieshout, 30-32; Sklar, 1988: 393-340; Westad, 2007: 345).⁸² As the Nicaraguan state was forced to militarise in response, there was a shift in notions of leadership related to production for the war effort and the 'popular': from unity of the people, 'democratisation' and 'massification' of Nicaraguan culture towards professionalism. This resulted in major changes for *teatro popular* and its cultural organisations.

⁸¹ One popular theatrical development coming from Nicaraguan *teatro popular* was puppetry theatre – nowadays known as social puppetry theatre. The Spanish-indigenous 'mixture' in the country's history was the start of a long tradition of puppetry in Nicaraguan culture. The famous puppetry theatre companies *Teatro de Titeres Guachipilin* and *Traca Traca* have 25 years of puppetry experience in Nicaragua, and have travelled in many other countries globally.

⁸² Between 1980 and 1989, around 40,000 Nicaraguans died in the conflict between the Sandinista government and the Contras (Westad, 2007: 347).

The majority of farmers were forced to join the military and others focussed on the production and protection of their land and families against the Contras. The Ministry of Culture reduced the special position of farmers' community theatre and focussed on 'global advertisement'. Many theatre directors argued during informal meetings in 2010 that the Ministry's aims had been focussed on creating more opportunities within the Nicaraguan political and economic situation through adjusting to the economic changes taking place in Latin America at the end of the 1980s. Consequently, the government hoped to increase solidarity and to provide a counterbalance to the anti-Nicaraguan propaganda in the Western media, for example by encouraging mutually beneficial relations in the region and by organising democratic elections earlier than planned. These economic changes, including globalisation, the new politics of the World Bank and the expanding private sector caused many artists to lose their jobs. The practitioners were only able to continue their work by requesting international donor funds. Appadurai's ethnoscape illustrates the fluid shapes made by human groups and their cultural expressions linked to flows of international capital. Here, the ethnoscape is seen in the entry of INGO money servicing INGO agendas, gradually causing the "capitulation" of some theatre groups from their politically-motivated ideologies to promoting unsuccessful social agendas. It became almost inconceivable to resume the original practice of *teatro popular*.

The *Nixtayolero* ('Morning Star') collective led by Alan Bolt, however, appeared to finally find an answer to the problem of funding. Based in farmland close to Matagalpa, the collective not only performed, but also specialised in income-generating projects on the farm from 1984 (Martin, 1994: 36, 89-95). *Nixtayolero* would travel to Sandinista state farms to offer people an evening of theatre (Van der Veer, 1984: 7). The material in their shows was developed through the company's theatrical research, as shown in the analysis of group members Pablo Pupiro and Ernesto Soto (later founders of Movitep-SF), such as actors' sexuality or the practices of enforced religious beliefs (Pupiro E Soto 2006, pers. comm., 20 Jan.). *Nixtayolero* was also an international phenomenon: Cubans from *Teatro Nuevo* provided technical assistance and *Nixtayolero's* facility was purchased with funds earned in tours abroad (Martin, 1994: 98-90). Because of a shortage of funds in 1988, *Nixtayolero* was pushed to become completely self-sufficient. This *again* articulates the juncture of politics and aesthetics in this context: limited finances and difficulties in finding appropriate facilities restricted the reflections that could nurture the critical work of *Nixtayolero's* practice (Ibid.). However, the loss of funds did not leave the company without a context

for its work: ‘the more explicit its critique of power with appreciation of its ambiguities became, the more a culture of producers was articulated’ (Ibid.: 110).

Meanwhile, the United States injected millions into a strong political opposition for the elections in 1990. In 1989 Daniel Ortega was defeated in the polls by Violeta Chamorro of the National Opposition Union (UNO), who became the new president of Nicaragua.⁸³ After losing two presidential elections, Daniel Ortega again became the president of Nicaragua in 2006 (BBC, 2006). Nicaragua enjoyed stable economic growth, as Ortega was able to attract several foreign investors, including Iran and Venezuela. Regarding each other as allies in their opposition to US imperialism, Iran and Venezuela have provided Nicaragua with discounted oil.



Figure 15: Daniel Ortega, Iranian President Ahmadinejad and Venezuelan leader Chavez during the ceremony for Ortega’s second term as president in Managua in 2012 (Photo: Oswaldo Rivas)

In 2011, President Ortega won a third term in power. Despite economic growth and improvements in education and healthcare, Ortega’s ways of exercising his power have been questioned, as well as whether Ortega truly has the same socialist ideals as before. His opponents condemned the elections as a “fraud”, and World Bank (2011) statistics show that Nicaragua is still the second-poorest country in the region after Haiti. Moreover, from

⁸³ During her presidency, Chamorro brought an end to the internal armed conflict, made space for democratic governance, changed the command economy into a free market and placed the army under civilian control (Huysegems, 1998: 23-35).

a cultural perspective, although the Nicaraguan government approved the UNESCO Convention on Cultural Diversity in 2009, the structures of cultural policies are barely visible.

The arguments I have been presenting throughout this history include the impact of the cultural revolution on the development of Nicaragua's *teatro popular*, the influence of the international community, the heritage of anti-imperialism and anti-interventionism, and the determination of the *teatro popular* practitioners. This history is demonstrated in the strong relationship between the aesthetics of the work and the context within which it sits: how anti-imperialism has caused the social construction of *teatro popular*'s artistic value. The rising anti-state and anti-interventionist world order has brought more reliability to the position that the government's role should be minimised, *and* also how INGOs could play a role in this development. This context is vital in understanding the background of non-profit organisation Movitep-SF, and in particular why international interventions are at times responded to with suspicion. The role of international donors has established a new structure for theatre groups, and consequently the donors have decided the topics that are presented to audiences. This has added to the gradual transformation of *teatro popular*'s practice. The clash between the notion of a 'democratic political *popular*' and economic agendas closing the aesthetic practice down is clearly in contrast to the 'rehabilitation and development' discourses in Cambodia and the concept of 'artistic' discourses in Brazil. The next section of this chapter will analyse how Movitep-SF has been able to work within the Nicaraguan cultural landscape throughout this period by adapting its aesthetic frameworks to the contingencies of the economic context.

4.3. Movitep-SF in 2004⁸⁴ – 'Capitulation' to NGO-aestheticisation

En los momentos de crisis, sólo la imaginación es más importante que el conocimiento ('In times of crisis, only imagination is more important than knowledge') (Einstein, quoted on festival T-shirts in 2004 during Movitep-SF's national theatre festival).

A tiny bar, red and white plastic chairs, and thirty children are watching an educational play about sexual abuse. Five young boys sitting in the front row bully the antagonist during the performance. "You are a

⁸⁴ It should be noted that the information in this section is derived from interviews and informal meetings in 2004 and 2006. I returned to Nicaragua in 2006 to work and interview practitioners.

witch!” the boys shout. She decides to interact with the little boys and warns them: “If you do not behave, I will transform all of you into frogs. I have magical powers.” The boys do not say a word more.

Four young adults and I created this performance called ‘The princess who cannot smile over six months in the United Nations Year of HIV/AIDS in 2004. The rehearsals took place three afternoons a week in a small health centre in one of the slums close to the international airport, on the outskirts of Managua. On Sundays the clinic was closed, and the space – full of blood-stained surgical tools, used sheets and old chairs – belonged to us. The other days we would rehearse in the small corridor right next to patients waiting for their appointments. During our very first meeting we discussed ideas for our performance. We did not talk much about costumes, acting styles, locations or storylines; the young girls immediately and only expressed the necessity of a social message, preferably about the issue of sexual abuse or incest between family members. Many young friends of the four had been abused in their past by family members and their aim was to use theatre as a communication tool to talk about this taboo.

At that moment in 2004 I am creating two performances in Nicaragua within Movitep-SF, and for the four girls I write my first Spanish play. An old Latin American folk tale tells the story of a girl who cannot smile. Via improvisations, it is this ancient story that becomes the foundation of the fairy tale of a princess, a flower, a water-seller and the schizophrenic guard of the king. During the first reading, the actresses laugh at my Spanish playwriting: not only does the grammar lack fundamental structure, but many words also seem to have ambiguous meanings. At the local market I invest in four convenient and reliable costumes, handmade by a grumpy elderly lady, and at the bus station Israel Levites in Managua I buy the entire business of people who sell water sachets, intended for one of the play’s characters.

We are invited to perform in various places, such as schools, orphanages and childcare centres. We also present in public spaces: bars, streets and plazas. It is easy to set up our stage in any designated area, as we only use one thick black curtain, a rope and four chairs. The fellow teatro popular practitioners who sit through rehearsals or attend performances are critical of the lack of artistry and the simple aesthetics of the performance. For them, the message is evident; however, they would have liked to be offered more sensory pleasures.

In 2005, after being in Nicaragua for six months, I am still not used to the fluidity of appointment times and being on ‘Nicaraguan time’. Via word of mouth in January 2005, a childcare centre – a full-time



Figure 16: The first scene of the play *The princess who cannot smile in an orphanage* in Managua, January 2005.
(Photo: Kirsten Broekman)

centre taking care of young children conceived through incest – invites us to perform our show. Upon arrival, the children are all dressed up, seated wearing clean clothes and haircuts polished with hair gel. When the actresses eventually arrive three hours late with incomplete costumes, it bothers me.

One afternoon a few weeks later, after a performance of the same play, a woman angrily asks me why I decided to write a play about incest when I knew it was the United Nations Year of HIV/AIDS.

This experience of my first professional interaction as a Dutch practitioner within Nicaragua's *teatro popular* landscape between August 2004 and February 2005 gives a glimpse into numerous interfaces with notions of *teatro popular*, as well as an idea of the different players within the Nicaraguan cultural ethnoscape. The founders of Movitep-SF can be perceived as the original players in the Nicaraguan ethnoscape, players that carry the heritage of the art practice *teatro popular*, which was a response to a specific revolutionary background.

The passage above describes the poor conditions in which the majority of practitioners work, and the ongoing determination of the young actresses. On one side, it demonstrates the heritage of *teatro popular* and how new generations of practitioners still grasp why *teatro popular* is associated with social intervention. The young actresses explicitly articulate the importance of integrating sensitive and contemporary social themes within the performance to create a support network for their peers. The initial function of theatre as a weapon and a tool is still in place 24 years after the revolution. In addition, there is a mixture of welfare and activism in place: the initial interconnectedness of aesthetic and social worth continues to be present.

Secondly, this scene shows the significance of the aesthetic discourse and aesthetic language (the language used in performance, including sounds, senses, looks, colours, shapes and styles) of *teatro popular*. The founders of Movitep-SF visiting my rehearsals and performances interrogated the aesthetic of the performance by placing it in the broader field of *teatro popular*, referring to several practitioners and scholars (the concept of aesthetic discourse). They all, without exception, articulated a desire to discuss the practice using aesthetic language.

Thirdly, this scene highlights the intricate nature of being the *other* as a Western applied theatre practitioner in a development setting. Although I had resided in Nicaragua before, it is undeniable that as a practitioner I remained the outsider and certain situations continued to challenge me.

Fourthly, the scene demonstrates the impact of international interventions on Nicaraguan society. More baldly, it seems as if Nicaragua has been infantilised: the United Nations is the teacher and the artistic practitioners do what the teacher told them. Whilst my fellow practitioners were critiquing my work artistically, the local community was angry that I had not conformed to the UN agenda. The local community criticised me for not dancing to the UN's tune. These struggles will be discussed in more detail later in this chapter.

These struggles are the result of a lack of financial resources for theatre practice, which I noticed while discussing the importance of aesthetics with the founders of Movitep-SF during interviews. In interviews, the practitioners indicated that *teatro popular* was regarded as a keystone of conflict resolution and peace-building in the country (Pulido, 2010: 11),

but that all financial support had ended after the Sandinistas lost the 1990 elections. In contrast to the concept of internationalised applied theatre in the previous chapter, in which international interveners arrived in Cambodia to directly intervene in the artists' work, in Nicaragua, due to the lack of financial support and governmental recognition, the practitioners themselves sought international support to continue their practice. In 2004 the agendas of international aid agencies did not contribute to the development of artistic practice. Attempts to conform to agendas of social change meant that the artistic quality of the theatre suffered, and the aesthetics of the practice were gradually limited and conformed to NGOs' ideas. I argue however that often, Movitep-SF continued to resist such compromises and attempted to find alternative routes by adapting its aesthetic frameworks to the contingencies of the economic context. This will illustrate that the invasive influence of 'global governance' structures on limiting the aesthetics of practice and that the ability to develop artistically occur regardless of the agency of the artist. In the case of a politically strong, historical and determined movement such as *teatro popular*, it is clear that the aesthetic dimensions of the practice have the potential to survive.

