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# **Evaluation and Ethics**

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An investigation of ethical  
dilemmas in evaluating  
applied theatre.

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# 1 Introduction

## 1.1 Context

This thesis is interconnected with the research internship I did with Collective Encounters as part of my M.A. in Cultural Policy and Cultural Management at Utrecht University (see 2.1). Collective Encounters is a professional theatre company located in Liverpool that uses theatre to try and realise social change. There are three main areas to the work of Collective Encounters:

- ❖ The research lab, which tries to contribute to the national and international theoretical thinking about ‘theatre for social change’.
- ❖ The professional theatre productions: productions created within non-traditional urban spaces that explore social and political concerns.
- ❖ The participatory programmes which are divided into:
  - three different core groups (Third Age, Transitions and Youth Theatre) that have regular members who rehearse together during the weekly sessions.
  - different kinds of outreach programmes that consists of workshops within the local community.<sup>1</sup>

The organisation has been committed to evaluating its work from the very beginning in its continuous attempt to improve its practice and enhance its impact.<sup>2</sup> However, employees of Collective Encounters are often confronted with ethical dilemmas during these evaluations.

The motivation for focusing my thesis on exploring the ethical dilemmas connected to the evaluation of applied theatre, is partly based on the request of Sarah Thornton, Artistic Director of Collective Encounters. Thornton describes evaluation as a frustrating, yet fascinating area currently connected to her work. She is particularly interested in how organisations such as Collective Encounters can ensure that their work is evaluated in a way that is ethically defensible while meeting the needs of their funders and social partners. Second, I have been actively involved in a few applied theatre projects myself, none of which were formally evaluated. As a cultural policy and

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<sup>1</sup> Collective Encounters, “Company Office Manual 2012,” 3.

<sup>2</sup> Collective Encounters. “Evaluation Policy and Quality Framework.” Liverpool, February 2012, 1.

management student, I am interested to see how applied theatre organisations could incorporate useful, ethical evaluation within their organisation to inform and improve their practice by, for instance, formulating relevant evaluation policies.

## 1.2 Relevance

For the most part, stakeholders in applied theatre<sup>3</sup> agree on the necessity of evaluation as a way to improve the work by critically reflecting on it. These stakeholders, however, do seldom agree on what should be considered ‘best practice’ in evaluation. A lot of past as well as current research and discussion is thus focussed on defining ‘best practice’ among the evaluation of applied theatre to discover how the impact, quality and value of the work can be best captured. Nevertheless, within this quest very little explicit attention is being paid to the ethics of evaluation or to the ethical dilemmas that are connected to the evaluation of applied theatre.<sup>4</sup>

How applied theatre can be evaluated in a way that is ethically acceptable is a real concern to Collective Encounters as well as to other artists and academics. The economic downturn makes this question more relevant than ever. ‘It is increasingly difficult to secure funds to carry out the work. We are increasingly pushed down a route that asks us to measure our work in ways that are not necessarily appropriate or indeed ethical’,<sup>5</sup> comments Thornton, referring not only to her own organisation but to the applied theatre field at large. For instance, recently the UK coalition government has explored the possibility of measuring the value of the arts through the use of the language and tools of economics.<sup>6</sup> A great deal of opposition exists to the idea that cultural value could be fully captured in this manner. The ‘#culturalvalue initiative’ of scholar Eleonora Belfiore, for instance, illustrates this. Her blog, which aims to provide a discussion platform for ‘researchers, cultural administrators, creative practitioners, policy makers and the general public’, is:

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<sup>3</sup> Applied theatre projects can deal with several possible stakeholders like practitioners, participants, the community, funders, social partners, policy makers, audience as well as other partners who are somehow connected to a project or programme.

<sup>4</sup> There are several articles that concern themselves with addressing one ethical dilemma within the evaluation of applied theatre. Often these are concerned with questions surrounding the evaluation methodology. See for instance, James Thompson ‘If it ain’t got that swing’ and Eleonora Belfiore and Oliver Bennett ‘Beyond the “Toolkit Approach.”’

<sup>5</sup> Sarah Thornton, e-mail message to author, December 18, 2012.

<sup>6</sup> This concerns the Public Service Placement Fellowship ‘Measuring Cultural Value’, based at the Department of Culture, Media and Sport. Claire Donovan finished phase two of the project in May 2013 by publishing ‘A holistic approach to valuing our culture: a report to the Department for Culture, Media and Sport.’ Phase one of the project was finished in 2010 by O’Brien his publication ‘Measuring the Value of Culture: A Report to the Department of Culture, Media and Sport.’

devoted to the topic of cultural value, and in particular to an exploration of cultural value that does not rely on an understanding of 'value' in economic terms. The starting point for this initiative is that we need to reclaim the value debate from the 'econocrats' who operate on the basis of 'the belief that there exist fundamental economic tests or yardsticks according to which policy decisions can and should be made'<sup>7</sup>

According to Belfiore, then, the use of an economic language is seen to be limited – and, in the context of policy-making, sometimes even harmful - as it is unable to capture the 'real' value of culture.

### 1.3 Research focus, questions and aims

This research will explore some of the difficult ethical dilemmas and questions inherent in evaluating applied theatre.<sup>8</sup> The focus will be on applied theatre within the Western World, the UK in particular. I'm excluding applied theatre projects in other contexts, like developing countries or post-conflict areas,<sup>9</sup> because I believe they produce ethical challenges of another nature. (Think of ethical dilemmas caused by cultural differences when Western facilitators work in these contexts.) The evaluation processes I have witnessed during my stay with Collective Encounters in Liverpool will function as my main frame of reference. Within this research, I will investigate some of the different perspectives of stakeholders on specific ethical dilemmas and will try to understand how particular actions and decisions can be legitimised by using three ethical models. The main question of this research is:

*How might some of the ethical dilemmas that surface in the evaluation process of applied theatre in the Western World be resolved?*

The sub-questions that will help answer this main question are:

- ❖ What are some of the most intractable ethical dilemmas in the evaluation of applied theatre?

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<sup>7</sup> Eleonora Belfiore, "About," Accessed January 1, 2014, <http://culturalvalueinitiative.org/about/>.

<sup>8</sup> I will focus on dilemmas that are ethical of nature and related to the evaluation process. There are many other kinds of difficulties in evaluation – like practical difficulties of how to process a great amount of qualitative data gathered through interviews - but these will not be considered here.

<sup>9</sup> Exemplary for some of the ethical dilemmas of the work in such a context is, I think, James Thompson's writing about his work in Sri Lanka in a rehabilitation centre with Tamil child soldiers. See Thompson, *Performance Affects*, 15 - 41.

- ❖ What different perspectives exist on the ethics of evaluation in relation to these dilemmas?
- ❖ How might these conflicting perspectives on ethical evaluation between stakeholders of an applied theatre project be overcome?

In investigating these questions, this research does not aim to develop a 'one size fits all' evaluation methodology. I do not think it is possible, nor desirable, to try and develop such a method. The field of applied theatre is extremely diverse and even within one organisation projects can differ enormously due to different stakeholders, objectives and circumstances. Already looking at the three core groups of Collective Encounters it becomes evident that one methodology might work with one of the groups but does not necessarily fit the needs of the others.

This research aims to provide insight into ethical dilemmas of evaluation of applied theatre. It wants to accomplish this by exploring some of the different perspectives of stakeholders with regards to these dilemmas. Moreover, this research aims to raise awareness among stakeholders in applied theatre of the importance of ethical evaluation. This research does not aim to eliminate or prevent conflict among stakeholders related to evaluation, but to help them reflect on their conflicting principles and, perhaps, come to a compromise that is acceptable to all involved.

## **1.4 Structure of this thesis**

The thesis is structured as follows, in chapter two: 'Methodology' I will explain how my internship and thesis are interconnected and how I went to work. In chapter three: 'Theoretical Framework' I will discuss several notions that are important for this research: applied theatre, evaluation and ethics. Furthermore, I will investigate three ethical models.

Structuring the main part of this thesis proved difficult as many of the dilemmas overlap or are interconnected. Ultimately I decided to focus chapter four on issues of actively involving participants in the evaluation. Chapter five explores some dilemmas that are the result of conflicting objectives and values among professional stakeholders in particular. Finally, chapter six focusses on some of the more practical causes for ethical dilemmas. To prevent repetition within these chapters, I will sometimes refer the reader to other chapters or paragraphs. The three chapters will focus on the sub-questions formulated above. Within each chapter, these sub-questions are connected to

particular kinds of ethical dilemmas. In order to make the information more accessible and less abstract, I have added some practical case studies to illustrate these dilemmas. These examples come from my research internship with Collective Encounters. I have made some of the names of respondents anonymous for confidentiality reasons. Within each chapter, I discuss different perspectives of stakeholders on a particular kind of ethical dilemma. Both the examples of ethical dilemmas and the different perspectives on them are not to be seen as representational, but rather as eclectic examples. Obviously, many different examples exist and other perspectives are possible. In my examples, I have merely focussed on the ones I regard as most illustrative for some of the most common difficulties of evaluating applied theatre ethically. In each chapter I will reflect on the dilemma's and the different perspectives with help of three ethical models. In chapter four this reflection is placed at the end of the chapter. In chapter five and six the models are used at several points as these chapters deal with more diverse dilemmas. Eventually, I will end in chapter seven with some conclusions and recommendations.

## 2 Methodology

### 2.1 Interconnection internship and thesis

Without theory, I have found that even the most reflexive of practice gets stuck and becomes repetitive, just as theory can become bafflingly abstract without practice.

– Helen Nicholson, *Applied Drama*, 15.

This thesis is interconnected with my research internship at Collective Encounters. I worked with this organisation from February 2013 till June 2013. During this period, I visited Collective Encounters in Liverpool twice: from the 12th of February till the 6th of March and from the 19th of March till the 11th of April. The rest of the research was done from Utrecht, the Netherlands. During this period I had regular e-mail and Skype contact with the employees of Collective Encounters and with Sarah Thornton in particular. My main task during the internship was to explore the field of evaluation. I gained insight in evaluation processes by investigating several evaluation models and guides. The acquired knowledge was processed by developing a database for Collective Encounters.

The choice to connect my internship and my thesis is based on the conviction that, as applied theatre practitioner and researcher Helen Nicholson argues, in the context of applied theatre, '[...] theory and practice are not separate processes or models of thought, with one based on action and another on reflection. They are interdependent and constantly in flux.'<sup>10</sup> According to Nicholson, it is important to let go of the idea that there is a binary opposition in applied theatre between practice and theory. Instead, she argues that there can be a more fluid continuum between the two.<sup>11</sup> I tried to incorporate this principle in my research by simultaneously gaining practical insight into evaluation processes while theoretically studying ethical models and ethical evaluation. Both aspects have been important in shaping my thinking about ethical evaluation for this thesis, for which the practice of Collective Encounters functioned as my main frame of reference.

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<sup>10</sup> Helen Nicholson, *Applied Drama: The Gift of Theatre*, (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 14.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 15.

Within this explorative research I used triangulation<sup>12</sup>, a combination of different data collection techniques, to get a clear and complete understanding of evaluation in the applied theatre sector and its ethical issues. Firstly, I used observation to witness evaluation processes at Collective Encounters and the ethical dilemmas that arose during these activities. This part of the data collection took place during my internship. Secondly, I conducted interviews, a discourse analysis of the different perspectives of stakeholders of applied theatre on particular ethical dilemmas and ethical evaluation in general, and a theoretical literature research of ideas concerning ethics, ethical models and evaluation. These three data collection techniques were used during the internship phase and while writing this thesis. I will describe my use of the different data collection techniques in more detail below.

## 2.2 Data collection

During my stay with Collective Encounters I made use of two different kinds of observational approaches. Firstly, I used 'free observation,' which means I did not employ a structured way of observation but did make it clear to those involved that I observed the activity as a researcher. This approach was used when sitting in on different meetings and the evaluation of 'Other ways of Telling'.<sup>13</sup> It enabled me to explore the evaluation process and the manner in which the different stakeholders participated in and responded to this process. I also used 'participatory observation' by taking part as a participant or volunteer<sup>14</sup> of several activities. This approach was used to personally experience particular activities such as the Alternatives to Violence Project<sup>15</sup>, its evaluation, workshop sessions and performance visits with the core groups. During either of these two types of observations I did not interfere with the evaluation processes.<sup>16</sup>

I interviewed staff members and partners of Collective Encounters in person, via Skype, or by e-mail. Most of these conversations can be described as semi-structured

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<sup>12</sup> Dirk Benjamin Baarda, Martijn P.M. de Goede and Johan Teunissen, *Basisboek Kwalitatief Onderzoek. Handleiding voor het opzetten en uitvoeren van kwalitatief onderzoek*, 2<sup>e</sup> ed. (Groningen: Noordhoff Uitgevers, 2009), 187.

<sup>13</sup> OWOT is a long-term outreach project of Collective Encounters in collaboration with the public libraries in St. Helens. The project is intended for mental health service users.

<sup>14</sup> CE has for each core group a set of volunteers that assists the facilitators during sessions. Most of these volunteers are students.

<sup>15</sup> AVP is an international, volunteer supported, non-profit organisation which is focussed on providing 'skills in self-esteem, non-violent communication and conflict resolution.' In the first weekend of March, AVP, in collaboration with facilitator Abi Horsfield from Collective Encounters, gave their first level one workshop for members of the Transition group. For more information about AVP see [www.avpbritain.org.uk](http://www.avpbritain.org.uk).

<sup>16</sup> Baarda, de Goede and Teunissen, 258 – 299.

interviews. However, some of the most insightful and relevant discussions with staff of Collective Encounters took place unexpectedly at informal moments during my stay in Liverpool.

During my internship I started conducting a discourse analysis of the perspectives of stakeholders of applied theatre on ethical evaluation<sup>17</sup> by reading and analysing evaluation-related policy documents and guides of Collective Encounters and several UK funding and arts organisations. The selection criteria for choosing documents of other organisations were based on either their connection with Collective Encounters as a partner or on the fact they were used as a reference point within the research lab of Collective Encounters. Within this analysis I focussed on applied theatre in particular, but sometimes I extended my search to the arts in general. I continued the discourse analysis after the completion of my internship by analysing several internet blogs of researchers related to the value of art<sup>18</sup>, arts evaluation<sup>19</sup> and evaluating community theatre<sup>20</sup>.

The decision to include documents and blogs about art in general is caused by a lack of available formal or academic sources that specifically address the ethics of evaluating applied theatre. Furthermore, since many applied theatre organisations are being (partially) funded by art-orientated funders such as the Arts Council England, it is important to see how the arts in general are being evaluated. Although applied theatre differs from 'conventional' art because the artistic process is characterised by the participation of non-artists in the artistic process, I was convinced that most issues that were raised in these documents about the value and evaluation of arts in general would also apply to the applied theatre sector.

During my internship, I started a literature survey to further inform my theoretical framework for this research. I began by reading some of the books and articles Thornton suggested in order to become more aware of the diversity of applied theatre within the Western World and of the position of Collective Encounters as a

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<sup>17</sup> In some cases these documents speak of self-evaluation instead of evaluation. Self-evaluation differs from evaluation in the sense that the assessment is conducted by people that are closely involved in the work. Often a selection of stakeholders. Though this difference might have an impact on the methodology used and the focus of evaluation, among other things, I choose to include these documents since a lot of formal evaluation is self-evaluation.

