

Mainstream or marginal?

A study of the musical practices of three
African immigrant performers in Norway

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CONTENTS

Contents	i
Acknowledgements	ix
Chapter 1: Constructing the field	1
Purpose and implications	1
Perspectives	2
Three combinations of ‘world’ and ‘music’	2
Searching for the ‘diverse’	3
Discourses of difference or sameness.....	8
From observation to research design	9
Theoretical sampling of research participants	10
Research participants selected	11
Recurring ‘thematic strands’	14
The world of ‘world music’	15
Africa on stage	16
Norway: Contexts, society, policies, discourses.....	17
The researcher as insider or outsider	19
Chapter overview	21
Chapter 2: Approaching the music of the <i>Other</i>	27
“Is this world music to you?” Entering a field of critical discourse	28
The ‘Other’ in musical production	29
World music: distance and marginalization.....	31
Postcolonial perspectives in world music discourse.....	33
Hybridity and the global imagination	34
Points of departure	35
Turning to subjects and actions.....	36

From genre to methodology.....	37
Theoretical framing	38
Essentializing 'origin'	39
The Other/Same dichotomy in postcolonial discourse	43
Critique of postcolonial theory	48
Decontextualization and recontextualization – of sounds and people	49
Research questions	54
Chapter 3: Adapting grounded theory.....	57
Methodology, epistemology, ontology.....	57
The selection of grounded theory.....	59
What is grounded theory?	60
Grounded theory terminology.....	61
Methodological procedures of grounded theory.....	61
Critique of grounded theory: subjectivity and construction	64
The 'neutral' observer.....	65
Gadamer on subjectivity and prejudice.....	67
Conclusions on grounded theory: Researcher subjectivity and grounded theory ideals	68
Delimitations.....	70
Ontology: talk and text.....	71
Phenomenology: Observing actions	72
Performance: music as action.....	72
Ethnomusicology, popular musicology and the culture term	75
Popular musicology.....	75
Musical analysis as a mapping of horizons	76
Ethnomusicology.....	79
Practice.....	85
Performance and discourse.....	86

Conclusions: combining grounded and extant theories and methods	90
Further methodological considerations	92
Notes on translation	92
Confidentiality	94
Chapter 4: ‘A minority thing’	97
Introduction: “Going with the mainstream”	97
Nasibu	98
Context and view	100
Concert description.....	101
Concert introduction	101
Music.....	102
Representing African music	103
Audience interaction	105
Storytelling	106
‘A family thing’	106
Rounding up	108
Recognizing difference	109
Multiculturalist discourse	111
Interview and developing questions.....	112
The market versus public support	112
Themes for further analysis	115
Model of ideas.....	116
Paradoxes	118
Access to funding	119
The concept of Bantaba	120
Year of storytelling	121
Improving the reports.....	121
Critique and need for adjustments.....	122
Concert setting	123

The conceptual producer.....	124
The role of the storyteller.....	125
Phenomenological view	126
Multiculturalism	127
Multiculturalist dilemmas.....	129
Multiculturalism and Norwegian political context.....	132
Governance through funding.....	133
The Year of Cultural Diversity	135
‘The national project’.....	136
‘The national project’ and the responsibility of minority artists ..	138
The Year of Cultural Diversity and production of difference.....	139
Downloading of concepts and absorption of multiculturalist axioms	140
Summing up: Discourse, governance and power	141
Delimitations.....	143
Conclusions: Opposing models of empowerment and marginalization	144
Mainstream?.....	146
Application to overall research and dissertation topics	147
Chapter 5: Transcending tradition	149
Introducing Kossa.....	149
Relocating to Norway.....	150
Kossa and Touba Orchestra.....	151
Selecting data to present	152
Introducing the horns	152
‘Cow horn’ rehearsal sequence	153
Building analytical categories	157
Category 1: The sound of horns.....	158
Category 2: Tradition	159
Category 3: Composition, or building the score	160