The roots of Movitep-SF: Asociación de Promotores de la Cultura

Positioned between, on one hand, the overwhelming involvement of the population in theatrical activities, thus showing passion for theatre, and, on the other hand, the growth of cultural collectives demonstrating the capacity of theatre for advocacy as an transformative and educational tool, the forerunner organisation of Movitep-SF – *Asociación de Promotores de la Cultura* ('Organisation for cultural promoters') (APC) – was established at the end of the 1980s. APC was an institute which encouraged amateur groups to create theatre performances. From 1992 until 1997, APC founded a theatre training centre led by Nicaraguan dramaturge Ernesto Soto and Dutch scholar Els van Poppel. This centre consisted of 16 existing *teatro popular* companies educated in theatre games, songs and dance techniques by many practitioners, including Alan Bolt. Moreover, the APC organised an annual theatre festival, in which the troupes had the opportunity to show their artistic progress. From 1990 onwards, the APC received international funds from the Netherlands, Norway, Spain and Sweden, aiming to invest in theatre as a tool to involve the Nicaraguan population more in practitioners' work.

In 1998, Hurricane Mitch hit the country, causing around 3,800 fatalities in Nicaragua, as well as damage estimated at around 1 billion dollars (Hellin et al., 1999: 316). Many

European countries wrote off Nicaragua's financial debt, and humanitarian organisations developed several projects to raise money for Mitch's victims. The APC generated a theatrical show with ten *teatro popular* companies touring around the country, visiting the affected areas to 'distract' the victims from their sorrow. APC producer and one of the founders of Movitep-SF Mendoza explained in 2006 that Mitch was the start of multiple projects and tours consisting of specific social themes, such as environmental issues, prostitution and other social issues (Mendoza 2006, pers. comm., 11 Feb.). Theatre companies such as *Chá*, *Renja Limf*, *Quetzalcoatl*, *Rayo de Luna*, *Carpullo*, *Teocoyani* and *TracaTraca* were invited to theatre festivals and were given the opportunity to be trained as drama teachers. Many exchanges between Dutch acting schools and Nicaraguan theatre companies also took place, teaching the students different techniques of *teatro popular*. Nevertheless, in 1998, the *teatro popular* companies lost confidence in both the government and international organisations due to the lack of financial support for APC. Food, clothing and medicine were given priority; all social projects were cancelled.⁸⁵

Movitep-SF

This led to five arts practitioners – all previously working for APC – establishing the non-profit organisation *Movimiento de Teatro Popular Sin Fronteras* (Movitep-SF) in 2000: Pablo Pupiro, Ernesto Soto, Daniel Pulido, Douglas Mendoza and Els van Poppel. Ernesto Soto and Pablo Pupiro worked together in the 1970s in the National Theatre Workshop founded by the Ministry of Culture, and in the *Nixtayolero* collective. The third founder of the organisation, Daniel Pulido – a Colombian theatre designer and visual artist – emigrated to Nicaragua in 1983. Douglas Mendoza, the youngest of the founders, controlled the production work and performed as an actor. The founders of Movitep-SF defined in an informal meeting their practice as the production of multidisciplinary theatre performances in collaboration with national and international artists (Founders meeting 2004, pers. comm., 25 Aug.). They explained that *Sin Fronteras* ('without borders') stands for interdisciplinary excellence *without borders*: the combination of literature, visual art, music, dance and drama, which together would enrich artistic creation. All its projects were collaborations between Movitep-SF and social wellbeing organisations, which contributed to providing research material and giving suggestions and ideas to the practitioners, as all

⁸⁵ *Teatro popular* practitioner Gonzallo Cuellar Leano and many others demonstrated during informal meetings in 2004 and 2006 their frustrations about the difficult priorities of the government and international organisations at the times of Hurricane Mitch.

the performances included (sensitive) social themes. Moreover, the educational and social aim of the organisation was also visible in that the practitioners shared their experiences and knowledge consistently with young people to sustain artistic growth, but also – as the founders argued in meetings – ‘to leave the experience and knowledge firmly planted in those who decided to embrace the art of theatre for the rest of their lives committed to their own popular origin’ (Pulido, 2006, pers. comm., 27 Jan.).⁸⁶ During informal meetings Pablo Pupiro stated that Movitep-SF’s aim was to entertain, surprise and provoke spectators, but also to stimulate the audience to actively think about the issues in their lives. The roots of Movitep-SF clearly demonstrate the heritage of *teatro popular* and the revolution: the driving force of the theatrical practice is social and educational; however, the aesthetic discourse is also visible in the practice, and sensation-based aspects were deeply rooted in it.

Simultaneously, Movitep-SF broadened its techniques to higher artistic levels to break through into the theatrical landscape of Nicaragua. That is, aesthetics played an important role within Movitep-SF. To demonstrate how the organisation defined ‘aesthetics’, Ernesto Soto and Pablo Pupiro frequently gave workshops within the organisation, in which they focussed on the role of the actor and the actor’s understanding of the plot, theme and character relationships within plays (Pupiro 2006, pers. comm., 20 Jan.):

The actor must be capable to answer any question about his character and the plot. He must learn to live, walk, eat and sleep as his character. The success of the metamorphosis is the success of the artistry of our practice.

During interviews and rehearsals with Movitep-SF, the term *quality* was mentioned very often; that is, the theatrical process should be performed accurately, precisely, thoroughly and with care. To clarify, the practitioners argued that *consideration* of the art-form is the basis of artistry: the professionalism of the actors, the accuracy of the choreography and the precise stage design. The artistry is also reflected in the artists’ respect for the visual and intellectual quest for a theatrical presentation: the artist must be *considered* with regard to the end product. The performance should avoid superficiality. According to members of

⁸⁶ During my fieldwork in 2004, Movitep-SF was associated with several Nicaraguan *teatro popular* companies, including women’s collective *Marzo del Ocho*, young adult collective *Quetzalcoatl* and theatre company *Chá*. These troupes all originated during the years after the revolution and still had their own structure, organisation and methodology, even though the founders of Movitep-SF were closely involved and, the majority of the time, part of the production teams. Their artistic philosophy was based on collective creation and their profile was grounded in similar ideas to Movitep-SF. The organisation was used as a communication and coordination tool for and between the theatre companies.

Movitep-SF, the other meaning of the term *quality* relates to the content of theatrical performances and the ways in which the audience understands the performance's message, but also how the actor responds to the sensations and emotions evoked by the spectators. All of the theatre practitioners I interviewed argued that theatre performances can only convey messages if the actors deliver high levels of acting skill. The skill of acting remains the main prerequisite for high quality performances; it is only then that the content can be transferred to the spectators. The aesthetic discourses here do not entirely map onto those identified in earlier chapters, particularly in terms of the role of the audience. In Chapter Two the aesthetic focus was on the transforming process of the student-actors, and Chapter Three demonstrated unawareness of the target audience. The significance of acting skills on stage was, however, previously mentioned in the Brazilian case study. My thesis investigates on which grounds the aesthetic judgements of applied theatre are formed in marginalised communities where the aesthetics of the practice differ from those of mainstream art. It is significant to note that the *consideration* of the art-form and the acting skill as formulated by the *teatro popular* practitioners above are very often reflected in aesthetic discourses of mainstream art.

The conditions that closed down artistic possibility

In 2004, the practitioners of Movitep-SF articulated the different aspects that have resulted in the imposition of an art-form within Nicaragua. The first aspect was the lack of high quality artistic theatre in Nicaragua. They argued that the country lacked an actual art community, due to the small numbers of artists, writers and theatres, and the lack of expertise, training and opportunities for aesthetic discourse. The second aspect, according to the practitioners, was the lack of theatre exchanges taking place between Mexico, Brazil, Colombia and Nicaragua. This would have been helpful for the development of a Nicaraguan theatre community, because these nations are influential and experimental within the field of Latin American theatre. These exchanges would enhance the practitioners' knowledge of different acting styles, theatre genres and experimental techniques, the practitioners stated. It would increase their aesthetic arena. However, the practitioners clearly emphasised that no one wanted to fund these exchanges. The third aspect that could develop more quality within the field of *teatro popular* would be to create fixed salaries for the existing practitioners. Ernesto Soto gives a hypothetical example (Soto 2006, pers. comm., 22 Jan.):

If Quetzalcoatl⁸⁷ would earn 200 dollars monthly, the actors would rehearse every day from 9am until 6pm and the artistic quality would improve every day. Within our field, money unfortunately makes the difference in artistic quality. It could enhance the experience and potential talent. The practitioners argue that repetition and more time for the art-form would increase the actors' skills and professionalism.

The lack of knowledge-exchange opportunities and the absence of good salaries reduced the quality of *teatro popular*, the practitioners argued. The practitioners were aware, however, that the national government only recognised artistic practices taking place in theatre *Rubén Darío* in Managua as existing Nicaraguan cultural expressions. In 2004, Nicaraguan cultural policy solely subsidised the *Comedia Nacional*,⁸⁸ accessible exclusively to the Nicaraguan elite and the international upper classes. As mentioned in the introduction of this chapter, the tensions in play are more stark in this case study: the practitioners articulate the consistent shape of the problem within the field – caused by economic influences – and clearly demonstrate the implications of understanding the artistry of *teatro popular*. The tensions I am identifying are very consciously acknowledged and navigated by the theatre practitioners. The 'democratic political *popular*' in the context of economic agendas is shown to be narrowed down – closing the aesthetic notions down, reflecting the politics of the practice; however, the strength of the practitioners' history preserves the practice.

The contradiction here should be noted: although practitioners articulate that quality suffers because of a lack of funding, my overall argument is that this might allow for a more autonomous engagement with aesthetics because the economic players from particular kinds of aesthetic backgrounds are less present. This will be discussed throughout the rest of the chapter.

The division of different age groups within the field of *teatro popular* is a vital aspect in creating an understanding of these politics. Moreover, both age groups were important players within the Nicaraguan ethnoscape in 2004 and 2010. The majority of the *teatro popular* practitioners within Movitep-SF I met in 2004 were born around 1960, starting their artistic career before or right after the revolution. These artists have continuously worked

⁸⁷ Soto has directed and written numerous plays for *teatro popular* company *Quetzalcoatl*.

⁸⁸ A few years after the revolution the financial support of the Ministry of Culture was cancelled, and the *Comedia Nacional* was also left without money. This theatre closed its doors for four years, and then slowly returned to offer theatre courses. In 2004 only Saturday courses were offered because only a few students could afford to go to the Theatre School.

within the field of *teatro popular*, despite or perhaps because of the intricate political and economic history of Nicaragua. The older generation practitioners are equipped with intense and high quality drama education from the theatre schools that developed after the revolution, or via different educational institutes in Cuba. Their definition of aesthetics includes character development, character relationships and how symbols and images can create an understanding to get social messages across. Experimenting with other theatrical techniques and the use of stage design and costumes are also important parts of their aesthetic arena. Their education was focussed on how and why questions relating to elements of the story, and the answers to these questions form the foundations of their plays. The diversity in their motivations to incorporate artistry into their work proved their artistic knowledge and their willingness to make choices. The older generation artists were more likely to receive international funding due to their experience and education, due to the status they had built in the country (because they were frequently asked to participate in national theatre projects) or because they offered unique products. Although the monetary resources had given them the opportunity to develop and explore their theatrical skills and creativity, during informal meetings in 2004 the practitioners noted that their successful funding applications were often based on social criteria rather than aesthetic criteria (see the festival example in the next section).

In contrast, the second important group of players in the ethnoscape and a major group within Movitep-SF and its associated theatre companies consists of individuals born around 1980, who have been working as artists for the last ten years via theatre experiences at secondary school or university, but also via word of mouth or after seeing performances in public spaces. The newer generation of practitioners has received little or no drama education. These artists often work on small projects and their troupes consist of few actors, mostly friends or acquaintances of the artists. During the day the artists have jobs outside the arts, and during the evenings they create theatre performances. The rehearsals take place in their homes. Their definition of the 'aesthetic' of *teatro popular* is the ability of plays to communicate their messages to the audience. In order to produce their artistic presentations, these artists also require international funding. However, the international aid agencies used different criteria for these artists than the older generation of practitioners. Young *teatro popular* practitioner Perez argued in 2006 that when his theatre company received a grant from a Central American women's organisation, it insisted upon a performance about domestic violence amongst women in Nicaragua. According to

Perez's theatre troupe and discussions with communities, different women's issues were more significant to be explored in theatre practice, neither underestimating nor underplaying the chosen social theme of the women's organisation. Perez stated that the roles were forced to be reversed: whilst the more educated *teatro popular* artists were at least given the space to develop their own creative ideas, Perez's theatre practice was "exploited" for the societal advancement of this developing country (Perez 2006, pers. comm., 27 Jan.). Many other young practitioners, including Perez, claimed in 2006 that the artistic practice became a *service* product for the educational purposes of international aid agencies, rather than giving the artists the opportunity to develop their own artistry. As a consequence, the young practitioner argued, *teatro popular* was no longer entirely perceived as a public cultural good in support for the population, as the top-down policies of the INGO sector insisted on which Nicaraguan social issues were vital to be discussed. Similar to the international struggles in Cambodia discussed in Chapter Three, many of the INGOs' project goals in Nicaragua do not match the community's or the participants' needs. Connecting to the opening argument about *teatro popular* practitioners preserving their history, this chapter will show how the politics and aesthetics of the practice are able to survive over time.