<sup>18</sup> # Cultural Value blog, curated by Eleonora Belfiore. See: <http://culturalvalueinitiative.org/>

<sup>19</sup> As part of her Public Service Placement Fellowship 'Measuring Cultural Value', based at the Department of Culture, Media and Sport. Claire Donovan started a blog called 'Priceless' that investigated the possibility to measure cultural value. See:

[http://blogs.culture.gov.uk/main/priceless\\_a\\_blog\\_on\\_the\\_very\\_idea\\_of\\_measuring\\_cultural\\_value/](http://blogs.culture.gov.uk/main/priceless_a_blog_on_the_very_idea_of_measuring_cultural_value/)

<sup>20</sup> Performing Impacts blog, See: <http://performingimpactproject.wordpress.com/>

theatre for social change within that field.<sup>21</sup> Most of that literature can be regarded as secondary literature for this thesis as it does not primarily focus on ethics or evaluation. Thornton also referred me to the work of Francois Matarasso, a highly respected arts evaluator and thinker, and to several evaluation guides that helped develop the evaluation policy of Collective Encounters. These documents became part of the primary literature for this thesis.

As a result of questions that emerged from my own practical experiences with evaluation of applied theatre, I decided to include theoretical works on ethics, ethical models and evaluation. For this purpose, I chose to use literature from the field of humanities as well as from the social sciences. This decision was partly pragmatic, due to the fact that in the context of applied theatre very little is written about ethical evaluation and ethical models, but also because in applied theatre the social dimension is as important as its artistic dimension. As such, I believed the social sciences could provide another relevant point of view than the humanities.

### **2.3 Methodological criticism**

I aimed to include the perspectives of many different stakeholders. The methodology I chose did result in a deeper understanding of some of the different perspectives on ethical evaluation of facilitators, academics, partners and funders. However, it did not provide sufficient information about the perspectives and opinions of participants in applied theatre. There are various explanations for this. Within the written discourse, participants appear to be virtually absent. Policy documents, op-ed pieces, evaluation guides and theoretical pieces are written by academics, funders, social partners, art organisations and facilitators. At best, perspectives of participants in these texts are indirectly represented by others, and even then they are very limited. During the observations of the evaluation processes, I chose not to interfere by talking with stakeholders about ethical evaluation as I did not want to influence them. The advantage to this approach was that I was able to observe evaluation processes while they were in process. A downside to this approach was, however, that while I was able to interview other stakeholders - facilitators and social partners - about their perspectives on ethical evaluation and ethics after these moments, I didn't get to speak to any of the participants about their opinions. As a result of time pressure I was thus

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<sup>21</sup> See Appendix 1 for the reading suggestions made by Thornton.

faced with the dilemma of having to weigh the solidity research methodology against the incompleteness of the information it provided.

## 2.4 Structuring and analysing data

The raw data I gathered through observation, interviews and discourse analysis was organised based on the answers it provided to the following questions:

- ❖ Why should the work be evaluated? For what purpose?
- ❖ Who should conduct the evaluation?
- ❖ Who should be able to influence the evaluation process?
- ❖ What aspects of the work should be evaluated?
- ❖ How should the work be evaluated, using what kind of methodology?
- ❖ When should evaluation take place?
- ❖ What should be done with evaluation results?

I chose to divide the data based on these questions, because it provided a chance to distinguish all the information in a clear way, while immediately providing the opportunity to see where perspectives about evaluation varied and conflicted. I chose not to differentiate perspectives of stakeholders of applied theatre based on categories such as 'funders', 'facilitators' or 'participants', since none of these constitute homogenous groups of people sharing the same values and ideas.

The data did not provide a clear answer to any of the questions listed above, due to the different perspectives of the stakeholders. The variety of perspectives and the level of conflict differed per question, suggesting that some issues were more pressing than others. By analysing the conflicting perspectives per question, I tried to determine whether these were based on practical objections or on mutually conflicting moral principles and the consequent need to trade one for the other. As a result, I was able to extract a number of common ethical dilemmas, which I complemented with some of the greatest concerns that Thornton mentioned in the context of her own work with Collective Encounters.

Finally, while analysing all the different perspectives on a particular kind of ethical dilemma, I measured them against three different ethical models. The models were used to reflect on differences in perspectives with the aim to understand how stakeholders legitimise certain decisions and actions in relation to a specific ethical dilemma. Whenever a model was not applicable to existing perspectives but still relevant to thinking about a particular ethical issue, I included it as well.

## 3 Theoretical Framework

### 3.1. Applied theatre

'Applied theatre' is an umbrella term that contains a broad variety of theatrical practices. According to Prentki and Preston, applied theatre includes among others: community theatre, theatre for social change, drama in education, participatory performance practices, prison theatre, theatre in health/education and many more.<sup>22</sup>

These practices,

[...] take participants and audiences beyond the scope of conventional, mainstream theatre into the realm of a theatre that is responsive to ordinary people and their stories, local settings and priorities. The work often, but not always, happens in informal spaces, in non-theatre venues in a variety of geographical and social settings [...] that might be specific or relevant to the interests of a community. Applied theatre usually works in contexts where the work created and performed has a specific resonance with its participants and its audiences and often, to different degrees, involves them in it.<sup>23</sup>

Nicholson points out that 'each of these forms of theatre has its own theories, debates and highly specialised practices which often are rather different from one another.'<sup>24</sup> To use the term 'applied theatre' generically inevitably means to ignore a lot of fundamental differences between all these theatrical practices. Furthermore, it has to be pointed out that not every practice included under the 'applied theatre' umbrella is equally comfortable with this label. Collective Encounters explicitly describe themselves as a theatre company for social change. Thornton states that she 'despises' the term 'applied theatre' because of its instrumentalist implications.<sup>25</sup> This aversion is understandable. Firstly, the term 'applied theatre' in itself suggests that theatre is being applied by the facilitators to something or someone, for instance a marginalised or disadvantaged group that needs 'fixing' or 'curing'. This implies a paternalistic attitude on the part of the facilitator, who knows 'what is best' for the participants.

Another difficulty with the term 'applied theatre' that Thornton points out is that it is connected to different ideas and claims about what change this kind of theatre can or should bring about. This can become problematic when applied theatre is seen as

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<sup>22</sup> Tim Prentki and Sheila Preston, *The Applied Theatre Reader*, (London: Routledge, 2009), 9.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 9.

<sup>24</sup> Nicholson, 2.

<sup>25</sup> Sarah Thornton, "Catching up and getting about" [2013] News – 12-06-2013  
<http://collective-encounters.org.uk/2013/02/catching-up-and-getting-about/>

a remedy for all kinds of ills such as social inequality, exclusion or poor mental health. As Thornton sees it '[...] such great claims for the power of the arts can result in them [the arts] being used as a sticking plaster to fix all problems. [...] This can lead to co-optation by funding agencies who then 'commission transformation.'<sup>26</sup> According to Thornton, 'theatre in itself does not cause change, but if the conditions are right, theatre can provoke people to cause change.'<sup>27</sup>

Nicholson has misgivings of her own when it comes to the term 'applied.' She points out that it is often contrasted with 'pure,' implying 'that its production values and status in the academy are diminished.'<sup>28</sup> In this view, then, applied theatre becomes second-best to 'pure' theatre. A further consequence of this kind of thinking is that aesthetic aspects are not seen as an important part of the evaluation of the work.

I realise that using the concept of applied theatre within my research is not unproblematic. However, the term is widely used within the academic discourse and it enables me to investigate different examples of ethical dilemmas in relation to the evaluation of a variety of theatrical practices. Some of these dilemmas will apply to all of the different theatrical practices that fall under the broader umbrella term; others will be specific to a sub practice. So, while employing the term 'applied theatre' generally, I will do my utmost to be as specific as possible when referring to particular practices and how they relate to different ethical challenges concerning their evaluation.

### 3.2 Evaluation

Following *Collective Encounters*, I define evaluation as: 'assessing the success/failure, worth/value and quality of something; and learning lessons that inform and improve future practice.'<sup>29</sup> In the case of applied theatre, this 'something' could for instance be a project, a process, a product, or a specific collaboration. In order to be able to decide what can be considered as success/failure, worth/value or quality, it is necessary to define beforehand – together with the stakeholders involved - what is meant by these concepts.<sup>30</sup> Evaluation thus requires: '[...] the identification of relevant standards of

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<sup>26</sup> Sarah Thornton, "From the Personal to the Political. Theatre for Social Change in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century with particular reference to the work of *Collective Encounters*: a review of relevant literature." (Liverpool: *Collective Encounters*, 2012) 19. She borrows the term 'commissioning transformation' from Balfour, 350.

<sup>27</sup> Thornton, "From the personal to the political", 19.

<sup>28</sup> Nicholson, 6.

<sup>29</sup> *Collective Encounters*, "Evaluation Policy and Quality Framework," 1.

<sup>30</sup> *Collective Encounters* has done this for instance in their "Evaluation Policy and Quality Framework".

merit, worth, or value [...].<sup>31</sup> Although I agree that a useful evaluation will not only assess the merit of an applied theatre project – because it also uses the knowledge gained as a way to inform and improve practice – it is important to mention that not all evaluations are used in this way. This is due to the difference between formative and summative evaluation (see 3.2.1). In order to be able to evaluate the work, it is necessary to gather information before, during and/or after a project. (For the difference between evaluation and data collection see 3.2.3)

Some scholars useful alert us to inevitable political dimensions of evaluation. Thus, Michael Scriven points out that it is a '[...] social and politicized practice that nonetheless aspires to some position of impartiality or fairness [...].<sup>32</sup> And Helen Simons argues that evaluation is inevitably political because it influences future decisions about, for example, how to distribute available resources and opportunities:

Evaluation has consequences for who gets what, whose interests are served in an evaluation, who stands to gain or lose by the findings of an evaluation and so on. Evaluation cannot be value free, nor can it safely be left to the personal values of the evaluator nor confined to the interests of those who have the power to commission it.<sup>33</sup>

In other words, evaluation is never neutral; it is a social and politicized practice because it influences and is influenced by different stakeholders of applied theatre who often have conflicting interests and objectives. Herein lies the main source for the ethical dilemmas in evaluation, simply because decisions have to be made by stakeholders about why evaluation is needed, what should be evaluated and in what manner.

### 3.2.1 Summative and formative evaluation

Two kinds of evaluation can be distinguished, depending on the motivations of the stakeholders: summative evaluation and formative evaluation.<sup>34</sup> Summative evaluation can be defined as evaluation that is focussed on 'proving' the impact of an existing

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<sup>31</sup> Michael Scriven, *Evaluation Thesaurus*, 4e ed. (London: Sage Publications, 1991), 139, quoted in Ian F. Shaw, Jennifer C. Green and Melvin M. Mark. *The SAGE Handbook of Evaluation* (London: Sage Publications, 2006), 6.

<sup>32</sup> Shaw, Green and Mark, 5 -6.

<sup>33</sup> Helen Simons, "Ethics in Evaluation" in *The SAGE Handbook of Evaluation*, ed. Ian F. Shaw et al. (London: Sage Publications, 2006), 245 – 246.

<sup>34</sup> Other definitions of these concepts are possible than the ones I have borrowed here from The SAGE Handbook of Evaluation. According to Moriarty, for instance, formative evaluation is evaluation that takes place during a process so the evaluation can help to make 'constructive changes'. Summative evaluation, on the other hand, is evaluation done at the end of a practice and thus can only help to improve future practice. For further information see Moriarty, 8.

practice.<sup>35</sup> In the context of summative evaluation it is not always a requirement to achieve complete understanding on how objectives were realised; the result is what matters. Summative evaluation differs from data collection in that its aim is to establish, for instance, the success of the work. Formative evaluation, on the other hand, is evaluation that is focussed on 'improving' or 'refining' practice<sup>36</sup> by producing constructive recommendations and actions. For formative evaluation it is necessary to understand how certain results - artistic, social or otherwise - were or weren't achieved. Formative evaluation may be conducted during a project to improve the ongoing process, but can also be conducted at the end of a project to improve future practice. An evaluation can either be summative or formative, or a combination of the two. In their study 'Performing Impact' Thomson, Sanders and Bloomfield point out that in the context of community theatre, summative evaluation is most common.<sup>37</sup>

### 3.2.2 Formal and informal evaluation

Evaluation can be done in two different manners. Shaw, Green and Mark distinguish between 'everyday, informal evaluation' and 'formal, systematic evaluation.'<sup>38</sup> When people speak of evaluation in the context of applied theatre, they often mean the formal way. This refers to the more traditional evaluation methods that are often used in the context of accountability. However, informal evaluation is used simultaneously to improve practice by '[...] chats over a cup of coffee or the "buzz" surrounding a workshop or event.'<sup>39</sup> However, not all stakeholders regard this informal approach as valid evaluation. Moriarty even believes that informal evaluation is in danger of being undervalued and unrecognised because formal evaluation frameworks are dominating the sector.<sup>40</sup>

The benefit of formal evaluation in comparison to informal evaluation is that it '[...] can offer a way to go beyond the evidence available to any individual [...].'<sup>41</sup> Moreover, formal evaluation '[...] can, if not completely eliminate biases, at least help make it clearer or easier to detect what the sources of possible judgmental or evaluative

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<sup>35</sup> Yvonna S. Lincoln and Egon E. Guba, "Research, evaluation and policy analysis: heuristics for disciplined inquiry", *Policy Studies Review*, 5(3) 1986, 550, quoted in Shaw, Green and Mark, 6.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.

<sup>37</sup> Pat Thomson, Julie Sanders and Jem Bloomfield. "Performing impact: a scoping study of the ways in which community theatre understands and evaluates its work." March 2013. Accessed January 8, 2013. <http://performingimpactproject.wordpress.com/2013/03/31/our-final-report/>, 2.

<sup>38</sup> Shaw et al., 2.

<sup>39</sup> Gerri Moriarty, *Sharing practice: a guide to self-evaluation for artists, arts organisations and funders working in the context of social exclusion*. (Arts Council England: 2002), 32.

<sup>40</sup> Moriarty, 32.

<sup>41</sup> Shaw et al., 2.

biases are.<sup>42</sup> After all, when data are collected in a structured and transparent way, it is possible to systematically compare results of different projects where the same evaluation methodology is used. This does not mean that informal evaluations could not be compared or that informal evaluation is always unstructured. When structured, it is '[...] more likely to be taking place through the medium of the art form or through a process of arts criticism and review [...].'<sup>43</sup> Such informal evaluations can take place sub-consciously or consciously. Collective Encounters has explicitly incorporated informal assessment within their evaluation policy, stating that:

Every workshop session will end with brief creative feedback exercises (5-10 minutes) during which participants should be invited to share what they've enjoyed or learned; what they'd like more of; what they'd like to do differently; and what they haven't enjoyed.<sup>44</sup>

Things that come up during these exercises may or may not be written down<sup>45</sup>, but they always inform future practice. Thus any formal evaluation of the workshop sessions, like the Rickter Scale<sup>46</sup> that is used in the Transitions group, is always complemented with informal evaluation. However, it is important to stress that conclusions of informal evaluation processes, which are usually carried out by individuals, might be tainted by personal preferences or assumptions.<sup>47</sup> For instance, whether or not a workshop is seen as successful by participants or by the practitioner is influenced by their own perspective and expectations. Nevertheless, an important benefit of informal evaluation is that, in many cases, participants of applied theatre feel they can be more open and honest in these than in formal evaluations. As such it is a source for crucial knowledge that would not surface through formal evaluation.