Category 4: Types of professionalism	162
Category 5: Band community	164
Concept: From tradition to composition.....	165
The village and the National Ballet.....	166
Kossa's acquired role.....	169
Critical perspectives	171
Distance as valuing factor.....	173
'Tradition' as provider of authenticity.....	174
Moving between representations	176
Chapter 6: Reconstructing Africa	179
Introduction	179
Rikskonsertene's multicultural programmes	179
Context, expectation	181
Establishing the space for performance.....	182
Setting the rules of performance	183
Greetings and dialogue: Call and response	183
Performance introduction: Laughter and imitation	186
Introducing discourses: Origin, Africa, otherness.....	187
Origin – of performers	187
Origin – of instruments.....	189
Discursive categories	190
Storytelling and theatricality.....	191
Signs of production	192
Critical analysis	194
On comedy and the clown – minstrelsy or 'traditional' performance?	194
Embodying discourse.....	197
Representing <i>Africa</i> and <i>origin</i>	199
Participation and experience	200
Drum Workshop.....	201

Deconstructing dance.....	202
De- and reconstructing Africa.....	203
Entrepreneurship and community	205
Summing up	207
Critiques of postcolonialism	209
Chapter 7: Building in-between spaces.....	211
Introduction	211
A diasporic audience	211
The Mantra club event.....	213
A reconnective diaspora	215
Soukous as a globalized, Pan African music style.....	217
A Ras Nas performance in Mid-Norway.....	219
Performing soukous.....	220
The role of the toaster	227
Performance roles and soukous as African cosmopolitanism.....	229
Soukous and reggae as ‘Black Atlantic’ reconnections	230
Ras Nas’ performance as establishing a diasporic space	232
Two types of diaspora.....	233
Conclusions	234
Chapter 8: Taking it back.....	237
Background: hip hop and discourses of otherness	237
“Small places, big places”	238
Becoming a hip hop community	241
Hip hop and rap as urban culture	243
Providing urbanity	244
Making it big - in Africa	245
Reception.....	246
Becoming an artist	249
Africa as centre	250

Musical reconnections	252
Taking it back – to the market.....	254
Reconnection as strategy.....	256
Concept: A double reconnection orientation.....	257
Virtual realities, mediascapes and future research.....	259
Really going with the mainstream: Eurovision Song Contest 2011	
.....	260
Reciprocal gazes.....	266
Diasporic modern-ness	267
On otherness, sameness and reciprocal gazes	269
Pointing towards conclusions	271
Chapter 9: Conclusions	273
Research questions and analytical concepts.....	273
Analytical concepts	274
Same and Other.....	276
A grounded theory of recontextualizing musical performers...280	
Grounded theory part 1: Constructing ‘sameness’ through	
community	281
Diaspora as living opportunity.....	283
Grounded theory part 2: Transcending the national project.....	285
Relevance, implications and future research.....	286
Implications.....	288
Representing or <i>presenting</i> ?	289
List of figures.....	293
References.....	295
Appendix I: Initial handout with information about the research	
project	309
Appendix II: Statement of consent (to be signed by participants)	
.....	311

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CHAPTER 1:

CONSTRUCTING THE FIELD

- An introduction to the field, questions, methodology and theory of the dissertation.

Purpose and implications

The purpose of this study is to gain a better understanding of how immigrant musical performers navigate their way through Norwegian popular music scenes, particularly how they handle the issues of *representation* that being immigrant musicians may imply.¹ I also wish to explore their experiences and expressions in relation to processes and discourses of cultural change in Norwegian society. Further, my purpose is to highlight certain critical discourses relevant in this field and provide new insights into current developments in the music markets and scenes available to immigrant performing artists in Norway. I hope that immigrant artists and the organizations that work with them may want to explore the insights and questions offered in this work in their continuing development and reassessment of their practices.

A purpose that has been developing in this work is to challenge current theories and perspectives on non-Western performers on Western musical scenes by exploring the recontextualization processes of artists from a perspective of rational action rather than the dominant postcolonial focus on representation. This exploration also aims at building new theoretical concepts and new

¹ In Norway, 'immigrant' is almost exclusively applied to non-Western immigrants, of first and second generation, and even beyond that. Despite this gross simplification, I will start by using the term 'immigrant' more or less in the same way, precisely for its discursive function. I will discuss this application in Chapter 2.

methodological insights through combining a Foucauldian reading of discourse with a phenomenological exploration of artists' actions.