The impact of Nicaraguan theatre festivals

Financial support for Movitep-SF has been as complicated as that of the applied theatre companies in both the previous chapters. During the initial years of Movitep-SF, only ten practitioners were capable of sustaining their families through their profession alone, whilst Movitep-SF then had a large number of actors actively working with them. For that reason, Movitep-SF had to make extensive use of grants coming from international aid organisations.⁸⁹ During meetings, Movitep-SF founders often emphasised that the majority of the grants entailed mandatory and fixed social themes. As an example, the arts organisation organises an annual national theatre festival⁹⁰ in which the new and established theatre companies of Movitep-SF are invited to perform and learn from each other

⁸⁹ Examples are the *Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit* (GIZ), Humanist Institute for Development Cooperation (HIVOS) and UN-related organisations. The most common countries giving financial support mentioned during interviews were Denmark, France, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden and the United States.

⁹⁰ For example, in 2003/2004 Movitep-SF organised the National Festival *Teatro en Funcion del Desarrollo social* ('Theatre in terms of social development') with funding from the Danish International Development Agency (DANIDA) and the participation of six *teatro popular* groups: *Coccon*, *Chá*, *Quetzalcoatl*, *Tang New*, *Renja Limf*, *Marzo del Ocho*. The festival also had special guests participating such as TNT from El Salvador and the contemporary dance group *Ideotas* from León.

artistically. This festival always uses a specific chosen social theme or a particular playwright targeting a particular group. I would like to describe two examples. The first highlights the aesthetic notions Movitep-SF aspires to, and how these notions are eventually forced towards social outcomes. This example emphasises the impact of global funding and support on the aesthetic discourses of Movitep-SF. The second shows how Movitep-SF has found solutions in new artistic works ranging from adaptations of plays to original scripts written by dramaturge Ernesto Soto. This illustrates the survival of *teatro popular* within this organisation.

The first example I will draw on is the annual theatre festivals linked to the United Nations' 'year-of concept', for example, the International Year of Youth, of Water Cooperation, of the Environment, or of the Potato. Since 1959 the UN has assigned International Years in order to focus on certain matters and to promote international action, all concentrating on global importance and consequences (UNA, 2012). The *teatro popular* practitioners explained that their approach to any form of international influence, in particular from the United States, was the inheritance of the past. The United Nations, however, had completely different connotations from the United States in Nicaragua: the UN played the role of neutral arbiter, of 'neighbourhood cop', and had tried to assert Nicaragua's sovereignty, mainly against the intervention of the Contras. To clarify, the practitioners understood sovereignty as a country being in the position to oversee and rule the nation itself, and something foreign players did not have authority over. Many practitioners explained during interviews that Nicaragua's sovereignty was certainly undermined by the United States during the civil war after the revolution.

In order to receive funding for Movitep-SF's annual festivals, these festivals have to include a fixed social theme prioritised by the UN or other international donors. Movitep-SF invites Nicaraguan theatre companies to work on this specific social theme and the troupes perform their interpretation of the theme to learn from each other's practice. With respect to these festivals, Movitep-SF explained that the main objective of performing these plays was to allow theatre companies to rethink their practices in areas relating to experimenting with acting styles, genres, group work and other areas. The development of the artists' aesthetic arena – the importance of the aesthetic worth – is considered a priority for Movitep-SF. This context offers the groups the opportunity to artistically grow, learn from exchanges and experiment on stage. These are all artistic components that – as

mentioned before – were previously missing in Nicaragua: Movitep-SF desired the establishment of a Nicaraguan theatre community. More specifically, the ideological inclination of Movitep-SF's founders – those who were part of the *Nixtayolero* collective – had an understanding of how festivals could be significant for the existing theatre companies. They argued that festivals could enhance the actors' skills and awareness through watching other artists and interacting with different audiences.

The audiences of the festivals consist of local communities and artists. The practitioners explained that in the first few years the festival plays provoked a mixed reaction amongst the audiences, ranging between laughter, approval and verbal exchanges during the performances. Van Poppel suggested that postproduction discussions were essential to the effectiveness of the plays, as it would allow the artists to discuss the aesthetics of the practice and the dramatic impact of the plays. The artists are actively invited to contribute to these discussions because, as the practitioners argued, these events could encourage them to think about their work and how to evolve within their aesthetic arena. The range of aesthetic responses amongst the artists allows Movitep-SF to identify how they can support the theatre companies to grow artistically (for example offering support in acting training, stage setting or light design), as well as helping the organisation to recognise parts of society where support of a particular social topic would be most necessary.

However, Movitep-SF has only been able to maintain short-term relationships with UN organisations and other international donors – due to the time-specific nature of the festivals – resulting in continued insecurity in their work. On top of this practical difficulty, in 2006 Movitep-SF became more hesitant regarding these organisations because the founders recognised that their approach differed from *teatro popular's* ideology and therefore limited them in their practice. Because the UN controlled the social nature of its work, Movitep-SF felt forced to obey the UN's agenda, and the practitioners argued that the projects were negotiating their own morals: 'how do these foreign organisations truly know what our art-form entails? More importantly, why do they have to explain the most appropriate way in order to get a message across?' (Pulido 2006, pers. comm., 27 Jan.).⁹¹ Moreover, the theatre practitioners and the audience members felt uninterested and indifferent with regard to the repetitive nature of the work. The audience members were

⁹¹ *Teatro popular* practitioners mentioned the existence of UN documents outlining proscription of content and style for performances. However I have not been able to obtain this document for this study.

clearly aware of the international funding policies and politics. During the festival plays, the spectators revealed their conditioned behaviour towards the UN's International Years and the socially-themed performances: 'we have seen enough of this topic, we got bored of it' (Anonymous audience members 2004, pers. comm., Sep.). Moreover, the spectators expressed in interviews that they were resistant to the performances' subjects. The frustrations that arose were a consequence of working within a prearranged social theme. Here, the UN – as in the previous chapter in Cambodia – strongly dominated the sensation-based aspects of the practice, and hence the responses of the audience. Consequently, this affected the artistic engagement and aesthetic quality from the perspective of the spectator. As mentioned, the practitioners argued that one of the definitions of aesthetics of *teatro popular* is how symbols and images can create an understanding of social messages. This aesthetic terminology illustrates that the UN proscribes *teatro popular's* aesthetic, because the UN outlines how the artistic practice should convey a message. This affects the aesthetic discourses surrounding the practice and the aesthetic experience of the audience members.

These audience responses to an art-form like *teatro popular* had a great impact on the artistic expectations of the artists. Pulido stated that the underplaying of the practitioners' aesthetic knowledge resulted in aesthetic concerns: what was their role as artists when INGOs decided on their methodology? What was the worth of their aesthetic arena if foreign-identified social outcomes were more important? What was the aesthetic value of their work? Was their knowledge about their culture and its needs not greater than that of the international donors? What was the worth of their own and their audience members' cultural knowledge of the context?⁹² The social and the aesthetic discourses were both pushed in one direction, leaving the artists insecure about their own artistic products and methodology.

One of the funding providers of arts projects (a UN-related organisation) in Nicaragua explained in a virtual meeting in 2005 that it did not have a cultural policy regarding *teatro popular*. Instead, it used the guidelines and Strategic Papers related to Indigenous People's Issues, which emphasise the importance of addressing cultural issues in all interventions. Within this organisation, theatre was mostly used in youth development, gender-based

⁹² These questions and many others were mentioned during interviews and informal meetings with *teatro popular* practitioners.

violence and HIV-AIDS awareness. For the purposes of this organisation, theatre was used with adolescents, youth and women with low educational levels as a means to ensure comprehension and to make messages more realistic. The organisation reported to the funding recipients quarterly. All theatre activities were funded by the organisation. When theatre activities were reported on, emphasis was given to the number of participants and the organisers' perception of spectators' interest (UN-related organisation 2006, pers. comm., Feb.)

This relationship between the social, aesthetic and economic confirms what I argued in the previous chapter, because *again* the international funding politics perceives theatre as a service good. International donors only take into account quantitative outcomes. The number of audience members is prioritised over *teatro popular's* artistry. Tragically, international interveners' efforts to tackle certain social subjects via *teatro popular* have resulted in a more suspicious audience. Instead of identifying common social concerns and using it the methodology of *teatro popular*, the approach is piecemeal and oriented towards narrow international conceptions of interests. As a consequence, the practitioners have been reduced to operating in a 'tiny' domain of reference concerning the quality of the work. The domain is reduced because the funders limit the organisation's ability to explore the social content of their aesthetic practice in theatrical exchanges and to learn from their audiences. This diminishes the quality of the aesthetic discourses surrounding the practice.

In contrast to this 'destructive' example in terms of aesthetic discourses, the founders of Movitep-SF later found solutions to maintain their aesthetic dimensions and goals. In 2005, Movitep-SF chose to expand its practice by studying and working with Shakespeare. A Shakespeare project in Nicaragua may not seem to be applied theatre, but the context of the work within an educational performance and a community setting positions it as part of applied theatre work. Founder van Poppel read Martin Esslin (1974) in Jan Kott's *Shakespeare Our Contemporary*, and was inspired by the following (1974: xi):

Great works of art have an autonomous existence, independent of the intention and personality of their creators and independent also of the circumstances of the time of their creation. That is the mark of their greatness.

Similar to the ideas of the Brazilian case study *Nós do Morro* discussed in the first chapter, van Poppel argued that the universal themes of Shakespeare such as power, the abuse of power, retaliation, life, death and love in all its struggles were prevalent in Nicaragua's

communities (Van Poppel, 2007: 2). Van Poppel also stated that the Shakespeare project required the incorporation of new and alternative disciplines, which had not been used before in Movitep-SF's groups: the use of stage setting and lighting, and identifying appropriate locations to reinforce the effect of the content and the show (Ibid.: 3). Two Dutch specialists in lighting design and Shakespeare were invited to develop the project, funded by *Fondo Nicaragüense de Cultura*, HIVOS, the Dutch Embassy and *Stichting Doen* (a Dutch foundation) (Movitep-SF, 2013). The project involved five weeks of examining and exploring locations and experimenting with lighting designs for different scenes and spaces (Van Poppel, 2007: 3). Van Poppel states that during this Shakespeare project, dramaturgy, poetry and *creación colectiva* were the most significant aspects. Firstly, the two independent specialists and nine actors worked in small groups and later with the entire group, shaping the play via improvisation, experimentation and discussions (Movitep-SF, 2013). In 2006, the idea arose of reproducing the knowledge acquired through the Shakespeare project and looking more closely at Shakespeare's plays. Four theatre companies of Movitep-SF therefore each produced a Shakespearean play (*Macbeth*, *Hamlet*, *Richard III* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*) performed in a travelling festival, specifically working on locations and with the use of lights (Ibid.). The project successfully integrated the input of the two Dutch specialists, coming from outside the organisation.

This example demonstrates the benefits of the practitioners' creative ideas and artistry for *teatro popular*. After the project the actors stated that they were more conscious and aware of what they could achieve, and how they could use several experimental forms of acting, literature and spacing in their performances. The impact of this art-form could not be measured in terms of UN numbers. Unquestionably, the statistics could define the success of the outreach, but in this example it is difficult to quantify what impact the project really had on the practitioners and the audiences, whose ideas might be indebted to decades of revolutionary tradition. Els van Poppel stated that the use of location gave the actors an extra dimension in their acting. The importance of the project, therefore, cannot be denied. The practitioners always chose locations accessible for the audience and far away from the theatres in Managua. Van Poppel explains that in particular within the field of *teatro popular* – a practice that is always performed on location – the project was very helpful in quickly identifying strong natural settings using artistic and designed lightning (Van Poppel, 2007: 6). This enhanced the quality of the performance and consequently the entire production.