There are different opinions about the relationship between the knowledge that formal and informal evaluation produce. Some state that formal evaluation is an improvement upon informal evaluations. Others see the two as different but complementary sources of knowledge. Others again claim that there can be an interactive relationship between the knowledge that the two produce, so '[...] that

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<sup>42</sup> Shaw et al, 2.

<sup>43</sup> Moriarty, 24.

<sup>44</sup> Collective Encounters, "Evaluation Policy and Quality Framework," 6 – 7.

<sup>45</sup> At the moment, Amanda Redvers Rowe, Creative Producer of Collective Encounters, is trying to partly formalise this informal evaluations by the development of forms to be filled in by facilitators at the end of a session. Facilitators should be able to fill in these forms within 10 minutes.

<sup>46</sup> The Rickter Scale is an evaluation methodology focussed on measuring soft outcomes. It was developed by Rick Hutchinson and Keith Stead. For more information see <http://www.rickterscale.com>.

<sup>47</sup> Shaw et al, 2.

informal and formal evaluations mutually challenge and question the other in a non-hierarchical way.<sup>48</sup> At Collective Encounters I have seen how formal and informal evaluations can be complementary. I have not yet witnessed an interactive (or dialectical) relationship between the two types of evaluation, although the possibilities sound intriguing.

### 3.2.3 What evaluation is not

One of the main difficulties with evaluation is that not everyone clearly distinguishes between evaluation and other concepts like data collection and advocacy. These activities, however, are hardly synonymous and therefore it is important to look at the differences. Data collection is at the basis of everything: it is necessary for both evaluation and advocacy. After all, evaluation requires data so that it is possible to make justified judgements about the success/failure, worth/value and quality of applied theatre (summative evaluation) and improve practice (formative evaluation). For both forms of evaluation the evaluator will critically analyse and reflect, before interpreting the data. Advocacy, on the other hand, uses a biased selection of only the positive information gathered through data collection in order to promote the work. Regardless of whether it is used for evaluation or advocacy, gathering data can be done in different ways. Charities Evaluation Services<sup>49</sup> states that it is important that this information is always '[...] collected in a planned, organised and routine way.'<sup>50</sup> But as we have seen, there are also more informal approaches. Additional methods of formal collection of information are monitoring, documentation and feedback.

Monitoring requires 'keeping a continuous record of appropriate data'<sup>51</sup>. Examples of data that can be collected during monitoring are: attendance figures, the number of workshops given etc. Monitoring is usually seen as part of the routine tasks of a company. Thus, Collective Encounters keeps detailed project record stats. This requires all facilitators to fill in quantitative data about their participants after each workshop, such as age categories and gender. Monitoring can also be used to check whether or not progress is being made towards specific goals like reaching your target group. However, to be able to use monitoring for this purpose, it is important to think about what kind of data are exactly required.

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<sup>48</sup> Shaw et al, 3.

<sup>49</sup> CES is an organisation that supports voluntary and community organisations in demonstrating their impact, improving their effectiveness and help share lessons learned. <http://www.ces-vol.org.uk/>.

<sup>50</sup> Charities Evaluation Services, *First steps in monitoring and evaluation* (Lithosphere Print Production, 2002), 4.

<sup>51</sup> Collective Encounters, "Evaluation Policy and Quality Framework," 1.

Unlike monitoring, documentation is less focussed on quantitative data in the form of numbers. It is a 'record kept of what happened during a specific project.'<sup>52</sup> The activities or events can be recorded, for example, by using photography and video. Keeping a personal journal - either by the artist or the participants - is also a form of documentation. Documentation is useful for evaluation because it can help 'jogging memories and offering visual evidence.'<sup>53</sup>

Another important information source for evaluation and advocacy can be feedback. Feedback is 'information gathered about someone's reaction to a process or event.'<sup>54</sup> Feedback may be gathered during a process or event by using documentation. However, it is also possible to collect feedback through interviews or questionnaires after a process or event.

Evaluation and advocacy are often confused. One reason for this is that in practice they often go hand-in-hand. The Arts Council of England, for instance, states that self-evaluation can be used 'to support future funding applications'<sup>55</sup> and 'reporting back to those with an interest in the project.'<sup>56</sup> I am not arguing that information gathered for evaluation cannot be used to support future applications or to report back to for funding agents. Advocacy, however, is not the same as evaluation. It is very important to distinguish an evaluation report that has been written to evaluate freely a project from an advocacy report written to secure funding or promote the work in order to 'garner support'.<sup>57</sup> After all, advocacy is not focussed on critically assessing the impact of applied theatre (summative evaluation) or on improving practice (formative evaluation). Advocacy 'tends to highlight strengths'<sup>58</sup> as its main aim is to convince with positive argumentation. This confusion of terms can pose a real threat to the quality of evaluation. And it can cause serious ethical dilemmas (see 5.2).

### 3.3 Ethics of applied theatre

The concept of 'ethics' can be defined in various ways. Some use it interchangeable with the word 'morality,' which Van Es defines as:

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<sup>52</sup> Felicity Woolf, *Partnerships for Learning: a guide to evaluation arts education projects* (Arts Council England, 2004), 7.

<sup>53</sup> Moriarty, 18.

<sup>54</sup> Collective Encounters, "Evaluation Policy and Quality Framework," 1.

<sup>55</sup> Arts Council England. Information sheet "Self-evaluation." Arts Council England, June 2011, 2.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

<sup>57</sup> Collective Encounters, "Evaluation Policy and Quality Framework," 1.

<sup>58</sup> Moriarty, 8.

[...] a spectrum of actions from face-to-face behaviour in small groups to political agreements on the arrangements of larger groups in society. The basic concern of morality is responsible behaviour, both for one's own life and for living with others. In [taking] that responsibility individuals refer to moral values and norms [...].<sup>59</sup>

Moral values are described by Van Es as 'collective ideas of the good' and moral norms as 'group expectations of behaviour'. Van Es subsequently distinguishes ethics from morality as follows: 'We speak of ethics when morality becomes the subject of study and theories of morality start to develop.'<sup>60</sup> As such, ethics of evaluating applied theatre are concerned with theories of what is responsible and 'right' or 'wrong' about intentions, decisions and actions relating to the evaluation processes of applied theatre. Ethics, however, do not predetermine what is the 'right' action to take in a particular situation. For that reason Edwards and Mauthner point out that ethics will not prevent conflict between principles or disagreement among different stakeholders. Developing an ethics of evaluating applied theatre will thus not eliminate ethical dilemmas in these kind of processes. But as Edwards and Mauthner explain, it can help in working through a dilemma: 'Ethics is about *how* to deal with conflict, disagreement and ambivalence rather than attempting to eliminate it.'<sup>61</sup> Thus, ethics can guide decision making when principles do conflict in a particular evaluation process.

### 3.3.1 Ethical dilemmas

Helen Simons describes ethical dilemmas as situations 'where we have to make a complex judgement, a choice between alternative courses of action, taking into account a myriad of factors – social, personal, political, cultural – that are pertinent in the particular context.'<sup>62</sup> When trying to resolve an ethical dilemma it 'is rarely a choice between right and wrong. This would be relatively easy to resolve. More often than not, it is a choice between mutually conflicting principles [...].'<sup>63</sup> This conflict can be intra- or interpersonal. Intrapersonal conflicts arise when one stakeholder is at a loss how to choose between conflicting principles which he or she regards as equally important. Interpersonal conflicts arise when different stakeholders embrace conflicting principles.

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<sup>59</sup> Robert van Es. "Negotiating Ethics: on Ethics in Negotiation and Negotiation in Ethics." Ph.D. dissertation, Nijenrode University, 1996, 7 -8.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid., 8.

<sup>61</sup> Rosalind Edwards and Melanie Mauthner, "Ethics and feminist research: theory and practice." In *Ethics in Qualitative Research*, 2e ed, edited by Tina Miller, Maxine Birch, Melanie Mauthner and Julie Jessop. (London: Sage Publications, 2012), 25. Emphasis in original.

<sup>62</sup> Simons, 243- 244.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., 244.

House calls the 'balancing' of such mutually conflicting principles 'the ultimate ethical act'.<sup>64</sup> In the context of evaluation of applied theatre an ethical dilemma can thus be described as a complex situation related to a particular evaluation process in which conflicting moral values or norms lead to the necessity of trading one principle for another. Choosing to follow one principle frequently leads to transgressing another.

### 3.3.2 Ethical models

'Ethical models', as Edwards and Mauthner name them, are also referred to with other labels. Simons, for instance, uses the term 'ethical theories' while discussing the same thing. In the context of this research I prefer to use the term 'ethical models' as it makes it possible to distinguish between the ethics (theories of morality) of evaluating applied theatre and general ethical models that might be used to guide decision making in case of an ethical dilemma. Helen Simons points out, though, that it may not always be obvious which ethical model is used.<sup>65</sup> Indeed it must be remembered that different models exist and can be used to 'justify decision-making in evaluation.'<sup>66</sup>

For this research three models were selected to help understand different viewpoints to particular ethical dilemmas that can occur while evaluating applied theatre. **The deontological model** was included in this research due to the fact that this type (in combinations with other models) is often used as a framework for ethical guidelines in social research.<sup>67</sup> **The care-based model** was selected because it critiques some of the notions of the deontological model. Additionally, **the negotiation-based model** was selected as I anticipated that it might provide a useful alternative. All three models emphasize different aspects of ethical choices and will, in some cases, legitimise different courses of action. I will use these models further on in this research to investigate if they can also help reflect on differences in perspectives among stakeholders and provide solutions for overcoming conflicting principles. I will begin with briefly describing the different models here. Additional information about the models will be given over the next three chapters.

**The deontological model**, also named intentional position or duty ethics, suggests that actions are moral based on their intention rather than on their consequences. Many variations of this model are used in thinking about ethical social

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<sup>64</sup> E. R. House, *Professional Evaluation: Social impact and political consequences* (Newbury Park, CA: Sage, 1993), 168, quoted in Simons.

<sup>65</sup> Simons, 252.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, 252.

<sup>67</sup> Edwards and Mauthner, 20.

research and evaluation, emphasising different kinds of right or duty.<sup>68</sup> I will be using the variation of the model as defined by Kvale in relation to qualitative research interviewing.<sup>69</sup> The key criteria for this model to decide whether behaviour is ethical or not, is a set of universal principles that are deemed to be applicable under all circumstances. In relation to evaluation these standards are often specified as ethical rules that are written down in ethical guidelines<sup>70</sup> by particular evaluation societies such as the Joint Committee on Standards for Educational Evaluation.<sup>71</sup> In relation to the evaluation of applied theatre, there is no such society. However, several relevant guidelines are available, such as Gerri Moriarty's *Sharing practice* and Felicity Woolf's *Partnerships for Learning*. These guidelines mention ethical principles, such as 'honesty' and 'openness', and ethical rules such as the necessity to obtain informed consent of participants and sharing results among direct and indirect stakeholders. The model suggests that when there is a need to choose between two mutually conflicting principles there is always a highest normative principle as a way out of the dilemma. For instance, informed consent might be a higher principle than sharing results. Thus, if an evaluator has relevant information he would like to share with other applied theatre organisations, but the provider of that information has not given his informed consent to do so, the deontological model would prescribe that the evaluator either tries to obtain informed consent or does not share the information. Kvale is critical of the model, however, because '[...] carried to its extreme, the intentional position can become a moral absolutism with intentions of living up to absolute principles of right action, regardless of the human consequences of an act,'<sup>72</sup> (for a concrete example see 6.2, page 53). Furthermore, one could question the possibility of recognizing and formulating universal standards for ethically evaluating applied theatre. Who will determine what these standards are and based on what grounds? Academics, the facilitators, the sponsors? What would guarantee that these standards are not greatly influenced by the social-political position of those that determine them?

The second model is **the care-based model**, which was developed by feminist writers. Though not specifically developed for social research, it is used within that context. The model emphasises 'nurturant relationships', 'care' and 'responsibility' as a

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<sup>68</sup> For an overview see Van Es, 15 – 28.

<sup>69</sup> Steinar Kvale. *Interviewing: an Introduction to Qualitative Research Interviewing* (London: Sage Publications, 1996), 109- 123.

<sup>70</sup> Kvale, 121.

<sup>71</sup> Simons, 246 – 247.

<sup>72</sup> Kvale, 121.

way to respond ethically in particular situations.<sup>73</sup> Sevenhuijsen argues that ‘the central question in the ethics of care: how to deal with dependency and responsibility, differs radically from that of rights ethics: what are the highest normative principles and rights in situations of moral conflict?’<sup>74</sup> Instead of an overriding highest principle, the care-based model argues that there is a ‘range’ of ethical choices in case of conflict. These choices are dependent on context of time and place, because ethical dilemmas ‘[...] are rooted in specific relationships that involve emotions, and which require nurturance and care [...]’.<sup>75</sup> Key criteria for deciding whether certain behaviour of stakeholders is ethical or not, are the care and responsibility they show for themselves as well as for others and the carefulness of judgement ‘based on practical knowledge and attention to detail in the context of time and place.’<sup>76</sup> For instance, in a situation where there is no informed consent to share information, this model urges the evaluator to explore which course of action is most responsible and least damaging to the connections between the stakeholders. Kittay points out some dangers of this model, however, like a ‘sacrifice or loss of self, failure to recognise autonomy of other and over-identification with other.’<sup>77</sup>

Thirdly, **the negotiation-based model**, which is derived from Robert van Es’ Ph.D. dissertation in economic science. He states that ‘the most important notions of negotiation in ethics are: the promoting of mixed interests, the reaching of compromise, the differences of power between agents and the actual concept of negotiation.’<sup>78</sup> Negotiating can be defined as ‘a verbal interaction between two and more agents to reach an agreement’<sup>79</sup> during which different agents discuss their own interests and discover the interests of others. Van Es points out that ‘every moral agent has a multitude of interests: they vary in importance and develop within time, due to changes the agent goes through and the changes in his environment.’<sup>80</sup> Agreement between different moral agents can be reached in different ways, but Van Es points out that there are several requirements for the negotiation to be able to justify moral decisions. The most important one is ‘reciprocity’. Van Es perceives trust as a reciprocal relationship and respect as an aspect of reciprocity. When there is an ethical dilemma this model

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<sup>73</sup> Edwards and Mauthner, 19 – 25.

<sup>74</sup> Selma Sevenhuijsen *Citizenship and the Ethics of Care: Feminist Considerations on Justice, Morality and Politics*. (London: Routledge, 1998), 107, quoted in Edwards and Mauthner, 25.

<sup>75</sup> Edwards and Mauthner, 19.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, 25.

<sup>77</sup> Eva Feder Kittay ‘Ethics of care workshop: tools and methods in bioethics’ EURESCO Biomedicine Within the Limits of Human Existence Conference, Davos, Switzerland, 8-13 September 2001, quoted in Edwards and Mauthner, 21.

<sup>78</sup> Van Es, 244.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, 185.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, 87.

suggests that a negotiation characterised by reciprocity, meaning that there is trust and respect between stakeholders, will enable them to find a suitable course of action. Thus, ethical action is a ‘temporary agreement of negotiating agents who have an interest in the moral question at hand [...] In most cases the temporary agreement will be a compromise.’<sup>81</sup>

When comparing the three models described above, it becomes clear that the deontological model is the only one that ‘judges an action independently of its consequences’<sup>82</sup> through a set of rather absolute normative principles. In contrast, neither the negotiation-based nor the care-based model try to ‘formulate moral principles that stand above power and context.’<sup>83</sup> Instead, they emphasise contextual reasoning, the dialogical nature of ethical practice, the relations between different stakeholders and the differences in power. The care-based model furthermore stresses that ethical action requires a caring attitude of stakeholders, taking responsibility not only for themselves but also for others and the course of action they choose in case of an ethical dilemma. Of the three types, the negotiation-based model might be the most useful for this research, because it further acknowledges that deciding on ethical evaluation is a process with both a social and a temporal dimension. After all, evaluation is a process that is subject to time pressure between stakeholders with different interests. Unlike the care-based model, the negotiation-based model also theorizes how stakeholders can come to a compromise in case of an ethical dilemma that is caused by conflicting interpersonal principles.