Perspectives

The starting point for this work is an acknowledgement of the fact that Norway has a more diverse population than ever. With increased migration, in particular non-Western immigration from the 1970s and onwards, this growing diversity has met with a range of responses, from worries about perceived 'changes in culture' to the establishment of outreach programmes promoting cultural diversity. The fierce discourses arising among the receiving part, between the welcoming and sceptical (or downright hostile) attitudes towards the cultural changes migration brings, do, however, reveal little of the life realities of those individuals seeking a new h. Those who reconfigure their life worlds in relocating to a new context, one that challenges their understanding of who they are and how they can express themselves, and how their expressions – such as musical performances – may relate to, describe or even influence their place in present-day society. This dissertation attempts to approach the discourses on cultural diversity in Norway from the perspective of immigrant performers' experiences, particularly through observing what I read as strategic actions on their part, namely preparing and giving performances. Thus my opening research questions reads: *How do immigrant musical performers construct their practices in Norway?*

Three combinations of 'world' and 'music'

The following story serves to demonstrate an early stage of the research process, where I was looking for a relevant ensemble or performer to observe ethnographically, and where I ended up observing three musical venues staging cultural diversity in very different ways – or combining 'world' and 'music' in

ways that did not necessarily become ‘world music’. Subsequently, I will present an analysis of this observation that informs the design of this study, first by providing arguments for my choice of selecting research participants along the lines of *theoretical sampling* in grounded theory methodology, second by drawing some thematic and theoretical lines that will be explored in the course of this dissertation.

Searching for the ‘diverse’

On an early summer’s day in June 2007 I found myself crisscrossing the city centre of Oslo by the most serviceable means of transportation: the rental bike, which you can both pick up and drop off at various locations around the city. The occasion was the huge annual outdoor mobilization of artists called ‘Musikkfest Oslo’.² What I was looking for was an ensemble or an artist to observe through fieldwork, someone who somehow reflected my field of interest, which was the processes of cultural change in Norwegian society. I had literally hundreds of free performances taking place at thirty-one locations throughout the city to choose from, but had selected three venues where immigrant performers seemed to be most active: an ‘African’ music venue in the greens of Sofienbergparken, a ‘World’ stage located on the kerbside at Arbeidersamfunnets Plass (‘Labour Society Square’), in the dusty and still rugged³ vicinity of the Labour Party and union headquarters at Youngstorget, and a hip hop venue blocking a narrow street next to City Hall.

² Formerly known as ‘Musikkens dag’ – ‘Day of Music’, *Musikkfest Oslo* has grown to become a major display of musical activity in the capital of artists, from amateur to professional, who wish to promote themselves. It was therefore a perfect spot to get a broad view of ‘what was going on’ in various music scenes.

³ I write “still rugged”, as this area contrasts sharply with my general observation of the city after returning to Oslo more than ten years after I had left it upon completing university. Suddenly, it seemed, there was hardly a spot in Oslo that had not been gentrified, refurbished and rebuilt, and the pockets you formerly found in need of repair, like the odd house falling apart for lack of maintenance, were almost all gone, all witnesses to Norway’s extended period of economic growth.

Anyone who has travelled Oslo's inner city will know that these locations are some distance apart, so I had to estimate both distances and schedules in order to time the performances of the artists that I wanted to screen. Yet as the day wore on, the stage appearances were sliding out of schedule, so what I had planned and what I actually observed slowly slipped apart, making my screening of artists increasingly random. At some point I gave up covering every performance of interest and just went with the flow of experiences for the moment.

Being six months into my PhD programme, after a winter where I had found few relevant performances and activities to observe, a day such as this made me like "a kid in a candy store" with too much to take in and too little time. But as I sweated away on my rental bike, changing venues for the fifth or sixth time, I still felt nowhere nearer to a decision about which artists to observe for my dissertation work. Rather than taking an interest in individual performers, what started to catch my attention was the difference between the stages, which all gave their diverging versions of Norwegian cultural diversity, or what it meant to be an immigrant artist in Norway.