The actors stated during interviews that not only did they learn about literature, stage design and sets, but they also noticed how much pleasure the audience experienced during their performances. They noticed the silences and could hear the laughter. The processes and products of this project were how the organisation had foreseen them. The practitioners expressed that they still had the desire to share their ideology with their audience through *teatro popular*. Even though they were held back by the prejudices of the Nicaraguan elite and by financial limitations, they realised that their wish to share their art-form was under threat. The pugnacious way in which they spoke of this impending disillusionment during the interviews showed that Nicaraguan *teatro popular* would not easily lose its worth. To ensure the preservation of this art-form, artistry was being employed by this revolutionary force. On its own merits, Nicaraguan *teatro popular* maintained its function as a cultural strategy of survival. Paradoxically, in this survival strategy, the practitioners adapted their aesthetic dimensions to a different kind of ‘cultural imperialism’, the use of Shakespeare. The practitioners adapted to the contexts of international funding by working with the universal themes of Shakespeare and inviting two ‘international’ experts.

This section has examined Movitep-SF and its players within the cultural ethnoscape. The most defined aspect of the organisation’s projects – in terms of the festivals – is the lack of financial resources, and this reflects their very insecure position in the larger picture. This position was a departure from the politically and socially inspired theatre form that the founders of Movitep-SF embarked on after the revolution. It is obvious that the *teatro popular* of the 1980s reflected its own political commitments, and was part of a bigger response, finding ideological encouragement with like-minded theatre troupes. The majority of the practice created at the time was inspired by a sense of assurance and trust in these issues. While *teatro popular*’s work was still motivated by social agendas in 2006, there had been a change in the political setting over the preceding few years and the artistic practice had become set by the agenda of international aid agencies. Funds coming from international aid allowed the group to create new works, but also resulted in aesthetic concerns within the field of *teatro popular*. The next section will examine the picture of the Nicaraguan ethnoscape in 2010 and how the players and passing years have influenced the social concerns rather than the aesthetic concerns of the practitioners.

4.4. Movitep-SF in 2010: Return to *revolución*

El conocimiento es una maravillosa aventura, donde los caminos de creatividad que puede señalar el arte, contribuyen a abrir puertas entrever posibilidades y desatar la imaginación es una estrecha relación entre lo cotidiano y lo universal ('Knowledge is a wonderful adventure – in which the paths of creativity bring the arts forward, doors are opened, glimpses of possibilities are shown and the imagination is unleashed – it is a close relationship between the ordinary and the universal'). (García, 1999: 5)

After four years I am back in Nicaragua. Every time I return, it feels as if I have just left the country. Now, I am not only here to continue the fieldwork of my PhD; I have also travelled here to expand the activity of a small Nicaraguan theatre company from la Chispa, Matagalpa to León: the plan is to transform a small cottage in the woods of León into a community arts centre. The community around the centre consists of many young children without educational or leisure opportunities. Through the artistic support of Nicaraguan friends and my savings, this centre could provide the community and the practitioners with a solid income. The idea was born out of a conversation with my Leónese neighbours in 2006, who proposed selling their small and unused shack cheaply for community purposes.

This time when I arrive, however, I immediately notice that the poverty in the country has become extremely visible. The amount of young prostitutes and children selling fruit and small toys, or waiting to clean the front window of the cars at the traffic lights has drastically increased. During every taxi ride to an interview or performance, I try to recall if I closed my eyes to the neediness of the country in previous years. Ironically, this year I believed that because I had contacted the majority of my Nicaraguan friends and acquaintances via mobile phones, email and Facebook – rather than by calling richer neighbours' landlines, as I had in the past – that the country was growing exponentially. Tragically, appearances are deceptive. Although for the vast majority of Nicaraguans electricity is a luxury, the same people now also own a cell phone and use email and social networking sites, even in remote, poor corners of the countryside. In the eyes of the teatro popular practitioners, I immediately notice the deprivation.

A few days after my arrival, I visit the future community centre in the poorer suburbs of León. Whilst walking around the small cottage, a very thin but friendly man comes out of the place and greets me. After living in a dump for many years, he temporarily "occupies" the house. He invites me inside, offers me fruit and explains – inspired by Buddhism – that peace comes from within and that you should not seek it without. I sit on a wooden bench, and I listen. I realise that a community centre can wait and leave his house.

This is the first time I notice that Nicaragua has changed. On all levels. The first performance I see in 2010 is an artistic creation of Nicaraguan-born, Costa Rica-raised actor César Meléndez, part of the mainstream Nicaraguan theatre programme. In his performance, Meléndez switches off the theatre's air-conditioning for the audience to feel the heat, to feel suffering, targeting the spectators of the national theatres, the elite of the country. This is defined as one of the new, subtle political developments within mainstream theatre.

During meetings with Nicaraguan colleagues and friends, I hear their frustrations about the extreme poverty in the country. Due to the extremely poor food conditions, the participants of teatro popular in the communities have become aggressive, less able to concentrate and less willing to challenge their limits. The older generation of teatro popular practitioners are clearly concerned about the country's future and its inhabitants. What does this bode for the future of teatro popular – when the social foundation of the art practice loses its worth, its value? The younger generation of artists are seemingly more concerned about the aesthetic notions of the practice: they ask themselves and their participants questions about aesthetic worth and highlight style and sensation. The country and its actors have clearly shifted.

Except for my host. My friend in the little thatched tin house in León. Every night he still sits, looks at his neighbours and gazes. During the boxing season, he might listen to the radio, but more often he prefers the silence.



Figure 17: My host's view in León. (Photo: Kirsten Broekman)

The last section of this chapter describes the situation of the Nicaraguan cultural ethnoscape and its players in 2010. The ongoing cultural heritage of the *popular* amongst artists was still visible: *teatro popular* practitioners argued that throughout the years, their determination and force remained strong, despite the poor living conditions and the fall of social outcomes. It is within this concept that the tensions in play are more stark here than in previous chapters; the Nicaraguan practitioners have explicitly articulated the desire to

fight for their practice for decades, and have therefore placed themselves in the midst of the applied theatre debate, even though the resource capacity and policy authority for confronting the economic problems of *teatro popular* have remained bestowed on an interaction between the agenda of international interveners and the state. In order to grasp the aesthetic discourses of applied theatre, an understanding of the social and economic regime in which it sits is important. Although the founders of Movitep-SF have become more and more concerned about the social worth of their practice, they have found many ways to survive.

The shift of aesthetic concerns to social ones

The older generation of practitioners of the arts organisation were worried in 2010.⁹³ When old Sandinista leader Daniel Ortega became president of Nicaragua in 2010 once more, the older generation practitioners felt cautiously relieved, allowing themselves to reminisce about the wealth of cultural resources after the revolution. However, their prudent happiness was short-lived. Despite economic growth and improvements in education and healthcare, Ortega's cultural policies were barely visible in comparison to the situation in 2004. Practitioners expressed that these political developments and globalising processes of the 'new world' were simply a new form of imperialism, showing the world an unrealistic image of Nicaragua and resulting in only negative consequences for the poorer population. In 2010, the roots of *teatro popular* – the response to imperialism – were in place again, and impelled the practitioners to create stronger political content via their practice, in the sense that they endeavoured to choose the social themes based on the needs of the communities.

In 2010 the practitioners were clearly more concerned about social outcomes compared to their aesthetic concerns in 2006. This was firstly because the practitioners noted that there was an extraordinary lack of international and national non-governmental interest in a true understanding of Nicaraguan issues, which was magnified by the systematic failure of social processes in the country. Pulido explained that the political and economic processes existing in 2010 counteracted the social aims of the arts practice. This left the *teatro popular* practitioners empty-handed, not giving the opportunity to make a difference. The art-form had always been perceived as a successful tool and a forceful weapon, but not on its own. In order to achieve the social aims of the practice, governmental organisations and social,

⁹³ Due to the short amount of time spent in Nicaragua in 2010, in this thesis I am only able to offer examples of long-term rehearsals mentioned during the interviews, rather than examples of my own observations during long-term rehearsals.

economic and psychological institutions needed to collaborate, but these support systems were systematically missing due to cuts to public services brought about by neoliberal economic policies. Moreover, the inappropriate approach of NGOs with regard to the same social themes magnified the social concerns of the practitioners; they questioned why they should always use quantitative data to evaluate an indicator such as the number of spectators, when they were clearly more concerned with what cannot be quantified. The practitioners highlighted that the successes and achievements of their artistic creations were hardly ever shown through quantitative indicators, such as the number of spectators.

Another aspect of the practitioners' shift from aesthetic to social concerns as observed during the interviews – the continuous and rising poverty – had immediate consequences for the practitioners in the local communities. The majority of the participants suffered from food shortages, resulting in loss of concentration, aggressive behaviour and higher rates of drug sensitivity. This caused two immediate problems for the *teatro popular* practitioners in the local communities. I would like to draw on two brief examples in which these two issues are explained.

Firstly, many participants ended up in the same situations that they had presented on stage. In Sutiava, theatre company *Fuerzas de la Naturaleza* consists of many young actresses, all living in poor conditions and coming from complicated family backgrounds. Over the past few years, the themes of its performances have been around the risks and consequences of young pregnancies. In the past, the young actresses had researched numerous problems in their community, and had found that this issue was the most prevalent. In 2010, however, the majority of the actresses had conceived at a very young age, after spending many years within this *teatro popular* company, researching and analysing the same problem. This has caused frustration, disappointment and feelings of failure among the practitioners, because their participants have made the same mistake after years of teaching other young people about it. This has deeply concerned the older generation of Movitep-SF, as was expressed during informal meetings.

The second immediate problem resulting from poverty is that large-scale ideas based on appropriate problems and themes are impossible to execute. The exponential rise in poverty has attracted INGOs from around the world and the communities and practitioners are in need of their resources. The foreign aid donors, however, insist upon

unsuitable, inappropriate and irrelevant social themes for the *teatro popular* performances. Pulido argued in 2010 that these organisations underestimated the practitioners' cultural knowledge of the context. The repetitive and unsuitable social themes caused much resistance within local communities, such as the repetitive HIV/AIDS themes in smaller communities where, community members argued, environmental issues and debates were much more necessary. Furthermore, *teatro popular's* participants – who already have concentration and nutritional problems – feel 'out of place' within these topics. They are not motivated to continue the practice. Douglas considers who or what is in the place allocated to it, and who or what is 'out of place'. As Douglas describes, 'dirt is the by-product of a systematic ordering and classification of matter, in so far as ordering involves rejecting inappropriate elements' (Douglas, 1966: 35). The content of the artistic work here is *again* shaped by the financial structure. The INGOs have the funds and set the agenda; the community members feel 'out of place', because what is in the place allocated to them is neither relevant nor necessary. This cyclical motion could result in slowly breaking down the foundation of *teatro popular*, the older generation of practitioners stated. This situation closely resembles the example from Cambodia. However, the reason I suggested at the start of this chapter that Nicaragua offers a more hopeful picture is because Movitep-SF has decided to accommodate *teatro popular* in other aspects of its work, reflecting the balanced path it wishes to maintain in its practice within this deprived context.

Movitep-SF's survival strategy

This path reflects the globalising processes surrounding the organisation, and illustrates that after 25 years, the evaporation of funds does not deprive the company of a context for its work.

The first aspect of the organisation's survival strategy is enhancing its visibility in the globalised world: in 2010, Movitep-SF published a second book⁹⁴ called *¿Y los de Teatro cuándo vuelven?* ('And those for the theatre, when do they return?'), explaining their long-term projects financed by *El Fondo de Gobernabilidad Democrática*. The *cultural* perspective of globalising processes (Appadurai, 1996; Cowen, 2004), defined as an exchange of cultures influencing local, national and regional cultures, involves three movements: flows of

⁹⁴ The first book was published in 2008, edited by Daniel Pulido and called *Teatro Popular. Por los Derechos Sexuales y Reproductivos en Nicaragua. Movimiento de Teatro Popular Sin Fronteras (Movitep-SF)*. In Nicaragua it is impossible to find any publications of this.

cultural goods, flows of people and flows of investments and knowledge (Anheier and Isar, 2007: 9). Movitep-SF is transporting its knowledge and cultural goods.

Before that, they received funding from the Swiss Cooperation of Central America, and the Embassies of Germany, Finland, Luxemburg and the Netherlands for a two-year artistic project focussing on sensitive social topics (Pulido, 2010, 4). From 2008 until 2010, ten theatre companies and one visual arts group coming from different parts of Nicaragua were involved. The themes all had a specific validity, Movitep-SF's founders argue, such as equality and gender roles, abuse of power and corruption and environmental issues. In a search for the most impact, the theatre companies developed their presentations in collaboration with institutes working directly within the local communities. These support networks show that the presence of theatre groups addressing these issues artistically underpins social themes, raises awareness and promotes reflection and discussion. The publication *¿Y los de Teatro cuándo vuelven?* describes this process in detail, including the opinions of audience members, synopses of all performances and voices of the different *teatro popular* companies involved.