### 3.4 Instrumental and intrinsic value

Stakeholders of applied theatre may have different motivations for investing either time or money in applied theatre based on what they believe to be the value of a particular initiative. In attributing value to the arts often a distinction is made between the intrinsic value and the instrumental value. According to Belfiore and Bennett the tensions between the two ‘[...] have been played out particularly strongly in Britain’<sup>84</sup> in debates surrounding the value of the arts and the legitimacy of funding. The intrinsic value refers to the worth of the arts in its own right. The instrumental value of the arts is related to the effects the arts can create when it is used as an instrument, a means to

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<sup>81</sup> Van Es, 272.

<sup>82</sup> Kvale, 121.

<sup>83</sup> Edwards and Mauthner, 25.

<sup>84</sup> Eleonora Belfiore and Oliver Bennett, “The social impacts of the arts,” 7. For an overview of this debate see E. Belfiore and E. Bennett, “The social impacts of the arts,” 7 – 10.

obtain benefits related to other agendas: health, education, social cohesion, economy, reduction of crime, etcetera. Some argue against valuing the arts in instrumental terms, stating that the arts are not intended to achieve things that might as well be accomplished through other activities. David Edgar, however, points out that: 'increasingly, such benefits are presented not as happy byproducts of artistic activity (and therefore able to be provided by other agencies more cost-effectively) but as part of its very essence.'<sup>85</sup> The way he puts it, instrumental and intrinsic value of the arts are not separate but interconnected.

Like Edgar, James Thompson detects a false dichotomy between art projects with a supposed intrinsic value and those instrumental ones which are considered 'socially connected, applied or functional'. He believes that 'there is no absolute division or clear binary.'<sup>86</sup> Be that as it may, I would argue that debates surrounding the 'instrumentalisation' surface more in the applied theatre sector than in the arts in general. The obvious reason for this is that applied theatre takes place outside the conventional theatre, in close collaboration with participants and social partners, and often is perceived to be a 'transformative agent'.<sup>87</sup>

Among facilitators there is an anxiety about instrumentalisation. There are several different reasons for this. The first one may be that seeing applied theatre as an 'adjunct to social policy' will cause, as Balfour argues, 'the aesthetic engagement being eroded in the service of pragmatism.'<sup>88</sup> Referring to his own experiences in prison theatre, Balfour states that funding was not available to 'agenda-less creative work.'<sup>89</sup> The work was only being valued for its possible instrumental benefits and not for its intrinsic benefits. And while Thompson thinks it is 'positive' to look at the instrumental benefits of applied theatre, he also fears that an exclusive focus on 'function' may lead to 'losing sight of the art practice' itself when it means that 'we are becoming target, not process orientated.'<sup>90</sup> He believes, therefore, that social objectives should not 'dictate' the artistic process. Instrumentalism is thus seen as limiting, endangering and possibly even damaging the artistic process itself.

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<sup>85</sup> David Edgar, "Why should we fund the Arts?" *The Guardian*, January 5, 2012, accessed January 11, 2014, <http://www.theguardian.com/culture/2012/jan/05/david-edgar-why-fund-the-arts>

<sup>86</sup> James Thompson, 'It Don't Mean a Thing if it ain't got that Swing: some questions on participatory theatre, evaluation and impact.' *Research in Drama Education* 5 (2000) 102.

<sup>87</sup> Taylor, 1 – 27. See Nicholson 10-13, for her argument against the use of the notion of 'transformation' and in favour of the notion of 'transportation' to understand the working of applied theatre.

<sup>88</sup> Michael Balfour, "The Politics of Intention: looking for a Theatre of little Changes." *Research in Drama Education* 14 (2009): 350.

<sup>89</sup> Balfour, 350.

<sup>90</sup> Thompson, 'It Don't Mean a Thing if it ain't got that Swing', 101.

Another problem of seeing applied theatre as a remedy for all kind of social, physical or mental ailments, is that it strengthens the belief that it is possible to 'commission transformation.'<sup>91</sup> In response to this Helen Nicholson states that she recognises 'the power' of theatre-making, but feels uncomfortable to use the term 'transformation' and make 'such grand claims for the effects and effectiveness of [her] own work as a practitioner.' Moreover, she points out that the idea of transformation '[...] raises bigger political questions. If applied drama is socially transformative, is it explicit what kind of society is envisioned? If the motive is individual or personal transformation, is this something that is done *to* the participants, *with* them or *by* them? Whose values and interests does the transformation serve?'<sup>92</sup> Questions like these are not always clearly addressed in the context of applied theatre projects that are supposed to have instrumental value. Aside from the difficulties mentioned above, the instrumentalisation of applied theatre has severe consequences for evaluation processes (see 5.1).

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<sup>91</sup> Balfour, 350.

<sup>92</sup> Nicholson, 12. Emphasis in original.

## 4 Involving participants

In this chapter I will investigate some of the ethical difficulties in involving participants in evaluation. Shannon Jackson argues that a lot of communities ‘[...] find themselves the object and not always the subject of community projects.’<sup>93</sup> Based on the evaluation models I studied and the evaluations I witnessed, I am inclined to say that, more often than not, this is equally true for most formal types of evaluation. It is more common that participants are included in reflecting on the quality of the work, conversations about how things could be improved and ‘where to go next’ within informal evaluation processes. In formal evaluations, however, participants may or may not be asked to provide data (either quantitative or qualitative) about themselves and their experiences in a particular project, but they are rarely included in reflecting on data they helped supply or asked what evaluation criteria should be applied. This means that other stakeholders than the immediate participants formulate and decide what makes an applied theatre project successful and valuable. This is worrying because, as Felicity Woolf points out, participants of applied theatre - who are often members of disadvantaged, marginalised or vulnerable groups - can ‘[...] easily feel powerless in the context of evaluation or research.’<sup>94</sup> For that same reason, Matarasso believes that art evaluation systems should be ‘inclusive, honest, rigorous and cautious’.<sup>95</sup> He argues, moreover, that ‘[...] our democratic principles should give us all an equal voice in debates about the arts, a voice which should be heeded because of the force of our arguments rather than the status we may or may not have.’<sup>96</sup>

What does it mean to give an equal voice to all stakeholders when we are evaluating applied theatre? What is perceived to be an inclusive practice? Who gets to decide? Among stakeholder there are different opinions about these questions. This is firstly caused by different opinions about the desired degree of involvement. Complicating factors are the power positions of stakeholders, relations of dependency and the notion of the moral agent. I will investigate these issues below.

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<sup>93</sup> Shannon Jackson. *Social Works. Performing Arts, Supporting Publics*. (New York: Routledge, 2011), 227.

<sup>94</sup> Woolf, 42.

<sup>95</sup> Matarasso, “The Weight of Poetry,” 8.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*, “The Weight of Poetry,” 6 – 7.

## 4.1 Degree of involvement

At the outset, it is necessary to point out that the involvement of participants in the evaluation process may or may not be perceived as important or relevant by all applied theatre practitioners and projects. Whether it is or not depends on what kind of participation is strived for. In the 'Quality framework for HELIX ARTS Participatory Practice', Toby Lowe argues that there is a spectrum of participation, a sliding scale on which participatory art can be placed.<sup>97</sup> On the left side of the spectrum, which Lowe calls the 'Kester-end'<sup>98</sup>, participation is characterised by its 'dialogical' nature. Participants take part in, and help to shape 'a process of creative enquiry'<sup>99</sup> while there is an 'on-going negotiation about the content and direction of the process'<sup>100</sup> between the participants and the artist, thus causing the work to be 'co-authored'. On the right side of the spectrum, which Lowe calls the 'Bishop-end'<sup>101</sup>, participation is characterised by the role of participants as being the 'material for an artist's work'<sup>102</sup> and the authorship of the work is in the hands of the artists. These differences will influence how participants are involved in discussing, shaping and reflecting on their experiences. Thornton states:

My personal feeling is that in discussing the quality of participatory arts practice the quality and depth of participation should be central, and this raises questions (political, ethical and practical) about the process of and beyond the arts practice: to what extent are participants not only involved creatively, but also involved in planning and shaping projects?<sup>103</sup>

A project's position on the spectrum of participation will also influence the role participants could or should have within the evaluation process. I would not argue that one position on the spectrum is more ethical than another, but I do believe that the level of participation that is strived for in the work in general should be reflected in the level of participation in evaluation. As such, projects and organisations located on the Kester-end of the participation spectrum, like Collective Encounters, are particularly

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<sup>97</sup> Toby Lowe, "A Quality Framework for Helix Arts Participatory Practice", Newcastle: Helix Arts, July 2012, 3 – 5.

<sup>98</sup> Lowe based this name on the work of Grant Kester. See, for instance, Grant H. Kester, *Conversation Pieces: Community + Communication in Modern Art*, University of California Press, 2004.

<sup>99</sup> Lowe, 4.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

<sup>101</sup> Lowe based this name on the work of Claire Bishop. See, for instance, Claire Bishop, "The Social Turn: Collaboration and Its Discontents," *Artforum*, February 2006.

<sup>102</sup> Lowe, 4.

<sup>103</sup> Thornton, "Response to Helix's Quality Framework," August 2012, 1.

concerned with how they can involve their participants within evaluation processes. In general, it appears to be a requirement of ethical evaluation that all stakeholders can contribute their views. The Arts Council England, for instance, argues for 'equal opportunities' in evaluation:

Evaluation should give everyone involved in an arts project the opportunity to contribute their views about it. No one should be excluded from this process because of their race, gender, sexual orientation, social background or disability. Arts Council England strongly advocates creative approaches to evaluation which can allow potentially excluded groups, including those with limited communication skills, to contribute their views.<sup>104</sup>

Involving participants of applied theatre is thus an important principle for ethical evaluation, according to Arts Council England. What remains unclear, however, is what 'opportunities' should be 'equal' in the context of evaluation. The kind of participation that the Arts Council England encourages, seems to me to be more concerned with enabling participants to have their own voices heard than with the ability of participants to influence and shape the evaluation process itself.

Some argue that the degree of involvement of participants should be higher, going well beyond merely expressing views. Prendergast and Saxton claim, for example, that participants should not just be treated as 'resources for feedback but as designers of that feedback.'<sup>105</sup> They believe it would give participants a sense of 'ownership.' In a similar vein, Matarasso argues that 'unless the people who are supposed to benefit from an activity can participate in defining the criteria of its success, [...] control remains firmly with the professional organisations and any claim of empowerment must be open to question.'<sup>106</sup> He acknowledges that while it may be difficult to open up a 'professional discourse to non-professionals', this challenge 'lies at the heart' of participatory arts practice itself.<sup>107</sup> In relation to this, several artists stress the option participants have not to take part in evaluation. Taylor, for example, argues that 'applied theatre participants should have the right to say no to a proposed inquiry [...].'<sup>108</sup> And Redvers Rowe stresses

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<sup>104</sup> Woolf, 5.

<sup>105</sup> Monica Prendergast, and Juliana Saxton. Ed. *Applied Theatre*. (Bristol: Intellect, 2009), 197.

<sup>106</sup> Matarasso, "Creative Progression," 8.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid., "Creative Progression", 11.

<sup>108</sup> Philip Taylor, *Applied theatre*, (Portsmouth: Heinemann, 2003), 129.

the importance of 'free choice' in the context of evaluation, stating that 'We [facilitators of Collective Encounters] never make anybody do anything.'<sup>109</sup>

## 4.2 Power positions and relations of dependency

Providing the opportunity for all the stakeholders of a project to contribute their views or be included in shaping the evaluation process is not as easy as it sounds. Nicholson reminds us: 'it is easy for trust to become dependency, for generosity to be interpreted as patronage, for interest in others to be experienced as the gaze of surveillance.'<sup>110</sup> In other words: while other stakeholders might provide participants the 'opportunity' to contribute to evaluation by inviting them to express their opinions or even help shape the evaluation process, there may be underlying issues that prevent participants from - more than superficially - doing so. A particular participant might, for instance, not feel comfortable to express his or her opinion openly because other participants or facilitators do not share this view. Collective Encounters thinks, therefore, that it is important to find creative ways around this problem. (For a concrete example of how they do this, see case study 'Third Age and Transition group' in paragraph 6.3).

In the context of the ethics of applied theatre practice itself, it is widely advised<sup>111</sup> that facilitators openly acknowledge their power positions and reveal relations of dependency between them and other stakeholders, particularly participants. Prendergast and Saxton, for instance, argue that even though it might not be a facilitator's or researcher's intention to 'dominate' in any way, they still need to be 'ever aware' of their own 'status positions' as 'awareness through continuous reflection is one way to keep our work, ourselves and our fellow-participants in ethical balance.'<sup>112</sup> It is equally important to be aware of relations of dependency between stakeholders and differences in power position in the context of evaluation, whether these are intentional or not. It is obvious these things may affect the behaviour of stakeholders and can hinder the involvement of participants in the evaluation process.

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<sup>109</sup> Amanda Redvers Rowe, Skype interview with author, 28th of October 2013.

<sup>110</sup> Nicholson, 160.

<sup>111</sup> See, for instance, Nicholson 155-167, Thompson, *Performance Affects*, 160 – 177 and Prendergast and Saxton, 193-195.

<sup>112</sup> Prendergast and Saxton, 194.

### 4.3 Moral agent

Depending on the kind of participants, there can be particular difficulties with involving them in the evaluation process. To illustrate this I will look at a specific situation that Collective Encounters was confronted with in their work.

#### ***Case: Involving participants with dementia in evaluation***

As part of the Live and Learn programme Collective Encounters works with people with dementia. Due to their loss of short-term memory it is difficult to have participants with dementia evaluate workshop sessions at the end of a session by using formal evaluation. Creative producer Amanda Redvers Rowe discovered that asking people how they liked an exercise at the end of a session resulted in mainly positive responses<sup>113</sup>:

People with dementia rarely say which things they did not like. However, you know from the reading of the exercises that there were things they did not like [...] If you ask at the end of a session 'Did you all like that?', everyone will go 'Yes, yes.' I reminded a participant: 'But you didn't enjoy that exercise.' The participant responded: 'Didn't I? No, I did.' The memory of it had gone completely. [...] I also think that when you are so dependent, you get to a point that you feel a bit intimidated, to actually criticise in any way. I think that they feel that they have to be nice all the time to the people that are giving them things.<sup>114</sup>

As you will not always get an honest reply to direct questions Redvers Rowe believes it is important to observe people's responses and make notes during a session. Collective Encounters is currently exploring how they can further improve their evaluations of workshop sessions with people with dementia.

What makes the involvement of participants with dementia in the evaluation process an ethical dilemma - and not simply a practical one - is the conflict between moral values that strive for an inclusive, collaborative and democratic evaluation process and the limited capacities of the participants. An important notion that is relevant in the context of this example, is the moral agent. The moral agent in applied theatre can be one single individual or a group of stakeholders. According to Van Es it is only possible to speak of a moral agent 'when this reflexive unity of action has freedom and rationality to its disposal'.<sup>115</sup> Following this argument, not all participants of applied theatre can be regarded as fully free and rational moral agents. Excluded might be children, or

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<sup>113</sup> The problem of participants that are hesitant to give honest, negative feedback, is a problem that is not just confined to participants with dementia. This problem can occur with other participant groups as well.

