



EM-what now?

It was too rainy a morning to be a start of such a promising project. As the four partners in The European Midwestern Art Production (EMWAP) gathered for their first kick-off meeting, Antwerp refused to show what a sunny city she had been. Sometimes. But here we were, with **Productiehuis Rotterdam** (The Netherlands), **Arcola Theatre** (UK), **Talimhane Tiyatrosu** (Turkey), **0090** (Belgium), me, and a never ending stream of grey moist outside.

After four short introductions things got very practical. EMWAP includes each partner bringing forward a production that will tour to one, two or three of the other partner countries. 0090 will coordinate and add to the dynamics by suggesting foreign residencies, foreign artists or foreign venues. The project culmination would be the 2015 International Festival in Istanbul, that will combine all partners and productions and include a seminar to present the results of the process.

Regarding the Midwest-philosophy, if you'd ask me what that is to me right now and I could point to you a picture of that meeting, I would simply say it was *that*. It is to orchestrate interactions between artists and producers from several European countries. To stage synergies, to coordinate moments of mutual artistic influence, to take people out of their comfort zone to see what happens when you put them in another setting. I could also say this project is here to actively obstruct any idea of a supposedly dormant/static/quiescent European contemporary art scene. Pick one.

As we went through the practicalities, the time tables, artistic choices, production schemes and timing, common grounds were found in humour and international politics. Please note that language was never a subject, let alone an obstacle. Here's how you win me over. Or at least here's how you really cross borders. Just as we silently agreed not to complain about the weather, there was the silent agreement *just to talk art*. Oscar Wilde once said that conversation about the weather was the last refuge of the unimaginative. So yes, no matter the weather. This project's future seems to be quite bright.