The second aspect of maintaining their practice is through understanding the marketability of their artistic product. Movitep-SF's founder Van Poppel explained in 2010 that their new projects were based on the question of how and where *teatro popular* artists can sell their artistic products. Three professional *teatro popular* companies, *Chá*, *Quetzalcoatl* and *Capullo*, were investigating the notion of marketing and theatre. Their aim would be to teach the companies to become financially independent, but also to make them familiar with different ways of using theatre as a marketing product. The survival of the *teatro popular* companies will be based on the economic developments surrounding them: through selling their products on the market. Appadurai's ethnoscape shows the fluid shapes caused by human groups and their cultural expressions linked to flows of international capital. Here, the practitioners adapted the resources for their artistic practice to the changes in the global ethnoscape.

Thirdly, Movitep-SF⁷ has evolved through a two-year training programme for young *teatro popular* practitioners – students of Movitep-SF's theatre companies – as well as a two-year training course on technical theatre for young artists to work independently and to be involved in production work for Movitep-SF's presentations. The pilot training programme

ended in 2008 with 15 graduates; the training then continued and became a theatre school. Embassies have been sponsoring the activities and accommodation for the theatre school's students. Movitep-SF's notion of survival in this globalised world also involves assuring the continuation of their practice by educating young interested practitioners. During my fieldwork in 2010 the students explained that the process of research, improvisation, collective creation and montage – as they have been taught during the workshops – has assisted them in creating an understanding of the social and aesthetic worth of *teatro popular*. In 2010 I also observed the students' end products – their performances – and the debates and artistic discussions that followed the performances, concentrating on the artistic and stylistic opportunities. Moreover, the young adults within the arts organisation are clearly focussed on the artistry of the practice. The question of the aesthetic worth of the work has become a serious matter and an intriguing puzzle for the young artists. The first 15 students meet up every two months for three days; they live together, work together and discuss and criticise their own and each other's work. Although the debates are lively, critical and open, the students listen to each other and respect each other's opinions. The graduates of 2008 now give workshops and help the new students in their artistic process. It could be argued that the National Theatre Workshop that flourished during the years after the revolution has been revived on a smaller scale.

The shift between older and younger generations' concerns

In 2010, the range of views about the aesthetic and social priorities of the practice varied between the two age groups.

On the one hand, the most numerous were still the older generation who, as described above, tightly embrace social concerns and the insecure future of the practice, and who no longer prioritise aesthetic concerns. During interviews I wondered if the older generation had forgotten their previous aesthetic concerns. I could speculate that theatre practitioners who are first engaged with social issues at times feel the heat of social problems pressuring the aesthetic ones. And once practitioners become more experienced, they become more committed to social work and arguments about socially-based art practices. However, it is also reasonable to argue that the changing global ethnoscape, that is, the influential power of international interveners and governmental agendas, forced the practitioners away from aesthetic concerns and back to social criteria. Undeniably, this arts organisation is rooted in particular historical struggles, defined as an anti-imperialist group originating during the

civil war. This generation of practitioners prefers not to cooperate with “oppressors”. They preserve the idea that they have absolute power over a given art practice, ‘population and territory and should be free from outside interference’ (Weiss, 2009: 23) – this sense of sovereignty – and this is their priority after decades of dependence and conflict. It is very easy to comprehend why independence is valued for the older generation of practitioners. During the 1999 UN General Assembly, Algerian president Abdelaziz Bouteflika captured this reasoning accurately (Quoted in Weiss, 2009: 22-23):

We do not deny that the United Nations has the right and the duty to help suffering humanity, but we remain extremely sensitive to any undermining of our sovereignty, not only because sovereignty is our last defence against the rules of an unequal world, but because we are not taking part in the decision making process of the Security Council.

In addition, the practitioners remembered and recognised the vertical nature of power within international institutes such as the UN, as well as in the top-down structures of most governments and national NGOs, including in Nicaragua. The practitioners were therefore confused, which resulted in resistance within the older generation of practitioners.

On the other hand, the younger generation of practitioners embrace passionately and more pragmatically the aesthetic value of theatre, perhaps unconsciously as a step towards opening up cooperation with the international community. It could be argued that the younger generation of *teatro popular* practitioner’s vague sense of 1960s idealism inherited from their ancestors has resulted in a more aesthetic focus. This could be the result of the education they received in previous years coming from the older generation, who taught them the significance of the aesthetic value of *teatro popular*. The students grew up hearing revolutionary stories from the 1980s about the freedom to ‘create’ and ‘experiment’. Moreover, the students explained during informal meetings in 2010 that their ambition was to become artists – they were interested in different acting styles and experimentation. Their preference in 2010 concentrated on the artistry of the art-form and how they – as young artists – could grow and develop their practice and knowledge. They saw themselves as the carriers and the future of the art-form, and they have realised that international money is one of the few paths to survival.

In 2010 the bifurcation of both age groups, the older and younger generations of *teatro popular* practitioners, had shifted dramatically between aesthetic and social concerns. Globalising developments have changed the social and aesthetic priorities of the younger and older generations of practitioners. For the younger generation of *teatro popular* practitioners this could allow more space for aesthetic experiments, because they will attempt to find alternative ways to develop the aesthetic of the practice via foreign money. The older generation will focus more on the social worth of the practice, making sure the original ideology of *teatro popular* remains intact. The players of the ethnoscape have shaped the survival of *teatro popular*. The ability to develop artistically or socially exists, regardless of the agency of the artist. In the case of a politically strong, historical and determined movement such as *teatro popular*, it is clear that the artists have more autonomy over the decision making in flows of international funding and national policies.

This section has examined the Nicaraguan ethnoscape in 2010, and how the players and passing years have influenced the social concerns of the practitioners. It has demonstrated the practices and ideas of two different age groups that reformed their concerns and priorities over the six years between 2004 and 2010. There has been a significant shift between the younger and older generation of *teatro popular* practitioners – the players within the Nicaraguan ethnoscape – from aesthetic concerns to priorities of social worth and vice versa. The older generation's shift from aesthetic to social worth connects to the scope of economics and politics within globalising processes: the rise of various international non-governmental organisations, as well as political institutions like the UN has led to a new era of global membership transcending the assumption that the political borders of nations determine the nature of politics and experience (Amrith and Sluga, 2008: 252). Within the post-Second World War era, the creation of the UN, a 'global police' within a system of international humanitarian law, has led to a new relationship between local sovereignties and international policies. This globalising process has increased the central importance for nations to position themselves within the international community. The interference of political activity operating at a transnational level has restricted local practitioners, resulting in this case study having to negotiate the complex arts funding and sponsorship policies of the international community for applied theatre projects.

The scope of economics, the globalising processes and the importance of sovereignty have also influenced the younger generation of *teatro popular* practitioners. They are attempting to

develop the practice's aesthetic dimensions by connecting to a wider global and national process through which arts practice has formed a larger domain, enhancing the practitioners' ability to operate in artistic spaces with more possibilities. This connects to the inherence of the aesthetic, social and economic in applied theatre explored over the course of the thesis, because it illustrates the many ways in which international and economic players participate in, and intrude into, the practice of applied theatre and its aesthetic sphere, relating to the arena of art. These players are manifest in the funding decisions of international aid agencies and in the cultural policies of national governments.

4.5. Conclusion

'Everyone is a poet until proven otherwise' (José Coronel Urtecho).

This is a more hopeful story than those of the previous two chapters. Here, the sustained 'popular' activism and the practitioners' understanding of their national context illustrate that there is still aesthetic hope for the practice of applied theatre. The practitioners execute a more politicised, historicised kind of practice in which they maintain more autonomy around their aesthetic decision making. In this context, the practitioners' understanding of their history is a source of strength that engages more fluently with global and national policies in articulating an aesthetic.

In this chapter I have examined non-profit arts organisation Movitep-SF, the players within its cultural ethnoscape and its aesthetic notions. The chapter has examined the push and pull movements between local sovereignties and the international aid industry, and has shown how this interaction occurs on a micro level between the commissioning and execution of cultural projects and theatre performances within Movitep-SF. I have argued that the entry of INGO money gradually moved *teatro popular* from its politically motivated ideologies towards unsuccessful social agendas. While *teatro popular* was regarded during and after the revolution as a keystone of conflict resolution in the country (Pulido, 2010: 11), in 2004 the strategy of international interveners resulted in a lack of interest in aesthetic concerns within the field of *teatro popular*. However, Movitep-SF has been able to work within the Nicaraguan cultural landscape throughout this period by adapting its aesthetic frameworks to the contingencies of the economic context.

This chapter has also looked at how the players in the cultural ethnoscape in the Nicaraguan example of Movitep-SF (co-)exist and have changed the aesthetic dimensions of the non-profit organisation over the years. The movement of these dimensions has resulted in conflicting interests between practitioners, international interveners and local communities, and in battles with regard to the artists' social intentions and outcomes for the communities.

Ultimately, the Nicaraguan case study has offered the opportunity to explore the clash between the notion of a 'democratic political *popular*' versus economic agendas closing aesthetic practice down, in contrast to the idea of 'rehabilitation and development' discourses in Cambodia and the concept of 'artistic' discourses in Brazil. The former two examples and this case study have all shown the consistent shape of the problem – posed by international economics and global governance –between the aesthetics of three very differently-framed examples of applied theatre. The implications of the patterns of practice I have identified show that although the global forms taken by transnational institutions are starting to evolve in new directions, and transnational integrated institution of art is possibly assembling itself (Carroll, 2007: 136-139), some applied theatre practices remain autonomous. There is an emerging flattening effect of globalisation on the practice of applied theatre – but there is resistance to this from local cultural practices. The resistance shown in this example is not hopeless.

Finally, this chapter has illustrated that the concept of the ethnoscape assists in understanding the meaning of aesthetics in applied theatre. In order to understand aesthetics in applied theatre, we cannot detach from the *ethno*, that is, something that is attached to the "human" shapes and flows of life through economic, social and cultural channels. My first work visit to Nicaragua in 2004 existed within one ethnoscape and presented the problem for my PhD research. Six years later, I observed a completely new ethnoscape. In terms of the outcomes of my research, the geographical and temporal move for my thesis illustrates that it is impossible to hold onto one ethnoscape as a moment in time. I have been to Nicaragua many times and I have clearly perceived the shift over time in the ethnoscape; the actors behaved differently in 2010 due to new demands and new developments. The implications are that the control of the entire social and economic regime in which the aesthetic sits shapes the movement of the practice. The theoretical point about the ethnoscape is that initially I used it as a spatial term, but it has become a

temporal one in this chapter. This has challenged the narrowness of the 'scape' to show that it changes over time. An important new result that this has produced is that ethnoscares can provide a framework for scholars and practitioners to reflect on the aesthetics of their practice. This chapter has allowed me to 'historicise' the 'scape' and has shown that the historical evolution of artistic notions, discourses and practices is important for understanding the notion of aesthetics in relation to applied theatre.

To conclude, this chapter returns to the start of this research and has explained indirectly why my interviews with Doña Socorro Bonilla Castellón failed spectacularly. Twice. In 2004 I experienced a transition between Doña Socorro Bonilla Castellón and myself, and in 2010 I experienced a transition between Doña Socorro Bonilla Castellón, myself, and the old and new generations of *teatro popular* practitioners. The division had become bigger, and the ethnoscape had changed. It appears to be a cyclical motion.

I do not expect to settle grand debates like the above about change versus continuity in practice. Ultimately, the conclusion will focus on the underlying proposition of this research and discuss the implications of the meaning of aesthetics within the field of applied theatre in development contexts.

Future models of internationalised applied theatre:

Summary and concluding reflections

‘Food first, then morality’
Bertolt Brecht, *The Threepenny Opera* (1928).

Doña Socorro Bonilla Castellón was right.

Introduced at the start of this research, I have aimed to create an understanding of what Doña Socorro Bonilla Castellón’s behaviour was saying about applied theatre, my assumptions about applied theatre and the meaning of aesthetics in applied theatre. Building on the ‘dirty’ and ‘clean’ dichotomy used throughout the research, Doña Socorro clearly thought I was dirtying her beautiful art-form because she perceived social work as damaging, inappropriate and polluting for her cultural practice. The *Comedia Nacional* in which she had been working for years was uninfected by notions of the social. Following this, for Doña Socorro art had a pure place, which did not belong to the social. Doña Socorro projected my uncleanness: my assumptions about the significance of *teatro popular* in Nicaragua. Therefore, from her perspective, she was perfectly entitled to throw me out of her house and subsequently her office.