<sup>114</sup> Amanda Redvers Rowe, Skype interview with author, 28th of October 2013.

<sup>115</sup> Van Es, 9.

participants with dementia or some sort of trauma, because they are either not self-conscious, aware of their personal interests, have insufficient freedom of choice, or cannot oversee the consequences of a particular choice.<sup>116</sup>

Whether or not stakeholders are seen as a moral agent capable of articulating their own views freely and rationally, may influence how they are treated by other stakeholders during the artistic process and which role they can play within the evaluation process. In cases where participants are not perceived as moral agents, they may be denied an active role in decisions about how to conduct evaluation. Perhaps some stakeholders who consider themselves as moral agents might even think it is best if they speak on behalf of those who are not considered moral agents. This raises further ethical questions concerning power and representation. Is it ethical to let a participant's opinion be represented in an evaluation by other stakeholders? Is it ethical to interpret somebody's attitude to a project based on observation? There can be a fine line between speaking on somebody's behalf or speaking for somebody. So, how might ethical models help to ensure that multiple and conflicting voices are heard, when some of the speakers are unable (or denied the right) to articulate themselves? I will reflect on this issue in the next paragraph.

#### **4.4 Reflections on inclusive practice**

The deontological model explains most of the perspectives of stakeholders as follows: stakeholders deem evaluation ethical when it meets with the moral principles that practice is 'inclusive' and 'democratic' and provides 'equal opportunities' for all the stakeholders involved. However, I believe that this model is less helpful for resolving ethical dilemmas related to participant involvement in evaluation for three reasons. Firstly, moral principles are not always clearly specified. For instance, it frequently remains unclear what opportunities should be equal and what is meant with this. There are exceptions to this. With regards to the moral principle of 'inclusion', Matarasso specifies that to him it means participants should not only be able to express their views in an evaluation, but should also be included in deciding on its form and criteria. However, even when ethical principles are made specific in this way, they may not be supported by all stakeholders. A final difficulty is that, in order for the deontological model to be of use in concrete situations, the hierarchy of moral principles has to be made clear. For example, determining that 'inclusive' evaluation gets priority over other

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<sup>116</sup> Van Es, 9.

moral principles like 'cautious' evaluation. I believe that deciding on such a hierarchy of principles is a dilemma in its own right.

The care-based model may be more helpful than the deontological model when it comes to guiding decision making in relation to ethical dilemmas of participant involvement. This model emphasises the responsibility of stakeholders – especially those in power - to care for one another. However, I find this concept on its own not helpful in the case of disagreement among stakeholders, especially with regards to differences in power. To the question whether or not it would be ethical for stakeholders to represent other stakeholders in an evaluation, the model could actually provide two different answers. Scholars like Denzin and Benhabib argue that via 'symmetrical reciprocity' it is indeed possible to 'put oneself in someone else's shoes'.<sup>117</sup> But I am more inclined to agree with Young, who points out that relations between stakeholders of applied theatre are asymmetrical due to the fact that all individuals have their own particular histories and occupy a particular social position. In terms of representation I am therefore inclined to go along with Young, who pleads for 'asymmetrical reciprocity' instead of 'symmetrical reciprocity.'<sup>118</sup> Asymmetrical reciprocity means:

accepting that there are aspects of another person's position that we do not understand, yet are open to asking about and listening to. Asymmetrical reciprocity involves dialogue that enables each subject to understand each other across differences without reversing perspectives or identifying with each other. In other words, rather than ignoring or blurring power positions , ethical practice needs to pay attention to them.<sup>119</sup>

In asymmetrical reciprocity it becomes necessary to have all stakeholders contribute their own views in evaluation processes because these views could never be fully represented by others. Inclusive ethical evaluation thus requires a dialogue or other types of interaction between different stakeholders. I would further argue that within this asymmetrical reciprocal interaction attention should be given to opinions about a particular project as well as about relevant standards of value and worth. However, it remains unclear how asymmetrical reciprocity can be used in cases where stakeholders are unable to express their own views or when they are not moral agents.

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<sup>117</sup> Edwards and Mauthner, 22 – 25.

<sup>118</sup> Ibid., 23.

<sup>119</sup> Ibid., 24.

The negotiation-based model provides a useful guideline in cases where participants are not moral agents. Van Es argues that decision making in case of ethical dilemmas requires that all agents taking part in the verbal interaction are moral agents. If they are not, they should be represented by moral advocates to 'promote their interests and to balance their power relationships'<sup>120</sup>. These moral advocates cannot be other stakeholders in the project. Additionally, assistance of a 'third party' who has no interests in the dilemma at hand, might be required in the case that there are obvious differences in knowledge and experience between moral agents involved in a negotiation. This would prevent stakeholders to represent other, more vulnerable or incapable stakeholders in discussions or in decision making related to evaluation and thereby abuse their power. In cases where all stakeholders are perceived as moral agents and are considered roughly equal, the presence of a third party can still be of value as that person could provide an '[...] observer's perspective in the form of impressions, mirroring and feedback.'<sup>121</sup> However, a third party should only interfere as a mediator in 'the process and the content of the negotiations'<sup>122</sup> when all the stakeholders approve of this role.

In this chapter I looked at some of the ethical dilemmas in involving participants in decision making regarding evaluation. In the next chapter, I will look mostly at professional stakeholders like funding agents, facilitators and social partners, since their objectives and values are often leading. Disagreement between these professional stakeholders can lead to several intractable ethical dilemmas.

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<sup>120</sup> Van Es, 267.

<sup>121</sup> Ibid., 271.

<sup>122</sup> Ibid., 271.

## 5 Conflicting objectives and values

Any evaluation is always limited by the choices that are made about what to evaluate and how to evaluate. Whatever the focus and whatever the chosen methodology, there are always some aspects of a project or programme missing in an evaluation. Thus, the choices that stakeholders make in relation to evaluation are key. It seems obvious that many of the dilemmas that surface in evaluating applied theatre are the result of conflicting interests, objectives or values between professional stakeholders. It can be difficult to find a good balance. I will first explore the kind of choices that need to be made when evaluating and the aspects that problematize these choices, before looking at an ethical dilemma, which is caused by different needs of stakeholders, with the help of the three models. Next I will investigate two of the most common causes of interpersonal conflict, namely instrumentalism and advocacy.

One of the first things that stakeholders have to decide on is the focus of their evaluation. In other words, they have to decide what is going to be evaluated. Moriarty points out that there are three different 'factors' of applied theatre that can be evaluated, the effectiveness, the impact, and the quality.<sup>123</sup> Evaluation can focus on one or more of these factors, however, it is usually restricted to one particular aspect of an applied theatre project or programme. Particular focuses of an evaluation could be the effectiveness of the collaboration, the impact of a project on the level of confidence in the participants, or the quality of a workshop's group dynamics or facilitation. In relation to the factor impact Etherton and Prentki, argue that there are many different forms possible, among which are '[...] the material, the physiological, the psychological, the social and the cultural.'<sup>124</sup> Because of limited resources it is impossible to evaluate a project on an endless number of aspects on all three factors, which becomes problematic when stakeholders do not agree on what should be evaluated.

The choice to look at a particular aspect and thus not to look at another is influenced by the stakeholders' motivations for becoming involved in a project in the first place. There are many different reasons for evaluating applied theatre projects. The most common reasons include measuring, proving and understanding impact, as well as improving and refining practice and ensuring accountability for the (public) money that

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<sup>123</sup> Moriarty, 30.

<sup>124</sup> Michael Etherton and Tim Prentki, "Drama for change? Prove it! Impact assessment in applied theatre," *Research in Drama Education: The Journal of Applied theatre and Performance* 11 (2006): 140.

was invested. The most frequently cited reasons why evaluation does **not** happen include lack of resources (time, money or trained evaluators), the belief that the evaluation is not worth the hard work it requires, or the belief that evaluation methodologies are inadequate. Hence, it is important to know the main motivation for a particular evaluation, as this not only influences the subject of evaluation, but also the manner of evaluation. Taylor also points out that '[...] knowing who it is for is central to how to conduct the evaluation.'<sup>125</sup> Indeed, stakeholder's motivations for or against particular types of evaluation can vary immensely. A further complication is that several kinds of evaluation can be done simultaneously, for example, formal and informal evaluation. Also, different professional stakeholders might conduct their own separate evaluations if they have different aims or feel that they can be more critical and honest in an internal evaluation.

An essential decision that needs to be made for any evaluation is what methodology of data collection to use, and how to reflect on this data. Most stakeholders acknowledge that, in the context of evaluation, there is not a 'one size fits all' methodology. Depending on the needs and priorities in a particular situation, different methodologies might be more suitable than others. However, about certain methodologies there is much debate about what is 'right' or 'wrong', and there is also debate about what would make for the most ethical evaluation methodology.

It is common that evaluation methodologies are adapted from the sector in which projects take place, such as health care. Etherton and Prentki, however, argue that 'art workers are notoriously suspicious (often with good reason) of the mechanisms of monitoring and evaluation imported from the social sciences, while being reluctant to develop their own.'<sup>126</sup> This also applies to methodologies that are imported from other areas, such as economics. Arts organisations and some academics are sceptical about these methods for several reasons, but most often because of the expected negative influence of these methods on the creative dimensions of applied theatre.<sup>127</sup> Moreover, there is the concern that these methodologies are not flexible enough (see 6.3). Arts organisations and artists are also worried about the tendency of some funders to insist

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<sup>125</sup> Taylor, 104.

<sup>126</sup> Matthew Jennings and Andrea Baldwin, "'Filling out the Forms was a Nightmare': Project Evaluation and the Reflective Practitioner in Community Theatre in Contemporary Northern Ireland." *Music and Arts in Action* 2.2 (2010), 74.

<sup>127</sup> *Ibid.*, 72.

on methodologies that prioritise ‘quantitative, statistical data’.<sup>128</sup> Thomson, Sanders and Bloomfield explain that,

[Funders] prefer what we might characterise as pseudo-scientific approaches to evaluation – numbers, graphs and pre and post tests are seen as reliable and valid, even though they are equally as subject to definition and manipulation as interviews and other kinds of documentation. We aren’t against numbers of course, but they can be used wisely – or not. They aren’t automatically better than words or pictures.<sup>129</sup>

It must be said, however, that not all funders place such rigid demands on evaluation. And it is also true that quantitative data make it easier to compare the effectiveness and impact of different projects. Qualitative methodologies, on the other hand, have the advantage of providing personalised in-depth information and nuance.<sup>130</sup>

Several academics and evaluators criticise currently used methodologies for their lack of base-level measuring. As Österlind points out, it is necessary to know what the starting point is to be able to make relevant statements about change.<sup>131</sup> Next to that, there is doubt about the legitimacy of statements on change if they are made during or directly after a process. A methodology that would assess change a considerable time after a project has ended might prevent that responses are tainted by, for example, the spontaneity or enthusiasm of the moment. However, as Matarasso points out, ‘longitudinal analysis and control groups’ might work within a major research project but, due to limited resources, is hardly realistic for evaluation processes in applied theatre.<sup>132</sup>

There are also alternative ideas on what constitutes a more suitable evaluation methodology than the ones that are currently being used. Belfiore and Bennett, for instance, argue that the current ‘toolkit approach’ is unhelpful in assessing the arts as it involves, ‘excessive simplifications, and its popularity is linked to its perceived advocacy potential rather than to any demonstrable contribution it may make to a genuine understanding of the nature and potential effects of artistic engagement.’<sup>133</sup> Instead, Belfiore and Bennett argue in favour of developing a more ‘humanities-based approach’

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<sup>128</sup> Jennings and Baldwin, 80.

<sup>129</sup> Thomson, Sanders and Bloomfield, August 9, 2012, “Problems with current evaluation models,” *Performing Impact Blog*. Accessed January 14, 2014. <http://performingimpactproject.wordpress.com/2012/08/09/problems-with-current-evaluation-models/>.

<sup>130</sup> For more information see, for instance, Woolf, 22.

<sup>131</sup> Eva Österlind, “Evaluation of Theatre for Social Change: What counts and what is being counted?” *Applied Theatre Research* 1 (2013): 101.

<sup>132</sup> Matarasso, “Smoke and mirrors”, 6.

<sup>133</sup> Belfiore and Bennett. “Beyond the ‘Toolkit Approach’,” 121.

instead of a 'one-size-fits-all model' that is too reliant 'on empirical methodologies borrowed from the social sciences'.<sup>134</sup> Holden, on the other hand, prefers to stick to existing methodologies but admits that these should be refined and applied properly. He also warns that knowledge gathered about outcomes in art processes cannot result in 'prescriptive methodologies' because, as he states, 'crude transpositions of "learning points" and "best practice" from one context to another often fail.'<sup>135</sup> In the case of applied theatre this is all the more important because context is a 'key determinant'.<sup>136</sup>

The terms and terminologies used in institutions or a particular social or cultural sector also play a crucial role in evaluation. Some artists and academics claim, however, that the sort of languages that are used within evaluation of applied theatre, with their origins in economics or the social sciences, are too focussed on 'targets', 'outcomes' and 'effectiveness'. In regard to the arts in general, Holden, for instance, argues that 'even where targets refer to cultural activities, they are often expressed in terms of efficiency, cost-per-user and audience diversity, rather than discussed in terms of cultural achievement.'<sup>137</sup> According to Holden, this 'language of outcomes' is problematic, as it can lead to the disregard of 'the essence of culture'.<sup>138</sup> Moreover, he points out that art organisations and artists often do not consider 'creating' particular 'outcomes' as their core business which makes it difficult for them to use the 'language of outcomes' in the evaluation of their own work.<sup>139</sup>

The choice to use languages from the partner sector nonetheless is partly a result of the languages that are used or required by funders or social partners. Therefore, Prendergast and Saxton, rather than dismissing these languages, wonder how they could perhaps be adapted to fit the priorities of artists, 'how can the languages of others assist us [artists] to make our case and how can we negotiate these languages so that everyone is clear about the results?'<sup>140</sup> The challenge thus becomes how to use these languages to suit all professional stakeholders while avoiding overlooking important aspects of applied theatre. This, however, is easier said than done, because the dominance of technocratic, sociological or economical languages in evaluation is also caused by the fact that artists and facilitators do not have an effective language of

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<sup>134</sup> Ibid., 121.

<sup>135</sup> John Holden, "Capturing Cultural Value: How culture has become a tool of government policy." Demos, 2004. Accessed January 14, 2014. <http://www.demos.co.uk/files/CapturingCulturalValue.pdf>, 19.

<sup>136</sup> Etherton and Prentki, 141.

<sup>137</sup> Holden, 13 -14

<sup>138</sup> Ibid., 20.

<sup>139</sup> Ibid., 21.