The stimulus for this PhD research came from these two failed interviews in Nicaragua. My encounters with Doña Socorro Bonilla Castellón and with *teatro popular* practitioners – who desired to examine the aesthetic value of their theatre practice – stimulated the research presented in this study of applied theatre’s aesthetics in development contexts. Distinct cultural traditions and aesthetic practices in development settings come face-to-face with global social and economic agendas, which makes development contexts some of the most important sites for exploring aesthetics, because the combination of social, aesthetic and economic factors they exhibit bring the contradictions of each corner of this triad to light, thus opening them up for analysis and interrogation. These observations prompted me to examine theatre companies globally that have articulated – in different ways and to different extents – a social change agenda within an understanding of aesthetics specific to their context. Thus, this thesis took the case of theatre company and school *Nós do Morro* in Brazil, multidisciplinary arts centre *Phare Ponleu Selpak* in Cambodia

and non-profit organisation *Movimiento Teatro Popular Sin Fronteras* in Nicaragua to explore the meaning of aesthetics within applied theatre. It has focussed on how different judgments of social and aesthetic worth meet, conflict or interact within the programmes, processes and outcomes of these three organisations. Each of these practices has shown controversies during my fieldwork, which are discussed in detail.

Building on the answers in the four previous chapters, in this conclusion I summarise how the overall argument hangs together. After exploring the landscape of social and aesthetic worth across the three case studies, this research has pointed out the many ways in which international economics and global governance – manifest in tax-reduced sponsorships by global corporations, funding decisions of international interveners and cultural policies of national governments – participate and intrude into both the aesthetic and social constructions of applied theatre’s artistic value, therefore framing its aesthetic sphere. The global pressure coming from the United Nations and the international humanitarian community seeking to shape applied theatre companies and make them respond to certain dynamics serves neither art nor community. This makes it very difficult to define and locate an aesthetic of applied theatre in a way that is ‘traditional’ in discussions of aesthetics (through definition of the art ‘product’ alone, via reference to ideas of beauty, affect and the senses, and not linked to instrumentalism), as introduced in Chapter One by Levinson’s foci of aesthetics (2003: 3-4). Hence, the *meaning* of aesthetics of applied theatre in development contexts differs from case to case due to the different ethnoscaapes, their players and their aesthetic imperatives. This study has thus merely found a way of understanding the impact of economic and international actors on applied theatre using Appadurai’s concept of the ethnoscape (1991), which offers a theoretical framework for investigating the *determining factors* of the aesthetics of applied theatre, and the *aesthetic discourses* surrounding applied theatre in development settings. Following this, I attempt to describe the implications for the field of applied theatre, and make suggestions for ongoing research.

The recipe framework

Appadurai’s ethnoscape reveals that any cultural expression has ‘external’ influences: ideas of imposition or natural growth are both simplifications of intricate processes. It is an oversimplification to argue that the aesthetic of the Cambodian case study is merely imposed, because this argument completely denies the agency of many Cambodian artists.

Similarly, it is unreasonable to state that the Nicaraguan case study is totally home-grown, as this ignores the flow of international money, ideologies and practices.

The reader will have noticed a recipe at the beginning of each chapter. I will draw out some implications of these recipes and why they have been my framing device. *Gallo pinto* is a traditional recipe in Nicaragua. However, Costa Ricans, Panamanians, Peruvians and Ecuadorians claim that the beans and rice dish originated in their country. This is similar to 'Dutch' pea soup, 'Cambodian' stir-fried shrimps and vegetables and 'Brazilian' shrimp bobo. Several countries claim to have invented the traditional recipe for pea soup or any other dish. Traditional recipes exist, but in many settings: people, groups and states can own these recipes, but in this globalised world there is no *original* owner. It is unfeasible to pretend that it only belongs to one group or one nation, and therefore to locate the origins or define the recipes as 'authentic' or 'home-grown' is impossible. Similarly, in order to understand the aesthetic of applied theatre, we cannot detach it from the *ethno* – something attached to the 'human' shapes and flows of life through economic, social and cultural channels. There is never any 'pure' or 'non-fluid' serving of art or community. Therefore, a different framework is necessary to describe, practice, analyse and explore the implications of the aesthetics of applied theatre: Appadurai's ethnoscape. The cultural ethnoscape has illustrated that the aesthetic of an art-form does not belong to one group or one nation. It shows that there is no original owner and that it is therefore very difficult to define the meaning of the aesthetics of the practice.

Therefore, the way taste changes depends on the way it sits within social, cultural and economic channels. The taste of one recipe is different in each location and changes everywhere it is made, even though the recipe or its name appears similar. The relation between the actual smell and taste of the food and the social, cultural and economic networks I have described is the range of input and the perception of others. It is worth noting that the theatrical practice is named differently across my case studies: in Brazil the practitioners use the term 'theatre'; in Cambodia, 'awareness theatre' or 'social circus'; and in Nicaragua, *teatro popular*. The aesthetics of the practice is different in each location and changes everywhere it is created, in particular where practitioners define their practice in different ways and where it exists on its own terms. The economic, social and cultural networks, including the human shapes and flows of life, cause a change of aesthetics, through which an implicated aesthetic is created. Therefore, defining the aesthetics of

applied theatre is very difficult. This research therefore aims only to describe *the determining factors* of the aesthetic of applied theatre, and *the aesthetic discourses* surrounding applied theatre in particular contexts.

The initial lens

In the introduction, I signalled the repeated tension between the aesthetic and social worth of applied theatre practice – a tension that has been evident and described in different ways across applied theatre literature, and has not been resolved. The heart of applied theatre – a dramatic activity with a social purpose – reflects the confusion of the landscape of social and aesthetic worth. This research started from the recognition that there are no universal aesthetic values of applied theatre that surpass the contingencies of time and place or the interests and investments of different social groups. Nor are there agreed criteria of evaluation for the aesthetic qualities of applied theatre. Therefore, I articulated the meaning of aesthetics observed via the practitioners' context, background and economic position, whilst avoiding the search for universal or 'pure' aesthetics. The major concern of the term 'aesthetics' during my fieldwork was that my fieldwork did not immediately fall into the categories 'nature of the craft', 'theory of criticism' or 'aesthetics of nature'. This reflects the general anxiety of an agreed definition of applied theatre's aesthetics and why this thesis has posed questions about why scholars and practitioners are concerned with their definition. This concern is evident not only in my direct encounters in Nicaragua, but also in recent applied theatre scholarship (Thompson, 2009: 138; Winston, 2006: 299). Both accounts of Thompson and Winston, however, are too quick to dismiss the utilitarian. In contrast, this thesis identifies a recurring tension between the aesthetic and social worth of practice through observations and practitioner accounts. The lack of reference to Augusto Boal throughout my research also illustrates this argument: applied theatre is not solely based on social change. We could therefore more usefully frame questions of aesthetics by acknowledging the embeddedness of 'aesthetics' within different cultures, while also taking into account tensions between social, aesthetic and economic worth, looking at how they interact.

Following my research, I argue that aesthetics is very relevant to applied theatre. The implications for understanding the aesthetics of applied theatre reflect starkly on its potency and, more specifically, on the politics of the practice. I agree with Thompson that the potency of aesthetics 'both in execution of projects that communicate or teach and in

the interpretation of those projects that report on effects, problem solved and things learnt' (2009: 111, original in brackets), 'will awaken individuals to possibilities beyond themselves' (Ibid.). Aesthetics can be used as a conceptual frame to better understand the work. Applied theatre practitioners will be able to discuss their performances according to aesthetic criteria, and international interveners will assess the practice via different criteria, including the practitioners' aesthetic value of their work. Consequently, the practice's potency will increase and the work will be valued according to its own artistry.

The zoom lens

The first case study – community-based theatre group *Nós do Morro* from Rio de Janeiro's Vidigal *favela* – articulated an aesthetic discourse for theatre happening in community contexts. The critical discussion of Bourdieu's and Freire's theories to understand the everyday practices of *Nós do Morro's* aesthetic and social processes illustrated an overarching schema that sees education as happening in an aesthetic – rather than a social – realm. The concept 'aesthetic discourse' was presented here, illustrating the complexity of *Nós do Morro's* choices that are embedded, determined and networked in a series of sometimes overlapping, sometimes competing economic, social and aesthetic practices. The aesthetic discourse is linked to how the mix of people, communicative exchanges, symbolisation and networks can change. The aesthetic model of this theatre company is derived from outside and inside the *favela*.

The influences of international economics are particularly notable here, highlighting the ways it frames the aesthetic discourses of *Nós do Morro*. The first influence of international economics is the conceptual metaphor of the construction of Rio de Janeiro's walls, built by the Brazilian government. This shows that *Nós do Morro* is shaped through economic development. *Nós do Morro* as a Brazilian export is *only* 'culturally necessary' for a positive image during the upcoming 2014 World Cup and 2016 Olympics. Secondly, oil company *Petrobrás* emphasises funding policies in a cultural and social sense: in order to create its brand, *Petrobrás* sees *Nós do Morro* as a social concern, because it supports the public good. This chapter has demonstrated that tax relief schemes or 'dirty' money allows artistic freedom for the theatre company, contrasting with 'civil society' or 'clean' money (discussed in the following two chapters), which comes with strings attached in ways that serve neither art nor community. The profound ambiguities of the positioning of *Nós do Morro* are the complexities around the term artistic 'freedom'. Bourdieu suggests that

artistic tastes are culturally and socially produced. Therefore, this could imply that ‘freedom’ is to occasionally leap over Rio’s walls, but only if the ‘laundering’ operation is put into place first. The artists I observed and spoke to illustrated this ‘laundering’ attitude and critical accommodating approach to engage with the ‘dirty’ money and Brazil’s global governance. Money for ‘social’ development produces middle-class theatre for middle-class tastes, and illustrates again the complex positioning and decision-making of *Nós do Morro*. International economics – apparent in global corporation tax policies and the international branding of Brazil – frames the aesthetic discourse in this case study.

The ethnoscape is discussed in relation to Cambodian multidisciplinary arts school *Phare Ponleu Selpak* (PPS) in the third chapter. This chapter articulated how the complex Cambodian history and context affects the sort of art that is being made at PPS, and how this influences the artists’ work. The cultural ethnoscape has proven to be a suitable framework for these intricate questions. The individuals and groups that make up the “moving” community at PPS – refugees, international interveners, artists travelling abroad, European artists travelling to the arts centre and tourists – affect the aesthetic dimensions and discourse of the arts school. The complexities of aesthetic notions in PPS’s globalised community rather than one restricted by geography is that these dimensions are influenced by each of the cultural ethnoscape’s players, all carrying their own history and background.

The aesthetic model of PPS has French origins, is built on Cambodian human power after time in the refugee camps, and has subsequently become more and more controlled by external powers. The landscape of social and aesthetic worth as explored in the Brazil chapter is completely reframed in this context by the fact that the cultural life of the arts school – aesthetic and social alike – is subject to post-memory and to the vagaries of international aid agendas. The aesthetic discourses within PPS are limited within a terrain permitted and supported by the international aid industry following the terror and obliteration of artists and the arts during the war. The Khmer practitioners I observed and interviewed showed their silent obedience towards this international terrain, accommodating the international interveners in *their* practice. As Chang describes: ‘We fear to lead, fear to initiate, we are afraid to make mistakes’ (Chang 2010, pers. comm., 12 Mar.). There is also a clear absence of aesthetic terminology. The discussion of the five actors within the cultural ethnoscape outlined how ‘civil society’ or ‘clean’ monies (in comparison to the ‘dirty’ money in Brazil) support an implied aesthetic that serves neither art nor

community. It was in these shocking clashes that my search for an aesthetic for applied theatre came to an end. The search was deeply affected and blurred by the different players in the ethnoscape and their aesthetic imperatives, helping neither the PPS community nor PPS's artistic practice, in that it was impossible to locate any meaningful notion of aesthetics in this case study.

In the fourth chapter I examined non-profit arts organisation *Movimiento Teatro Popular Sin Fronteras* (Movitep-SF), the players within its cultural ethnoscape and *teatro popular's* aesthetics. *Teatro popular* was regarded during and after the Nicaraguan revolution as a keystone of conflict resolution and peace-building in the country (Pulido, 2010: 11). The entry of INGO money gradually shifted *teatro popular* from its politically motivated ideologies to unsuccessful social agendas. The attempt to conform to agendas of social change meant that the artistic quality suffered, and the aesthetics of the practice gradually conformed to NGOs' ideas. However, Movitep-SF continued to resist such compromises and attempted to turn to alternative routes by adapting its aesthetic frameworks to the contingencies of the economic context: the so-called capitulation to 'NGO-aestheticisation'. As consciously acknowledged by Nicaraguan theatre practitioners, the sustained 'popular' activism and the practitioners' understanding of their national context illustrate that there is still hope for the aesthetics of applied theatre, for articulating an aesthetic discourse that is not entirely framed by international funding and global governance. The practitioners execute a more politicised, historicised kind of practice in which they maintain more autonomy around their aesthetic decision-making. That is, the practitioners' understanding of their history is a source of strength that engages more fluently with global and national policies. This aesthetic model has local origins, has developed within communities, survived financially through funding from outside and has continued its practice based on the strength of the communities.