<sup>140</sup> Prendergast and Saxton, 188.

their own to capture those dimensions of their work which they regard as crucial. Thornton, thus, wonders, 'how can we find a way of evaluating work in our own language [...] that can genuinely demonstrate impact and speak to funders in a way they understand yet doesn't compromise us and our work?'<sup>141</sup> Along similar lines, Lowe states that the sector should be able to understand and articulate value in their own language. If the applied theatre sector fails to do this, assessment will continue to be connected to standards developed outside this sector. Lowe then poses the following question,

[...] whether those standards are from other areas of the arts, or from the social policy contexts in which much of participatory arts occurs. Do we want to be judged by standards developed in relation to gallery exhibitions or operas or by the number of participants who enter employment?<sup>142</sup>

Holden succinctly captures this crucial need for the applied theatre sector to develop its own evaluation language, when he states that there is a need for a critical, convincing language that is capable of 'reflecting, recognising and capturing the full range of values expressed through culture.'<sup>143</sup>

The choices mentioned above can lead to ethical dilemmas during evaluation as a result of conflicting interpersonal principles, objectives and values. The following case provides a concrete example of an ethical dilemma that is the result of interpersonal conflicting needs:

***Case: Funder requirements and participants needs***

While in Liverpool, I participated in a training weekend. At the end of the weekend, the facilitators asked us to fill in some evaluation forms. There was a considerable level of resentment to 'filling in the forms' among some of the participants, who considered particular questions intrusive and unnecessary. The form contained several questions about personal mental health and about whether or not a person had been a victim of abuse, or had been convicted of a crime in the past. The questions were to be answered by 'yes' or 'no'. In some cases there was the possibility to tick a box that said that you did not want to answer a particular question. The facilitators of the project clearly stated that they did not appreciate the evaluation forms either, but that the forms were something that the funders of the training deliverers

<sup>141</sup> Thornton, e-mail message to author, December 18, 2012.

<sup>142</sup> Lowe, 2

<sup>143</sup> Holden, 9.

required. One of the facilitators told a participant that if she did not want to answer a question, she did not have to. As a result of this remark, that particular participant stopped filling in the form.

In the case above neither the content nor the methodology of data collection were appreciated by the facilitator and the participants. This case, furthermore, illustrates how facilitators might face an intractable dilemma when they try to meet both the needs of their funders (who require particular information for accountability) and have respect for their participants. In the case above, the facilitator gave the participants the choice to either fill in questions or not. Jennings and Baldwin, however, have reported on similar cases in which payment had been withheld from facilitators by funders until the required number of forms had been filled out by the participants.<sup>144</sup> Thus, the funders forced the facilitators into pressuring their participants to complete the evaluation forms, even though some of them might clearly not feel comfortable doing so.

When reflecting on this dilemma with the help of the three models, different courses of action could be legitimised. The deontological model, for example, does either legitimise the facilitators trying to receive enough data or give participants the choice to not fill out the form, depending on whether or not useful evaluation is deemed more important than informed consent and harmless evaluation. The problem with this model, however, is that there is no clear hierarchy of principles that all stakeholders subscribe to. The care-based model provides a clearer stance, because according to this model pressuring facilitators to receive enough data from their participants is unethical, because caring for others is important within this model. Furthermore, it is the responsibility of those in power that evaluation meets the needs of all stakeholders involved. In such a case of interpersonal conflict, like the case mentioned above, the negotiation-based model argues that there is a need for an inventory of the stakeholders who have an interest in the ethical question at hand and that all these stakeholders should be invited to take part in a negotiation.<sup>145</sup> Thus, the needs of funders are equally important as the needs of other stakeholders. (How to deal with differences in power between these negotiating agents has been discussed in 4.4.). The moral principles that are valued by stakeholders often seem to be related to their different interests, because funders might be more

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<sup>144</sup> Jennings and Baldwin, 76.

<sup>145</sup> Van Es, 263.

interested in an evaluation that focuses on factors related to their own agenda, for instance, health or criminal justice, participants might be more interested in their own individual impact, and artists might be more interested in the artistic aspect of their work. This, however, does not mean that stakeholders solely act egoistically. According to the negotiation-based model, 'most agents act out of mixed interests, in which the interests of both the self and others are promoted.'<sup>146</sup> Thus stakeholders also have an interest in the wellbeing of other stakeholders, which somewhat corresponds with the notion of the 'nurturant relations' from the care-based model. Additionally, the negotiation-based model suggests that moral compromises are achieved most successfully by 'logrolling, breaking problems up in manageable sub-problems, and package deals, taking problems together in order to distribute disadvantage'<sup>147</sup> among the different stakeholders that are involved. Taking all this into consideration, the negotiation-based model suggests that the dilemma mentioned above is best resolved by starting a negotiation between the stakeholders (funder, facilitator and participants) about their different interests and by trying to make compromises. For instance, the funder may agree to use another methodology that is more appropriate according to the facilitators if the participants agree to provide the required data, on the condition that they always have the option not to answer particular questions.

As a result of the many choices that need to be made when evaluating, a variety of ethical dilemmas can arise. However, the most intractable interpersonal conflicts are the result of either instrumentalism or advocacy, which I will discuss below and which I will reflect on with the help of the three ethical models.

## 5.1 Instrumentalism

In paragraph 3.4 I described some of the difficulties with the instrumentalisation of applied theatre. Obviously, these difficulties also have an influence on the evaluation process. When professional stakeholders perceive applied theatre solely as a tool for obtaining objectives from agendas like health and education, this invites quantitative, formal, and summative evaluation focussed on outcomes. The main task of the evaluation then becomes to prove the impact projects have had in terms of these targets. Such an evaluation will not set out to improve practice (formative evaluation) and look at the artistic aspects of a project. Many artists are worried that this type of

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<sup>146</sup> Van Es, 48.

<sup>147</sup> Ibid., 265.

evaluation negatively influences their work. Thompson, for instance, argues that, 'evaluation should be more concerned with an ambiguous process than setting goals for the journey's end.'<sup>148</sup> He fears that predetermined outcomes limit the applied theatre process and its impact. According to Thompson, focussing on 'function' the initiation of a project - be it 'social inclusion' or 'smoking rates' – can cause the 'artistic process' to become side-tracked.<sup>149</sup> In relation to this, Thomson, Sanders and Bloomfield argue that,

When we look at evaluations we are inclined to say that funders' evaluation requirements could be said to operate with some of the same dimensions as the political agendas that produce their funding. They suffer from short termism. They expect unrealistic outcomes and demand that these be promised at the outside. This places practitioners in the position of having to spin the evaluations in order to avoid punishment/secure more funding in the future.<sup>150</sup>

Even though this may not apply to all funders, statements like these, demonstrate that some artists have serious reservations about the influence instrumentalism has on funders' evaluation requirements. One of these artists is Philip Taylor, who believes that the beneficiaries of evaluation should be, first and foremost, 'teaching artists, participants, and the wider applied theatre community.'<sup>151</sup> He states that, 'It is imperative that evaluations feed into long-term strategic planning and not merely document what commissioning agents want to hear.'<sup>152</sup> Though this might be true, it has to be pointed out that not all commissioning agents simply long for these evaluations that say what they 'want to hear'. They may require particular information as part of the evaluation of their own work. It may for instance be important to them to obtain an overview of the kind of people the programme reaches and to ensure the equality of opportunity and access. In such cases, particular data is necessary to verify if the funders' money reaches the target groups it was intended for.

Although funder requirements might be perfectly reasonable, if only these requirements determine the direction of an evaluation this can cause serious problems. One issue is power. Another problem is that people tend to be more motivated 'by their

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<sup>148</sup> Thompson, "It Don't Mean a Thing if it Ain't Got that Swing," 103.

<sup>149</sup> Ibid., 101 – 103.

<sup>150</sup> Pat Thomson, Julie Sanders and Jem Bloomfield, August 9, 2012, "Problems with current evaluation models," Performing Impact Blog, <http://performingimpactproject.wordpress.com/2012/08/09/problems-with-current-evaluation-models/>.

<sup>151</sup> Taylor, 105.

<sup>152</sup> Ibid., 105.

own priorities and aims than those of another's choosing.<sup>153</sup> Evaluation that does not include the priorities and aims of all stakeholders is less likely to be supported by all parties, or be of value to all of them. A further difficulty is a lack of transparency between stakeholders about objectives. As Matarasso argues, 'evaluation requires a clarity about goals, delivery processes, assumptions and values which has not always been evident in arts practice, even when it has claimed social or economic objectives.'<sup>154</sup> Etherton and Prentki provide a useful example to understand why this is problematic related to the inclusion agenda, as shown below.

participants who are socially excluded in one way or another are put through a process aimed at making them more able - and willing - to resume a place in 'normal' society, rather than society being offered the chance to reassess 'normality' in the light of the experience of the excluded, who may not wish to be included on the terms currently on offer.<sup>155</sup>

This illustrates that there can be different perspectives among stakeholders that may very well, 'point in opposite directions as indicators of the "success" of the intervention.'<sup>156</sup> The choice to evaluate a particular impact and from what angle will be influenced by 'the subject position' of those who are in charge of the evaluation.<sup>157</sup> Covert or unarticulated aims or intentions of stakeholders are for that reason problematic, because it becomes unclear what agenda is steering the work or the evaluation. This goes against moral values which stipulate that evaluation should be 'open' and 'honest', ultimately leading to the question of whose values are evaluated.

The kind of dilemmas, that are caused by instrumentalism, are concerned with conflicting values and aims of particularly professional stakeholders regarding the instrumental and intrinsic aspects of the work. For example, a funder might require that an evaluation assesses whether a project has had an impact on the chances of the participants to enter employment, when the funder commissioned the project for that reason. However, the artist, valuing the intrinsic value of applied theatre above its

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<sup>153</sup> Roz Hall, Paper for Jubilee Arts C/PLEX Project Evaluation Working Party 2001, quoted in Gerri Moriarty, 25.

<sup>154</sup> Matarasso, "The Weight of Poetry," 5.

<sup>155</sup> Etherton and Prentki, 149.

<sup>156</sup> *Ibid.*, 149.

<sup>157</sup> *Ibid.*, 140 – 141.

instrumental value, believes this to be a too limited scope to assess the success of the project.

In case of this kind dilemma, the deontological model is unhelpful as there are no universal principles that prescribe that certain aims or values of stakeholders are more ethical than others. The care-based model is also problematic when interests of professional stakeholders clash. According to the model care and responsibility require that professional stakeholders ensure that not only their own interests, but also the interests of others are taken into account. However, it may not always be possible to combine these interests within one evaluation and the model does not provide clear answers on how to deal with this issue. The negotiation-based model might provide more starting points than the other two models, as two of the key aspects of this model are the promotion of mixed interest and the reaching of a realisable compromise within a specific context (see also the paragraph above).

## 5.2 Advocacy

In paragraph 3.2.3 I distinguished evaluation from advocacy. It has to be pointed out, however, that not everyone regards these activities as mutually exclusive. Woolf, for instance, states that evaluation can help to show that funding has been well used.<sup>158</sup> This way, evaluation is seen as a tool to justify and secure future funding, because it provides evidence of a certain impact. However, combining evaluation with advocacy has several unwelcome side effects. Advocacy can negatively influence the quality of the evaluation when it leads to '[...] overclaiming outcomes and achievements'.<sup>159</sup> Another undesirable consequence might be that certain aspects of the process, like failures and unexpected outcomes (see 6.4), are not included in the evaluation process or withheld from evaluation reports. Reducing the main purpose of evaluation solely to advocacy, then, puts serious pressure on other purposes of evaluation such as knowledge development, and program and organisational improvement. Jennings and Baldwin even warn that evaluation, in such cases, can reach 'the level of a public relations or marketing exercise, where each report acts as a form of superficial self-advocacy on behalf of the delivery organisation and the commissioning agency'.<sup>160</sup> In the past, this had led to insufficient objective evidence to enable informed cultural policy making. As a

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<sup>158</sup> Woolf, 7.

<sup>159</sup> Moriarty, 21.

<sup>160</sup> Jennings and Baldwin, 74.

consequence, John Knell argued that there is a need for more objective evidence collection by arts organisations and institutions.<sup>161</sup>

Despite these negative consequences, stakeholders combine advocacy with evaluation for several reasons. Some art organisations, for instance, fear that certain shared information may be used by funders, '[...] to refuse funding to, or attack and undermine the work of an organisation or artist.'<sup>162</sup> Moreover, Jennings and Baldwin point out that there are strong disincentives for facilitators and organisations to,

report honestly on their experiences of any difficulties implementing the project (since this might reflect negatively on their professionalism and competence), and their observations of impacts which are less than or different from the stated objectives of the project (since these might suggest that the project was 'unsuccessful' or that the organisation failed to focus sufficiently on the projects objectives).<sup>163</sup>

In relation to this, Taylor states that in some cases evaluation reports can even become 'crucial' to the survival of arts organisations. He believes that, 'those who commission applied theatre are often intent on receiving reports they can use to ensure sustained funding. They can be less than supportive of reports that are critical of the program or point to weaknesses in it.'<sup>164</sup> This attitude encourages advocacy rather than robust evaluation. Not everyone shares Taylor's scepticism, however, for instance, Thornton points out that, 'there should be a recognition that some funders are very open to learning, to hearing what went wrong as well as what didn't and that doesn't necessarily affect their funding decision.'<sup>165</sup>

The influence of advocacy on evaluation is an ethical dilemma, because there is a conflict between (1) evaluation being objective, cautious, promoting a reflexive practice, and information being shared openly and honestly about successes as well as failures and difficulties; and (2) the desire to promote the work or at least not harm it via evaluation. Professional stakeholders frequently do not agree on which moral principles are more important. For instance, is it more important to have an honest evaluation process, or one that does not harm the stakeholders or the artistic activity itself?

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<sup>161</sup> John Knell, "The art of dying." Intelligence Agency, January 2005, 5.

<sup>162</sup> Moriarty, 21.

<sup>163</sup> Jennings and Baldwin, 85.

<sup>164</sup> Taylor, 104 - 105.

<sup>165</sup> Sarah Thornton, e-mail message to author, October 31, 2013.

The deontological model helps understand the perspectives of stakeholders mentioned above, based on the fact that some stakeholders deem evaluation unethical when it does not live up to certain moral principles. These stakeholders believe that evaluation should be 'cautious', 'honest', and 'rigorous'. Thus, they perceive evaluation that ignores these principles, in favour of providing material for advocacy, as unethical. Advocacy, most commentators believe, should not be the leading motivation for ethical evaluation. However, other stakeholders might prioritise that evaluation should not harm or endanger the applied theatre practice itself. Thus dilemmas caused by advocacy are difficult to resolve in an impartial manner with the help of the deontological model, because the sector lacks a clear hierarchy of principles which dictates that one principle is more important than the other.

Since both the care-based and the negotiation-based model do not believe that ethics can stand above context, neither are necessarily against or in favour of combining evaluation with advocacy *an sich*. However, the care-based model argues that actions are unethical if they are likely to damage the nurturant relationships between stakeholders, or show no care and responsibility. For instance, when advocacy damages the trust between professional stakeholders (because of dishonesty), from a care-based model point of view, this is regarded as unethical. However, if, in a particular situation, avoiding advocacy completely is harming the nurturant relationships between stakeholders, this might also be considered unethical. Likewise, the negotiation-based model emphasises reciprocity, trust and mutual respect. For that reason, when regarding the dilemma with help of this model, withholding important information from other stakeholders without their knowledge is deemed unethical. On the other hand, if in a particular case the stakeholders agree that evaluation should be used to promote the work, this model also believes that evaluation may very well be used for advocacy purposes.

In this chapter I discussed ethical dilemmas that were the result of conflicting objectives and values between, particularly, professional stakeholders. However, even if stakeholders agree on what principles are important for ethical evaluation, there may still be some obstacles that have to be overcome. These obstacles will be explored in the next chapter.