Contrary to the concept of internationalised applied theatre in the Cambodian chapter, in which international aid agencies were attempting to create a new sovereign state and directly intervened in the artists' work, in Nicaragua, due to the lack of financial support and governmental recognition, the *teatro popular* practitioners sought international money themselves to continue their practice. This illustrates that the invasive influence of 'global governance' structures on limiting the aesthetic discourses of the practice, and that the ability to develop artistically occurs regardless of the agency of the artist. In the case of a

politically strong, historical and determined movement such as *teatro popular*, it is clear that the aesthetic dimensions of the practice have the potential to resist the massive global pressure coming from the international community.

Ultimately, the Nicaraguan case study has offered me the opportunity to explore the clash between the notion of a ‘democratic political *popular*’ versus economic agendas closing aesthetic practice down, in contrast to the idea of ‘rehabilitation and development’ discourses in Cambodia and ‘artistic’ discourses in Brazil. The three case studies have all shown the consistent shape of the problem – posed by international economics and global governance – between the aesthetics of three very differently framed examples of applied theatre. The implications of the patterns of practice I have identified show that the international humanitarian community is seeking to shape applied theatre companies and make them respond to certain dynamics. Global forms taken by transnational institutions are starting to evolve in new directions, and an integrated, transnational institution of art may be assembling itself (Carroll, 2007: 136-139). However, this research has seen that some applied theatre practices remain autonomous. An emerging flattening effect of globalisation on the practice of applied theatre is happening – but there is resistance to this from local cultural practices. The resistance in the Nicaraguan example is not hopeless: the practitioners have found alternatives to resist the pressure to become a particular type of company, living in a state partially organised along international agendas.

Contributions to the field and suggestions for ongoing research

This is the first study to examine the artistic significance of applied theatre including the social worth of the practice in development settings, drawing on an interdisciplinary literature review as well as observations and interviews. The effect of using a variety of empirical work has resulted in a rich body of material, creating ideas for new studies while examining complex situations.

One positive opening generated by using the theoretical framework of the ethnoscape is that it draws on new kinds of relationships outside the social and aesthetic discourse relating to applied theatre. This framework has revealed more than just the aesthetic and social discourse; ethnoscapings can provide a theoretical framework for scholars and practitioners to reflect on the aesthetics and aesthetic discourses of their practice. Flows of ideas and capital – the ethnoscapings – occur in each case study in a different way. Each of

the case studies has a rich history and what occurs in each of these sites cannot be simplified. From examining the ethnoscape and its players in Cambodia and in Nicaragua, I clearly perceived shifts in the ethnoscape over time. Initially, 'ethnoscape' was used as a spatial term, but became a temporal one in the last chapter. This challenges the narrowness of the 'scape' to show that it changes over time. The fourth chapter allowed me to historicise the 'scape', and I argue therefore that the historical evolution of artistic notions, discourses and practices is important for understanding aesthetics in relation to applied theatre. Furthermore, within this research I have attempted to provide a model for multi-layered, broad and deep kinds of analysis. The ethnoscape offers the specific kind of attention I argue is needed within the field of applied theatre, and also indicates what specific directions this attention needs to be focused on in future research: for example, the attention to funding streams, and also to the broader economic contexts of projects, such as the walls in Rio de Janeiro, or the attention to the extraordinary dilemmas faced by arts projects in Cambodia, and the tensions and conflicts in communities of practice in Nicaragua.

One complexity is that the meaning of rapid global shifts clearly concerns many practitioners: the interference of political activity operating at transnational level – forms of institutionalisation including the European Union and the United Nations – and economic activity in multinational corporations complement but at times restrict national and local governments. This has resulted in complex arts funding and sponsorship policies of the international community for applied theatre projects. The focus on development contexts in this research is emblematic of the century that has witnessed an accommodation to a utilitarian narrative engaged with neoliberal economic movements, which in turn has directly affected theatrical practices. *Nós do Morro*'s mission remains artistically 'sustainable' because of oil money; however, the company has been funded under the social heading of *Petrobrás*. The applied theatre companies in Cambodia and Nicaragua are likely to become similar companies in terms of social agendas and outcomes, whilst other Nicaraguan *teatro popular* practitioners attempt to attain a counter-hegemonic ideal, inventing artistic alternatives to survive the economic contingencies. These concerns will now be discussed in detail.

Firstly, the funding from oil company *Petrobrás* – a Brazilian company making cultural policy – contrasts with companies that are supported by international cultural policy

organisations: *Petrobrás* is an international global enterprise, and the cultural policy-maker mainly funds local art and provides theatre companies with opportunities to grow artistically. This might imply that global corporate money could play a future supportive role in marginalised art communities. As my earlier commentary on Marxist theories of art implies, the sources of funding for art have always been problematic. Marxists 'view capital as a social relation embedded in productive, material entities and the key issue is not the utility that the capital produces, but the social process by which capital itself gets produced' (Nitzan and Bichler, 2009: 4-10). A standard Marxist deterministic account would say that the 'ultimate' driver is economic, but later Marxist thinkers (such as the Cultural Marxists) have tempered this determinism with accounts that give agency to the social, ideological or cultural. Cultural Marxist theorists express broader ideas about the role of culture in the global economy, without excluding culture as part of it. Therefore, it would be extremely useful to develop a global point of view that attracts many different groups within society, in which they are able to state with some credibility that their interests are those of society at large (Lears, 1985: 571).

This study has attempted to uncover the pressing need for neglected key frameworks in these three cases: cultural, ideological, social and economic channels. The defence of a purely aesthetic or purely social motivation cannot be maintained in these cases. Our field should be more attentive to the economic, social and cultural relationships within the aesthetic discourses surrounding applied theatre. The practice urges closer engagement with diverse voices from within and *outside* the field of applied theatre. Applied theatre should be considered as 'forms of dramatic activity' (Nicholson, 2005: 2) rooted in social, cultural and economic struggles where numerous players both inside and *outside* the field battle with economic and socio-political situations. Based on an analysis of three different case studies, and drawing on the ethnoscape as a theoretical framework, this research offers a broader picture of applied theatre, in which new positive opportunities do appear from, for example, the input of corporate funding.

The research has reminded us that the practice of applied theatre takes place in surprising places, and we should be vigilant in our assumptions and projections. All the assumptions I had about the field of applied theatre were proven wrong, and are all part of the overall argument with regard to the assumptions and projections of applied theatre: *Nós do Morro* can maintain its mission because of oil money; the international money providers change

their agendas and the artists change simultaneously, and the theatre organisations in Cambodia and Nicaragua are likely to become more similar. As surrealist painter Leonora Carrington (1988) noted: ‘the task of the right eye is to peer into the telescope while the left eye peers into the microscope’ (1988: 16): we should carefully look at the practice of applied theatre. This research, analysing the aesthetics of applied theatre through the perceptions of theatre practitioners, facilitators, international aid workers and myself, has created an understanding of what these encounters tell us about the future needs of the field of applied theatre.

Further exploration is thus essential to undertake a meaningful interdisciplinary literary dialogue between the different players within the contemporary ethnoscape. We should avoid making simplistic conclusions about the places where and the ways in which applied theatre should occur. Building from understandings of the positive consequences of corporate funding in the field of applied theatre, I aim to unwrap the debates that criticise corporate social responsibility, arguing that it is vital to grasp the causes of these developments in the broader socio-political environment and global context. The economic dimension of the practice has not been seen as worthy of scholarly investigation in applied theatre research to date, and the research process repeatedly highlighted a pressing need to better understand the aesthetic and economic relations, historically and contemporaneously. A more general response, noting that the economic crisis of 2008 has now moved into a long-term period of austerity in the developed world, is the stimulating discussion about economics of practice – or rather, the scholarly attention on the impact of neoliberal economic policies on theatre and performance practice in the developed world (for example Jen Harvie’s book on *Fair Play: Art, Performance and Neoliberalism* and Maurya Wickstrom’s *Performance in the blockades of neoliberalism: Thinking the Political Anem*). Arguably, these scholars make generic references to the relationship between economics and aesthetics, whilst I am arguing for a more integrated and detailed investigation through the framework of the ethnoscape.

Secondly, the implications of international economics and global governance are also my concern in the field of applied theatre. My vision of the implications within the field is therefore twofold. On one hand, we find new opportunities and practices arising in unexpected places. However, on the other hand, the empirical outcomes of this study illustrate the misperceptions and miscommunications between the different players. Wolff

argued that the established conceptions of quality in the arts militate against the support of art practices of marginalised communities, for which traditional criteria of assessment are often inappropriate and disallow the consideration of popular art outside the mainstream (1983: 11-15). Examples of art practices of marginalised communities absent from the mainstream discourse are: *Petrobrás* claiming that *Nós do Morro*'s mission is based on social criteria, the international theatre directors reluctantly working with their own strategies within PPS, and the *teatro popular* practitioners working through the predetermined social themes of international donors. Looking to the future for applied theatre, it is possible to speculate that applied theatre companies globally could all develop to become similar internationalised companies, as shown in the Nicaraguan and Cambodian case studies. It could be argued that this process has always been the case, as there has always been a limited set of practices circulating around the world, reinvented in each new context. In each place and in each time the ethnoscape looks different, but within a limited set of discourses and practices. The question is whether globalising forces are narrowing sets of practices down, or whether the cycle is narrower now in terms of possibilities of reinvention.

I argue that applied theatre practices globally are even now becoming too uniform: research is required in order to critically examine the global pressure coming from the United Nations and the international humanitarian community. The global forms taken by transnational institutions are starting to evolve in new directions. We should be alarmed by this development, and we should not perceive this as an inevitable journey that cannot be altered. We need to attentively investigate what level of resistance applied theatre companies can enact. Although each arts organisation is trying to find a place for applied theatre in the 'new' world, the Cambodian and Nicaraguan companies could hopefully resist the pressure to become similar companies living in a state partially organised along international agendas.

The future of internationalised applied theatre could become a restricted internationalised unified place, far from the initial proposition of this research: the journey away from locating a pure and universal aesthetic of applied theatre. Carroll (2007: 134-135) takes a step further in this compelling topic in the 'new' global world: the possible future unification of arts practices due to political, economic and/or cultural causes and pressures conditions the practice of applied theatre. I agree with Carroll that 'an integrated,

transnational institution of art' (Ibid.: 136) may be assembling itself. My concern is that this could imply the end of local practices, and create a form of 'flat' applied theatre practice. Aesthetic judgments will then shift towards universal criteria, resulting in internationalised and unified aesthetics of applied theatre.

Returning to the Nicaraguan *gallo pinto* recipe, this development will force practitioners and audiences across the world to taste, smell and make the same *gallo pinto*. The practitioners will be forced to leave out secret local ingredients unique to their country and its mix of human flows and systems. This could unify and even reduce the taste of the *gallo pinto*, and could leave the artists with artistic frustrations in the kitchen. My main concern is that this direction will suppress the expression of the situated interests of practitioners in their places of origin and cultivate an artificial global appreciation of the local, produced and consumed by the rest of the world. The local cooks will then only produce one predetermined meal for one global audience, in which their own flavours and ingredients will slowly vanish. Practices that are favoured in this 'one size fits all' model are prearranged social-themed productions, and local artistic methodologies and traditions are diminished as a result. We should not ignore the qualities of local applied theatre practices in these sites, and consequently the potential of the artistry and its learning possibilities inherent in its astonishing performances. This is a call for a more nuanced understanding of applied theatre's aesthetic, including the identification of the relevant features of art practices and their relationship to broader social structures and the characteristics of a culture or community, whether that is Nicaraguan *teatro popular*, Gogol in Rio's *favelas*, Cambodian's social circus or any other practice. The naming of the practice is not significant; I merely believe that all cultural forms that have intimate connections with particular contexts, histories, traditions and cultures should have the right to maintain their artistry.

The practitioners whom I interviewed and observed demonstrated different attitudes and approaches about how to engage with international economics and global governance drivers: a 'laundering' attitude and critically accommodating approach in Brazil, silent obedience and accommodation towards the international interveners in Cambodia, and a politically strong, historical and determined response towards the capitulation to "NGO-aestheticisation" in Nicaragua. In the last chapter there is resistance to the flattening effect of globalisation from local cultural practices. This illustrates that resistance is not hopeless.

As a result, this research proposes a more politicised, historicised kind of practice, teaching and mentoring around these questions. This will support applied theatre practitioners in finding their way in the new global world. A follow-up to the impact and influence of international funding and global branding in the field would be a strong area for future research, as this interaction in development settings requires much more attention.

In addition to more interdisciplinary research in the field of applied theatre, I argue that an exploration of the future developments of applied theatre in development settings organised by the international community forms a new area of research. In the three case studies, as in many other contexts, practitioners are in need of continuing sources of support. The practitioners have survived oppressive regimes and often work more than one job. They deserve to receive appropriate support and funding in which their art-form can remain autonomous. As Wolff (2008: 35) proposed a dialogic account that does not insist on the admiration of the dominant aesthetic but is instead based on social production and reflexivity. This allows any art-form to exist and be valued through social contingency and reflexivity. Moreover, Wolff suggested the explicitness of aesthetic judgment criteria: judging the achievements of applied theatre according to the norms of mainstream theatre will fail, as it will always miss the characteristics of the applied theatre practice being judged.

Academics and practitioners of applied theatre travelling to developing countries or post-conflict zones should therefore be cautious and thoughtful in choosing their projects and responding to international donors. Unfortunately, offering the hope of change, development, cultural modernity and artistic solutions aiming to reform aesthetic dimensions or to overcome the countries' past is an overestimation of their role. If we truly believe in art practices and socially engaged practices in marginalised communities, we should avoid any form of imposition in these places. Successful projects are contingent upon long-term development and support, conscious thinking and not compromising the artists' needs. I believe that it is better to retreat than to continue a practice in which neither art nor community is served by applied theatre. Any meaningful notion of aesthetics in applied theatre needs to serve art and community.

Bertolt Brecht said it accurately:

'Food first, then morality.'

Appendix 1

List of respondents

The Netherlands

1. Two staff members UNESCO The Hague The Hague, Office UNESCO, June 12, 2008
2. Emeritus professor music anthropology, UNESCO advisor Leiden, Leiden University, July 11, 2008
3. Assistant professor community development Colombia Uni Amsterdam, Central Station, July 21, 2008

Brazil

4. Researcher & Lecturer Queen Mary University Manchester, Contact Theatre, March 16, 2009
5. Administrator *Nós do Morro* Rio de Janeiro, Café Prefácio, October 7, 2009
6. Executive director NGO favela communities Rio de Janeiro, House respondent, October 14, 2009
7. Actress *Nós do Morro* Rio de Janeiro, Rooftop NdM, November 5, 2009
8. Actor *Nós do Morro*, Model Rio de Janeiro, Rooftop NdM, November 6, 2009
9. Director *Nós do Morro* Rio de Janeiro, Rooftop NdM, November 9, 2009
10. Staff member Cultural department *Petrobrás* Rio de Janeiro, Office *Petrobrás*, November 12, 2009
11. Actor and receptionist *Nós do Morro* Rio de Janeiro, Rehearsal NdM, November 13, 2009
12. Associate producer *Nós do Morro* Rio de Janeiro, Teatro Maison, November 13, 2009
13. Globo and film actor São Paulo, Airport São Paulo, November 15, 2009
14. Staff member Social department *Petrobrás* Rio de Janeiro, Rooftop *Petrobrás*, November 16, 2009
15. Two staff members Centro Teatro Oprimido (CTO) Rio de Janeiro, Office CTO, November 19, 2009
16. Financial staff member *Nós do Morro* Rio de Janeiro, Office NdM, November 27, 2009
17. Board member *Nós do Morro* Rio de Janeiro, Office NdM, November 30, 2009
18. Cultural policy maker SESC Rio de Janeiro, Office SESC, December 1, 2009
19. Board member *Nós do Morro* Rio de Janeiro, Office Newspaper, December 1, 2009
20. Lecturer Drama and Theatre UNIRIO Rio de Janeiro, UNIRIO, December 2, 2009
21. Group interview actors NdM Rio de Janeiro, Rehearsal space, December 4, 2009
22. Researcher and staff member CEsEC Rio de Janeiro, Office CEsEC, December 7, 2009
23. Board member *Nós do Morro* Rio de Janeiro, Office Newspaper, December 8, 2009
24. Director *Nós do Morro* Rio de Janeiro, House director, December 9, 2009
25. Independent Actor Rio de Janeiro, Café Barboda,

26.	Journalist and independent writer	December 11, 2009 Rio de Janeiro, Car Journalist, December 11, 2009
27.	Coordinator <i>Nós do Morro</i>	Rio de Janeiro, Office NdM, December 16, 2009
28.	Board member <i>Nós do Morro</i>	Rio de Janeiro, Office NdM, December 16, 2009
Cambodia		
29.	Old Minister of Women's and Veterans and opposition leader	Phnom Penh, Living Room, January 26, 2010
30.	Group discussion Actors Theatre Awareness group	Battambang, Theatre PPS, February 9, 2010
31.	Professor Performing Arts, Circus and Apsara RUFA	Phnom Penh, RUFA area, n/a February, 2010
32.	International Director PPS	Battambang, House director, February 22, 2010
33.	Founder, Circus Director and theatre director PPS	Battambang, Office PPS, February 23, 2010
34.	Warden and detainees Battambang detention center	Battambang, Detention center, n/a February, 2010
35.	Circus assistant director PPS	Battambang, La Villa, February 24, 2010
36.	Warden detention center Battambang province	Battambang, Detention center, n/a February 2010
37.	Miss Landmine 2009 and mother	Battambang, Office PPS, March 2, 2010
38.	Three actresses PPS	Battambang Kitchen PPS, March 4, 2010
39.	International theatre director	Phnom Penh, Café Fresco's, March 7, 2010
40.	Director Environmental German NGO	Phnom Penh, Balcony interviewee, March 8, 2010
41.	Arts Journalist Cambodia	Phnom Penh, Café Fresco's, March 8, 2010
42.	Director French Institute of Cambodia (CFF)	Phnom Penh, Office CFF, March 8, 2010
43.	Artistic director Khmer Arts	Phnom Penh, Rehearsal Khmer Arts, March 9, 2010
44.	Theatre director, contemporary dancer and producer Metahouse	Phnom Penh, Office Metahouse, March 9, 2010
45.	Staff member Krousar Thmey Children's aid foundation	Phnom Penh, Office Krousar Thmey, March 12, 2010
46.	Director Documentation Centre Cambodia	Phnom Penh, Office DCC Cam, March 12, 2010
47.	Dance ethnologist, Lecturer and Director Khmer Arts	Phnom Penh, Café Nosh, March 14, 2010
48.	Royal family member	Phnom Penh, Monument books, n/a March, 2010
49.	Artistic director Shadow Puppet Theatre	Phnom Penh, Theatre, March 15, 2010
50.	Staff member Cambodian Living Arts (CLA)	Phnom Penh, Office CLA, March 17, 2010
51.	Dancers Khmer Arts	Phnom Penh, Rehearsal Khmer Arts, March 18, 2010
52.	Arts consultant and Curator	Phnom Penh, Living Room, March 18, 2010
53.	Staff member Buddhist Institute	Phnom Penh, Buddhist Temple, March 19, 2010
54.	Actresses Amrita Performing Arts	Phnom Penh, Amrita Office, March 19, 2010
55.	Survivor Khmer Rouge Tuol Sleng	Phnom Penh, Home survivor,

March 21, 2010

Nicaragua

56. *Teatro popular* practitioner and artistic director *Lilycayán* Matalgapa, Library, August 14, 2010
57. *Teatro popular* practitioner at university level León, Café la Rosita, August 16, 2010
58. Visual artist and fonder Movitep-SF León, Home, August 16, 2010
59. Actress National Theatre León, Home actress, August 19, 2010
60. *Teatro popular* practitioner and modern dancer León, Home practitioner, August 19, 2010
61. Actresses Theatre group *Fuerzas de la Naturaleza* León, Farm Sutiava, August 20, 2010
62. Dramaturge León, National theatre, August 21, 2010
63. *Teatro popular* practitioner, actor and fonder Movitep-SF Matagalpa, Home fonder, August 22, 2010
64. Puppetry directors and actors Managua, Puppetry school, August 23, 2010
65. *Teatro popular* practitioner *Sacuanjoche* Managua, Metrocentro, August 23, 2010
66. Group interview Teatro popular training school Matagalpa, Theatre school, August 28, 2010
67. *Teatro popular* practitioners *CHA* Managua, Theatre R. Dario, August 30, 2010
68. *Teatro popular* practitioner, dramaturge and founder M.SF. Matagalpa, Community Centre, September 1, 2010
69. Ex FSLN patriot León, Home patriot, September 3, 2010
70. Circus director and actors Granada, Circus school, September 7, 2010
71. Dramaturge, *teatro popular* practitioner and fonder M.SF. Matagalpa, Community centre, September 8, 2010
72. Ex national theatre director and actress National Theatre Managua, University, September 9, 2010
73. National officer Reproductive health UNFPA Managua, via email, September 9, 2010
74. Theatre director and director National theatre school Managua, Theatre school, September 10, 2010
75. *Teatro popular* practitioner Managua, Metrocentro, September 13, 2010

United Kingdom

76. Medical Humanitarian and Doctor Manchester, Hospital, July 19, 2011

Appendix 2

Fieldwork Consent Form



Consent Form

Kirsten Broekman has explained to me the nature of the research and what I would be asked to do as a volunteer, and has given me my own copy of the volunteer information sheet, which I have read.

I have had an opportunity to ask questions about the project and my role in it and I consent to take part as a volunteer. I also understand that I can withdraw consent at any time without having to give a reason.

I understand that Kirsten Broekman might want to use photography, audio- and video recordings, and other information involving me for wider distribution. These may be made available to other artists and researchers over the internet or published in books. I agree that this information may be made available over the internet or published in books written by Kirsten Broekman in the future.

In addition, my personal details can be collected and stored securely by Kirsten Broekman so she can identify me and ensure correct use of the research material in the future.

Signed by participant (or by participant's guardian if under 18 years):

Signed..... Date.....

Print name.....

As a PhD Student in Drama at the University of Manchester I agree that all information will be used respectfully, appropriately and sensitively at all times. I will seek to protect the identities of participants as well as credit sources of material were appropriate. I have provided clear information about how the information will be used, and passed on my contact information in case the participant requires further information:

Signed..... Date.....

Print name.....

Appendix 3

Interview list example

Interview with Director, *Nós do Morro*

1. Name
2. Age
3. Profession
4. Where do you live? How many years have you been living here?
5. What is your living situation? Do you have kids? Are you married/single?
6. I would like to know about two aspects of *Nós do Morro*: its artistic philosophy and its organisational structure:
What is the artistic philosophy of *Nós do Morro*?
7. One of the things that I admire about *Nós do Morro* is the attention to aesthetic criteria. Why are aesthetic criteria so important for *Nós do Morro*?
8. Where does this attention originate?
9. Do you use any definitions of aesthetics or art in your work, such as concentration, discipline, transformation, or any other concepts?
10. How do you communicate your work? Is it for a Brazilian and/or European audience?
11. I did not choose CTO for my research, because I think that *Nós do Morro* has different objectives. Could you name these objectives?
12. What is the artistic role of the teachers and directors within *Nós do Morro*?
13. How do you select the teachers and directors for *Nós do Morro*?
14. Could you talk a bit more about the role of funding for your work?
15. Could you talk a bit more about the politics around the arts and cultural policies?
16. Does *Nós do Morro* have any artistic conflicts with *Petrobrás's* finance policy? Could you think of any examples in which *Nós do Morro* could not maintain its artistic philosophy due to funding policies? For example, during my time in Nicaragua the practitioners' work was validated according to social development criteria rather than aesthetic criteria. Has *Nós do Morro* encountered any of these conflicts?
17. Does the social value of theatre limit the artistry of theatre?
18. What is the organizational structure of *Nós do Morro*?
19. How many employees are working for *Nós do Morro*?
20. How are the employees funded?
21. Could you talk a bit more about the auditioning process: How do you select the students?
22. Is *Nós do Morro* a school and/or an artistic institute?
23. What are the future plans for *Nós do Morro*?

Appendix 4

Example of a *teatro popular* performance



Figure 18: Teatro Popular performance 'The Rainbow that Paints My Skin' (Photo: Kirsten Broekman)

The majority of *teatro popular* performances in Nicaragua are outdoors, in open public spaces and/or on provisional stages. The artistic practice – based on the *ideology* of supporting and empowering the people and improving their living conditions – uses *local and traditional folklore* in the communities (Epskamp, 1994: 134) as a means of discussing communities' issues and giving them the opportunity to come into contact with theatre.

This includes the use of handcrafted masks, traditional and local music and dance, colourful props, costumes and plain stage settings. The themes and content of the performances are related to the daily lives and living conditions of the community members, and/or are a way of improving the artistic skills of the *teatro popular* practitioners (very often community members as well). Theatre organisations have used classical and literary theatre, such as works by William Shakespeare or Ancient Greek literature, lighting courses, design workshops and other techniques to artistically educate the practitioners. Discussions with the audience members about the content of the performance are also a very important part of the artistic process. Following a *teatro popular* performance, each spectator has the opportunity to discuss and offer their ideas and opinions.

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