## 6 Practical obstacles

In this chapter I will look at ethical dilemmas that are caused by practical hindrances. These dilemmas are either the result of difficulties in choosing between conflicting principles that are regarded as equally important by most stakeholders, or caused by contextual factors. First, I will investigate why standards surrounding confidentiality and informed consent do not always guarantee ethical evaluation. Subsequently, I will explore how time pressure can also stand in the way of ethical evaluations. Thirdly, I will look at difficulties finding proper methods of data collection.

### 6.1 Confidentiality and informed consent

Moriarty argues that, ‘ethical issues such as confidentiality, ownership of information and consultation on and agreement of content are crucial in the design and delivery of evaluation by arts organisations working in a context of social exclusion.’<sup>166</sup> According to him, it is indispensable to carefully think about these issues as trust, ‘can very easily be broken by insensitive use of information gathered through evaluation and in some cases could put individuals or groups in danger of physical, verbal or emotional abuse.’<sup>167</sup> Thus, it is important for professional stakeholders to have appropriate policies and procedures in place to protect participants, especially when they are vulnerable. Organisations that receive funding from the Arts Council of England are already obligated to have such policies and procedures when working with children, young people or vulnerable adults, ‘both to meet the requirements of the law and to deliver best practice in arts activities.’<sup>168</sup> The organisations should make a, ‘commitment to safeguarding’, and their policies and procedures should ensure that it is clear how to proceed in case, ‘abuse is suspected or disclosed’, and that, ‘the position of trust and caretaking’, is not abused by the artist or art organisation.<sup>169</sup> However, even with such policies in place, it is not automatically guaranteed that an evaluation will be dilemma free.

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<sup>166</sup> Moriarty, 20.

<sup>167</sup> Ibid., 20.

<sup>168</sup> Arts Council England “Keeping Arts Safe. Guidance for artists and arts organisations on safeguarding children, young people and vulnerable adults.” Arts Council England, October 2005, 8.

<sup>169</sup> Ibid., 8.

**Case: Anonymous?**

After attending a workshop weekend during my stay in Liverpool, I was asked to fill in some evaluation forms. The facilitators stated that the evaluation forms were anonymous, and that they would not know who filled in which form. Since I was clearly the youngest and the only person in my age category, however, it would be easy to retrace the form I had filled in.

In the case above, anonymity was guaranteed, but only up to a point. If the information I provided would lead to concerns about my own safety or that of others, confidentiality might be broken as information would need to be shared with relevant organisations. While this sounds perfectly reasonable, it does raise ethical questions, such as, what is the level of anonymity in evaluation? How do the evaluators proceed in case of concerns of safety? In what circumstances can anonymity be broken? What kind of information causes 'concern'? In what manner is this influenced by the subjective interpretation of the evaluator?

Another ethical rule that is emphasised in guidelines is the need for informed consent. This entails that stakeholders – often the participants - give their consent (in case of children the consent of parents is also required) to take part in an evaluation process. This informed consent (which includes being made aware of the participation terms, possible risks and benefits as well as purpose and details of the evaluation) must be obtained prior to any data collection.<sup>170</sup> However, in practice, it turns out that this standard does not always guarantee an ethical evaluation.

One of the difficulties is what quality of 'informing' constitutes 'informed consent'. In the case of illiterate participants, for instance, it would be unethical to provide the information in writing, instead of explaining it in spoken words. Additionally, in case of written information, the questions remains how it is verified that participants actually understood the information before signing? Moreover, Miller and Bell point out that the 'formality' of the procedures involved in getting informed consent, 'will certainly alienate some groups and individuals.'<sup>171</sup>

Most funders and facilitators stress the importance of informed consent from participants before starting an applied theatre process, as well as before starting the

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<sup>170</sup> Kvale, 112.

<sup>171</sup> Tina Miller and Linda Bell, "Consenting to what? Issues of access, gate-keeping and 'informed' consent." In *Ethics in Qualitative Research*, 2e ed, edited by Tina Miller, Maxine Birch, Melanie Mauthner and Julie Jessop. (London: Sage Publications, 2012), 71.

evaluation of the applied theatre process. Miller and Bell go a step further and even argue in favour of 'consent' that is 'ongoing and renegotiated between researcher and researched throughout the research process.'<sup>172</sup> They are convinced that 'ethical considerations' should entail more than simply, 'satisfactorily completing an ethics form at the beginning of a study and/or obtaining ethics approval.'<sup>173</sup> It should, therefore, also be possible for stakeholders to withdraw their 'consent' at any given point during the process, even if this means that useful or even critical data cannot be used in evaluation. Collective Encounters currently has included this idea in their 'Ethical Research Policy', explicitly stating that, 'the participant has the right to withdraw retrospectively any consent given, and to require that their own data, including recordings, be destroyed.'<sup>174</sup>

The inherent dilemma of the issues above is that the ethical standards of informed consent and confidentiality formulated to ensure ethical practice do not guarantee that evaluation is indeed ethical. As pointed out earlier (see 3.3.2), ethical rules are characteristic for the deontological model, which believes that ethical dilemmas can be resolved based on a hierarchy of ethical principles, and with the help of ethical rules. However, the examples above illustrate some of the limitations of ethical rules in guaranteeing ethical behaviour. The reason for this is that the context in which these rules need to be applied is not taken into consideration. By contrast, the care-based model does not think that ethical dilemmas could be resolved without looking at the context. As Edwards and Mauthner argue, 'the importance and centrality of attention to specificity and context means that ethics cannot be expected to be a source of absolute norms.'<sup>175</sup> Thus, ethical standards cannot be seen as rules that need to be lived up to (as is the case with the deontological model) but as guiding lines to be interpreted depending on the situation. For instance, when confidentiality does more harm than good, such as in cases in which abuse has been disclosed by vulnerable participants to facilitators, it might be decided to break that confidentiality and report to relevant organisations. On the other hand, in situations where facilitators have concerns about the safety of a participant, but sharing that information is expected to enhance that threat, it might be decided to postpone action. In both instances, the care-based model places an emphasis on the nurturant relationships between stakeholders. Actions should

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<sup>172</sup> Miller and Bell, 61.

<sup>173</sup> Ibid., 61.

<sup>174</sup> Collective Encounters, "Ethical Research Policy," 3.

<sup>175</sup> Edwards and Mauthner, 25.

show care and responsibility for oneself and the other. Thus, depending on the situation different courses of action could be legitimised with the help of this model.

On the issue of informed consent, the negotiation-based model supports the perspective of Bell and Miller that ‘consent’ should be renegotiated during an evaluation process, and should not simply be perceived as ‘given’ after initial consent has been received. The reason for this is that according to the negotiation-based model, stakeholders are believed to have a ‘multitude of interests’<sup>176</sup> that can, ‘vary in importance and develop within time’<sup>177</sup>, which is either caused by changes of the stakeholder him- or herself, or as a result of changes in the environment.<sup>178</sup>

## 6.2 Time pressure and priorities

Even though stakeholders might agree that ethical evaluation should be ‘useful’, ‘inclusive’ and ‘cautious’, time pressure often undermines these criteria. Given the limited resources available to most applied theatre projects, evaluation is not always a priority. Matarasso concurs, ‘evaluation, however important, is always secondary to achieving a programme.’<sup>179</sup> I have also witnessed how facilitators, who were dedicated to ethical evaluation, simply did not have enough time to verify if a certain evaluation method was in accordance with their principles, such as the case below illustrates.

### ***Case: Informed?***

An outreach project was jointly evaluated by both the funder and the facilitators in one evaluation session. During a meeting I attended, prior to the evaluation, the representative of the funding agency indicated which two forms he would be using, and the main facilitator informed what would be the aim of the evaluation exercises he would be doing with the participant group. After the evaluation session, I asked the main facilitator what he thought of the forms that were used to evaluate the project. He stated that he did not know, as he had not had the chance to take a look at the forms yet.

In this case, of course, the facilitator could have simply asked the funder during the meeting if he could have a look at the forms. However, there were many elements of the project that needed to be discussed and evaluation was not the top priority of the main facilitator. Additionally, the fact that the forms were required by the funder and

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<sup>176</sup> Van Es, 87.

<sup>177</sup> Ibid., 87.

<sup>178</sup> Ibid., 87.

<sup>179</sup> Matarasso, “Use or Ornament,” 15.

'part of the deal' influenced the attitude of the facilitator. Thus, what the example shows, is that although organisations might have relevant policies and procedures in place, these are useless when resources are insufficient to carry them out properly. (Since the issues surrounding funder requirements have been discussed in chapter 5, I will not elaborate on them here again).

The dilemma here, then, is the result of a conflict between (1) ideas of what constitutes an ethical evaluation, and (2) the available time to realise these principles in practice. According to the deontological model (in its extreme form), however, there is no dilemma at all. This because the model does not consider contextual factors, such as time pressure, for deciding on what actions are ethical. Thus, ethical evaluation has to be, for instance, 'cautious' and 'useful', regardless of the context. Evaluators have to live up to these principles, whether there are resources for it or not. In case of time pressure, this might even mean that facilitators need to direct their attention to the evaluation to guarantee cautious evaluation even if this negatively influences the artistic process, which I believe to be undesirable. This situation is a good example of a 'moral absolutism' (see 3.3.2) which makes the deontological model problematic to use.

The two other models do take contextual factors into account. The care-based model, emphasising responsibility, advises evaluators to take into consideration how they will ensure ethical evaluation in practice. For example, by ensuring that the chosen methodology and scope of a particular evaluation are realistic given the available time and resources. As part of this responsibility, it may also be regarded as important that stakeholders consider relevant ethical issues surrounding data collection, such as confidentiality and ownership in advance, because this might ensure more deliberate decision-making and might draw attention to the importance of directing enough resources to evaluation to carry out relevant policies and procedures. The negotiation-based model does not prescribe a certain action in case of time pressure, but stresses that what is ethical in a particular situation is dependent on the temporal agreement between stakeholders. Thus, in case of time pressure stakeholders might need to deliberate and make a compromise about which aspects of the work and evaluation have priority. Conditions for such a negotiation between stakeholders have been described earlier (see chapter 5, page 42-43). Negotiating about this is only helpful, however, insofar the dilemma is caused by different priorities of different stakeholders. Thus, this model is useless if the dilemma is intrapersonal.

### 6.3 Data collection methods

One of the dilemmas of realising ethical evaluation is to find the most suitable, ethical method of data collection in a particular situation, that produces enough of the required information in a useful manner. Moriarty, for instance, states that, 'there are contexts when it may feel to participants like "over-kill", especially in the early stages of developing a working relationship with a group. Evaluation is important but hardly at the price of destroying enthusiasm and engagement.'<sup>180</sup> Thus, the method of data collection needs to be tailored to fit the needs of a specific project. If this is not the case, it might threaten the quality of the evaluation. The case below illustrates this.

#### **Case: Insufficient data**

After an evaluation session of an outreach project, it became clear that there was insufficient quantitative data to verify whether or not the predetermined outcomes had been reached. The main facilitator stated that, 'there was no way that all of the participants were going to fill in a form. Some of them did not fill one in at the start. [...] I explained to the participants why they were needed and said that if people really did not want to do them, they did not have to.'<sup>181</sup> As a result of that remark, only half of the participants filled in the form. During the writing of the final evaluation report, the main facilitator wondered whether he should have been 'a bit more political' about the forms during the evaluation workshop. At the time, he had not been 'thinking it through.'<sup>182</sup>

Before the evaluation session, the applied theatre organisation had pointed out to the funder that they were not 'very keen' to use the particular forms, as they were considered to be 'not really accessible' to their participants.<sup>183</sup> During the writing of the final report, one of the facilitators expressed to me that she believed that another methodology would have been better to provide the required quantitative data. However, because the project was part of a bigger programme of the funder, it was decided to use the funder's methodology for this project in order to be able to compare it with other projects.

The final payment was not withheld from the applied theatre organisation as a result of the insufficient data. The funder, present during part of the evaluation session, understood the situation as he himself had experienced 'big issues' with participants who were not fully completing the forms.<sup>184</sup>

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<sup>180</sup> Moriarty, 21.

<sup>181</sup> Interview with facilitator, March 27, 2013.

<sup>182</sup> Ibid.

<sup>183</sup> Ibid.

<sup>184</sup> E-mail contact with funder, May 15, 2013.

What the example above shows, is that not all data collection methods are equally suitable for every occasion. Gathering the required data can be difficult as a result of specific aspects of a project or of a participant group (see also 4.3). In some cases it may not be impossible to collect the required data per se, but it might be problematic to gather it using a specific methodology.<sup>185</sup> Another difficulty of data collection is that, depending on the circumstances, participants are inclined to give the answers they think the evaluator (whether this is the funder, a facilitator or an external evaluator) wants to hear. As a consequence, the data that is gathered might not be reliable, or provide ‘an accurate picture’<sup>186</sup> of the situation as participants are hesitant to give negative or critical feedback. In such cases, a less ‘direct’ approach might be advisable, as the example below illustrates.

**Case: Third Age and Transitions group**

Redvers Rowe argues that the participatory programmes of Collective Encounters differ in the way that data can be collected based on the characterisations of the participant group. In relation to the Transition group she argues that,

‘What we found out from Abi’s<sup>187</sup> work is that people who are homeless, or who have experienced homelessness, do not give you the nice answer, they give you the truthful answer. [...] They will genuinely tell you how they feel at any moment. They don’t gloss over. They might be hugely insecure in lots of ways, but in terms of genuine feedback, you don’t have to worry so much with that group. You will get genuine feedback.’<sup>188</sup>

However, the direct approach of simply asking ‘What do you think?’ does not work with all the different groups of Collective Encounters. In her own work with the Third Age group, Redvers Rowe has experienced that a more creative, art-based approach<sup>189</sup> was required for her evaluation-workshop.<sup>190</sup>

I knew I had some group dynamic issues. And I used the evaluation workshop to find out what they might be. So I asked [the participants]: ‘Are you all happy in the group? Do you all feel you have a voice? That you get the chance to speak and be heard?’ ‘Yes, yes, it is all very even’ is what

<sup>185</sup> As argued earlier, in the case of dementia or illiteracy it may be necessary to use other, non-written based evaluation methodologies or more creative approaches to evaluation.

<sup>186</sup> Irene White, interview with Jennings February 6, 2009, quoted in Jennings and Baldwin, 84.

<sup>187</sup> Abi Horsfield is the Transitions Outreach Manager of Collective Encounters.

<sup>188</sup> Amanda Redvers Rowe, Skype interview with author, 28th of October 2013.

<sup>189</sup> For more creative approaches see, for instance, Moriarty, 36 – 38.

<sup>190</sup> In the long-term programmes of Collective Encounters a full session is dedicated to evaluation every six months. During this session creative methodologies are used to explore ‘the participant/group progress towards aims/objectives and reflect on the experience of the programme, their reflections on the quality of the process how it could be improved etc.’ See Collective Encounters, “Evaluation Policy and Quality Framework,” 7.

the only spoken responses where. Very positive. Listening to them, you would think there was no problem. [...] I then asked 'Can you do me a still picture of the group? What does the group look like?' [...] After that I asked if they could show me a picture of a perfect group. [...] I asked them what we needed to do as a group to get from the first picture to the second picture. [...] Suddenly by making a picture, I found out a lot more than by asking the question.<sup>191</sup>

According to Redvers Rowe, evaluation is sometimes about 'teasing out' things when direct questions do not provide the 'genuine' answer. It is one of the most difficult aspects of evaluation in applied theatre.

In general, most facilitators and art organisations agree that there is a need for more creative – and, some would argue, more flexible - approaches to evaluation. Moriarty, however, points out that it is a challenge for arts organisations who work in the context of social exclusion to actually use, 'methods of evaluation which are more akin to creative practices than to social science practices.'<sup>192</sup> I would argue that these creative approaches are already widely used in informal evaluation. The problem is that this type of evaluation is not validated by all professional stakeholders. Moreover, since these creative approaches are often qualitative, it is necessary to consider carefully how, 'findings can best be recorded and analysed.'<sup>193</sup> It is important to realise that different approaches to evaluation have different, 'strengths and limitations'.<sup>194</sup> As such, good evaluation, Eisner argues, is 'multilingual'.<sup>195</sup> Though Eisner might be right, in practice stakeholders can still face several ethical dilemmas when selecting a methodology.

Dilemmas in selecting a methodology in a particular situation are caused by the fact that the method needs to be suitable to the context, 'realistic', 'cautious', 'rigorous', 'inclusive', 'harmless', 'useful' and validated by all the professional stakeholders. Some artists suggest that more creative approaches are necessary to meet all these requirements, however, as pointed out earlier, funders often prefer 'pseudo-scientific approaches' (see chapter 5, page 39). How can these two contradictory positions be combined? Practical obstacles related to data collection methods, thus, can be causes for interpersonal conflicts between professional stakeholders and intrapersonal conflicts when a choice has to be made of which principle is more important.

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<sup>191</sup> Amanda Redvers Rowe, Skype interview with author, 28th of October 2013.

<sup>192</sup> Moriarty, 31. See 36 – 38 for a description of some of these creative approaches.

<sup>193</sup> Moriarty, 36.

<sup>194</sup> Österlind, 103.

<sup>195</sup> Elliot Eisner "Assessment and Evaluation in Education and the Arts" in *International Handbook of Research in Arts Education*. (Dordrecht: Springer, 2007), 423-426, quoted in Österlind, 103.

Here, the deontological model is not of real help. Even if ‘multilingual’ is seen as an essential principle for ethical evaluation by all stakeholders, the model does not explain how to realise this in practice, because it would simply argue that it is necessary. By contrast, I believe that the care-based model would emphasise that stakeholders need to carefully select a methodology together, as their joined knowledge and experiences with evaluation will result in a more deliberate decision. Their choice for a particular data collection method should be suitable to the time and place of the specific evaluation. Thus, if facilitators indicate that a methodology is unfit for their participants, the care-based model urges that funders should take this into account. Both professional stakeholders are then responsible to try and find a more suitable methodology. The negotiation-based model, in relation to issues of selecting a suitable methodology, argues that conflicting interests of stakeholders need to be negotiated in order to reach a compromise. (see also chapter 5, page 42-43). In relation to the more practical element of the dilemma, the model, however, does not provide a solution.

## 6.4 Unexpected outcomes

Apart from the call for more creative and fluid data collection methods, some facilitators and commentators also feel the need to gather data regarding unexpected outcomes of applied theatre processes. As Jennings and Baldwin put it, this is the only way, ‘to gain a more sophisticated understanding of what community arts projects can (and, perhaps, cannot) hope to achieve.’<sup>196</sup> They argue that while, ‘[...] funding bodies must assess whether organisations have delivered what was originally proposed and funded with public money,’<sup>197</sup> accountability should also entail communicating about unexpected and negative outcomes<sup>198</sup>, as, ‘the emphasis on a project’s ability to meet pre-defined objectives may obscure successes which have occurred in areas of equal social value.’<sup>199</sup> By the same token, as Etherton and Prentki point out, prescriptive evaluation can overlook unintended and negative impacts:

In a worst case scenario the impact may be the opposite of that intended by the project workers. For instance, a project aimed at raising women’s consciousness of their rights in relation to domestic violence that does not attempt to include men within its processes, may return those women to the company of their abusive partners, more

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<sup>196</sup> Jennings and Baldwin, 83.

<sup>197</sup> Ibid., 83.

<sup>198</sup> Ibid., 83.

<sup>199</sup> Ibid., 85.

exposed to assault as a consequence of the attitudes they have inculcated from the workshop.<sup>200</sup>

Thus, if evaluation does not provide room for unintended impacts, harmful consequences can be overlooked, and therefore vital lessons cannot be learned to improve applied theatre practices in the future.<sup>201</sup>

Ethical evaluation, then, should provide insight into the expected as well as the unexpected, and into the desired as well as the undesired consequences of applied theatre. This dilemma is partially practical of nature, however, I would argue that it also has an ethical element as the inability to include unintended and negative is in conflict with moral values that evaluation should be 'cautious' and 'rigorous'.

The deontological model lacks starting points to deal with this dilemma. Even though one could argue that the principles that evaluation should be 'cautious' and 'rigorous' also entail looking at unexpected and negative outcomes, the deontological model does not provide answers about how to live up to these principles in relation to the dilemma of unexpected outcomes. By contrast, both the care-based model and the negotiation-based model do support the notion that evaluation should be flexible enough to include the sort of outcomes mentioned. Obviously, it may not be possible to evaluate all unexpected outcomes. However, the models do support the idea that when it becomes evident that certain undesirable or negative outcomes may play a part, evaluation should try to address them. Additionally, since 'nurturant relationships' and care and responsibility are at the core of the care-based model, stakeholders in power should do their utmost to ensure that less powerful stakeholders are protected. Therefore, the model stresses that those in power of evaluation are responsible for ensuring that the focus of evaluation does not overlook negative or unintended impacts of the work, because harmful practice might be continued if negative results are not taken into account.

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<sup>200</sup> Etherton and Prentki, 148.

<sup>201</sup> Moriarty, 17 – 18.

## 7 In closing

In the end and perhaps as it should be, this research left me with many more questions and fewer certainties about ethical evaluation than I had before. Nevertheless, I would like to end with some careful conclusions regarding the sub-questions I posed in my opening chapter, with recommendations for stakeholders that are genuinely dedicated to ethical evaluation, and with several suggestions for further research.

### 7.1 Conclusions

Before returning to the main question of this research, ‘How might some of the ethical dilemmas that surface in the evaluation process of applied theatre in the Western World be resolved?’ I will first look at the sub-questions.

The first sub-question, ‘What are some of the most intractable ethical dilemmas in the evaluation of applied theatre?’ can be answered by stating that there are different sorts of ethical dilemmas; I distinguished three types. The first type is connected to difficulties involving participants in the evaluation process, which are caused by different ideas among professional stakeholders about what should be the level of participation of participants. This type is also connected to difficulties of participants to express their opinions freely, due to limited skills, power issues and relations of dependency.

The second kind of ethical dilemmas are the result of interpersonal conflicting aims and values, particularly between professional stakeholders. Thus, this kind of dilemma is likely to surface when choices have to be made regarding what motivates an evaluation, what aspects should be evaluated, which data to collect using what methodology, and how to reflect on this data using what kind of language. In this regard, multiple sources of partial funding and short funding cycles can be problematic, as these often cause many stakeholders with diverging interests, aims and ambitions to be involved. In case of instrumentalism and advocacy this type of dilemma is common.

Finally, dilemmas can be the result of intrapersonal conflicts when a stakeholder values moral principles he or she cannot realise simultaneously. These kind of dilemmas are often caused by practical obstacles. Some of the complicating factors that have come to light are, (1) limited resources, time, money and knowledge of evaluation; (2) power positions and relations of dependency between stakeholders; and (3) difficulties

in articulating, understanding and reflecting on all the different values of applied theatre.

The second sub-question, 'What different perspectives exist on the ethics of evaluation in relation to these dilemmas?' is more difficult to answer, as stakeholders have very different perspectives on the dilemmas mentioned above. Given the limited scope of my research, I was only able to discuss a fraction of all the possible perspectives. Moreover, it became clear that points of views, priorities and attitudes do not necessarily match up within a particular group of stakeholders, or a particular form of applied theatre. Most stakeholders agree, however, that participants should always be able to contribute their views freely. Depending on the participation level that professional stakeholders strive for, some even indicate that participants should also be able to help shape the evaluation process by, for instance, helping to identify relevant criteria. Particularly artists and some academics are worried about the methodologies and languages that are currently used in formal evaluations of applied theatre. They believe that these methodologies are unsuitable, and they advocate the use of more creative approaches that also include unexpected outcomes. Perspectives of stakeholders are likely to conflict when they do not agree on the following points:

- ❖ Desired or required participation degree of all the different stakeholders;
- ❖ Aims of a particular project or programme;
- ❖ Most suitable methodology for a particular project or programme;
- ❖ Value they attach to applied theatre in general, or to a particular project;
- ❖ Language that is best able to capture, articulate and reflect on this value.

For the third sub-question, 'How might conflicting perspectives on ethical evaluation between stakeholders of an applied theatre project be overcome?' I looked at what guidance three different ethical models could provide. Below, I will discuss in what way they were or were not helpful and I will offer some additional points of criticism.

The deontological model helped explore which principles or moral standards stakeholders regarded as important for ethical evaluation. The models provided less help for resolving ethical dilemmas in particular situations. The reason for this is that most principles are formulated in such a general way, that it is hard to object to them. There are not likely to be many stakeholders that would, for instance, not be in favour of 'harmless', 'useful' or 'cautious' evaluation. Even more problematic is that most of these

general principles are open to interpretation. What one stakeholder might consider as 'harmless' evaluation, another might find quite damaging. Moreover, it is often unclear what the hierarchy of the different principles is. Should one prioritise one over another? Furthermore, the model did not provide specific advice on how to apply these principles in practice. Overall, the model did not even consider context to decide on what is ethical, which, in the case of applied theatre, is very undesirable, as context is the quintessential 'key determinant'<sup>202</sup>.

The care-based model was useful for considering the different positions stakeholders have in an evaluation process because it acknowledged relations of dependency and differences in power. In case of a dilemma, the care-based model supported the choice that demonstrated the most care and responsibility for the stakeholders involved. The model, however, mainly intends to achieve harmonious, caring relations between the different stakeholders, whereas relations are seldom completely harmonious and caring. Furthermore, I find the model's use of the term 'responsibility' problematic, because the model regards it as the responsibility of stakeholders with more power to consider the needs of those with less power. This might lead to forms of unintended patronage.

The negotiation-based model draws attention to the different interests that stakeholders have, and provided guidelines for how these interests should be negotiated ethically. As there are different ways of negotiation possible - not all equally desirable - it is important that a negotiation meets Van Es' criteria of reciprocity, trust and respect among negotiating agents. For that reason, the model may be more useful to practices that are located on the Kester-end, instead of the Bisshop-end of the participation scale, since these practices are already concerned with creating an 'on-going negotiation' between participants and facilitators (see also 4.1). The model is helpful for resolving ethical dilemmas caused by conflicting interpersonal principles, but less helpful for guiding decision-making in case of intrapersonal dilemmas. Moreover, one could argue whether it is always possible to start a negotiation such as Van Es describes in case of a dilemma. Furthermore, trying to realise such a negotiation might create dilemmas in itself.

The main question can be answered by stating that ethical dilemmas need to be resolved in the context of a particular situation. There cannot be one ethic of evaluation that attempts to prevent ethical dilemmas by providing theories or ideas that dictate

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<sup>202</sup> Etherton and Prentki, 141.

what is moral. Such an ethic of evaluating applied theatre, would lead to insufficient attention to specificity of time and place. Different ethical models may be used to help develop ethics of evaluation, as they have proven to help guide the decision-making process when dealing with ethical dilemmas. Of the models that were discussed here, I found the care-based model and the negotiation-based model most promising. They both took the context of ethical dilemmas into consideration. Since both models have their limitations, as pointed out above, I would recommend a combination of the two to help develop ethics of evaluating applied theatre. Ultimately, I believe that theories and ideas about ethical evaluation can only be developed through a process of continual fine-tuning, in close proximity to the field, and with the intent to genuinely include all stakeholders.

## 7.2 Recommendations

### 7.2.1 Considerations for ethical evaluation

During the course of this investigation, I often wondered if ethical evaluation might be more of an utopia, than a realistic option in practice. Even so, I still think there are several things that stakeholders could do to make their evaluations more ethical. First, I would recommend an evaluation practice that is carefully prepared, ideally in collaboration with all the stakeholders and especially with participants. Such a practice takes into account the many differences that exist between the stakeholders, and acknowledges that there are always more options to shape a particular evaluation process. An ethical evaluation practice should also scrutinise choices made in relation to an evaluation process in order to legitimise these choices, and investigate whether there are better options. Questions of an ethical nature that could be addressed while constructing an ethical evaluation practice that is valuable to all stakeholders are:

- ❖ Is it clear – to all stakeholders – what the purpose and shape of a particular evaluation process is?
- ❖ In what manner are the different stakeholders involved in the evaluation process? How is this decided upon? Who was able to influence or make this decision?
- ❖ What motivates a particular evaluation process? Whose motivation is this?
- ❖ What is being evaluated? What motivates this choice?
- ❖ What evaluation language is used? What motivates this choice?

- ❖ What approach or methodology is used? What motivates this choice?
- ❖ What kind (formative or summative) and manner (formal or informal) of evaluation is used in the evaluation process? What motivates this choice?
- ❖ Is the evaluation realistic given the available resources and the commitment (and skills) of the different stakeholders?

### 7.2.2 Further Research

This thesis was mainly explorative in nature, as such the dilemmas and the perspectives discussed are eclectic, instead of representative of the entire applied theatre field. Some of the questions I did not discuss are, for instance, concerned with what is done with the evaluation reports (are they put away in a drawer, or are they used to undertake action?), or are concerned with the pros and cons of using an external 'objective' evaluator. I also believe it would be wise to expand the scope of future research and include not only participants, but perhaps also other stakeholders that I did not discuss here, such as the audience or the wider community. Alternatively, researchers could investigate applied theatre practices that operate outside the Western World and look at the ethical dilemmas of evaluation in contexts, like post-war areas.

One of the main issues that is essential to address, is the lack of an effective language that can capture all the different dimensions and values of applied theatre and that is accepted and validated by all stakeholders. In combination with this methodologies could be improved. As pointed out in the introduction, stakeholders are already occupied with finding more appropriate methodologies and evaluation languages. In the context of realising an ethical evaluation practice, I believe that starting points for resolving ethical dilemmas can be found in the more informal, creative approaches to evaluation that are already used by some arts organisations. The task at hand, now, is to find ways of making sure that the information these informal evaluations provide, is manageable and included in evaluations, to try and realise a more interactive relationship with existing formal evaluations.



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## Appendixes

### Appendix 1: Reading suggestions by Sarah Thornton

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## Appendix 2: Glossary

Advocacy	promoting the work in order to garner support <sup>203</sup>
Data collection	collection of specific data that can be used for evaluation and advocacy
Documentation	recording of what happened during a project or programme with help of, for instance, video, photography and journals.
Evaluation	assessing the success/failure, worth/value and quality of something <sup>204</sup>
Feedback	information gathered about someone's reaction to a process or event <sup>205</sup>
Formative evaluation	evaluation focussed on improving or refining practice
Formal evaluation	structured way of evaluating
Informal evaluation	everyday way of evaluating
Monitoring	keeping a continuous record of appropriate data, and progress towards goals <sup>206</sup>
Summative evaluation	evaluation focussed on proving the impact of the existing practice
Self-evaluation	evaluation carried out by one or more of the direct stakeholders

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<sup>203</sup> Collective Encounters, "Evaluation Policy and Quality Framework," 1.

<sup>204</sup> Ibid.

<sup>205</sup> Ibid.

<sup>206</sup> Ibid.