The stage at 'Arbeidersamfunnets plass', laid on by the Norwegian artist promotion organization *Du Store Verden*,⁴ had a wide variety of artists. The show opened with a collective of musicians from at least six nations led by a young woman in a Norwegian traditional costume known as 'bunad', announcing itself with the slogan "musikk uten grenser" – "music without boundaries".⁵ What followed was a long programme of various crossover constellations and quick shifts in genre; reggae/dancehall, salsa, Afro-joik, Brazilian-Balkan rock fusion, klezmer, R&B, and a DJ with an Indian bhangra drummer fronting the stage for an early afternoon dance session.

⁴ Literally: 'You Big World', a somewhat old-fashioned statement intended to express surprise (similar to the English exclamation 'My goodness') which in this context becomes a play on words to illustrate the mission to present a larger world to presumably surprised audiences.

⁵ A play on words meaning both 'music without borders / boundaries', and 'unlimited music'.

The 'African' stage was at the same time serving as the closing day of 'Afrikan History Week',⁶ a seminar, workshop and festival held by the organization *Afrikan youth in Norway*. They invited people to "chill & grill" in the park, featuring different generations of artists of African heritage, most of whom were living in Norway, but also artists invited from other Scandinavian countries as well as a few artists arriving from Kenya, South Africa and the United States. Reggae blended with soukous, rap, soul, spoken word and solo vocal performances while the DJ-host kept urging the audience to move from the grass where they were, indeed, chilling and grilling, and come closer to the stage on the parking lot to "lift the spirit of the artists". The venue seemed to attract quite a mixed crowd in terms of age and ethnicity, yet with a prevalence of reggae and Rasta attributes of clothing colours, vocal expressions and hairstyles.

The programme at the hip hop stage 'Morradi'⁷ started off early with a dance battle between finalists from various junior high schools, judged by a man and woman hailed by the speaker as leading senior 'street dancers'. They agreed somewhat reluctantly to come on stage to prove their skills – a few improvised moves – before they were allowed to point out the winners. The speaker handed out company-sponsored prizes to the contestants: T-shirts, cellphone accessories, and music players. The programme went on to introduce novice artists – dancers, rap amateurs – from the multi-cultural youth culture house *X-ray* before gradually moving on to more and more established artists as the day went on. The afternoon was topped off with celebrated artists such as the rap duo Madcon – who at that point had already reached star status in Norway – and the young godfather of Norwegian Rap, El Axel.

Finding youth

These were only some of the artists with an immigrant background, and what struck me most at this venue was the presence, almost predominance, of

⁶ Spelled with a k, *Afrikan* is often associated with Afrocentric political movements.

⁷ *Morradi* is slang for 'your mother', as in rap phraseology; "...and your mother, too!"

immigrant youth both on stage and among the audience. For some time I had been going through the databases of three organizations⁸ that promoted immigrant musicians and ‘world’ artists, without being able to find any young artists; indeed, there was hardly a musician under thirty on their files. So I wondered, simply, that if young immigrant musicians existed, where they were and what they were doing. (Well, here they were). I had assumed that there would be a broad representation of artists in these databases, but young immigrant musicians were simply not promoted by these organizations. Was this because young performers were not established enough yet? Or were they not interested in being promoted through these channels? If not, why not?

This question had started to trouble me, sensing as I did that I would overlook something if I went straight from wanting to study cultural diversity to the particular representations of diversity that were most apparent – or accessible – and most outspoken, for example in the artist databases of organizations promoting immigrant artists or at the venues actively addressing cultural diversity or ‘multiculture’ as a defining framework for artistic expression.⁹ These all seemed to lean towards a *world music* type of representation, emphasizing the artists’ musical connections to their places of origin or linking musical performance implicitly or explicitly to ideas of solidarity.

Representation as discourse

It was against this backdrop that the differences between the venues became more interesting to observe than the artists themselves. This was because the way these three venues contextualized the performers not only offered three

⁸ The promotion databases of *Du Store Verden* (www.du-store-verden.no), *Samspill* (www.samspillweb.no) and *Rikskonsertene*’s programme offers for schools, and also their international programme sites (www.rikskonsertene.no). Accessed October 2006-June 2007.

⁹ ‘Multiculture / -al’ is my translation of ‘flerkulturell’, a term often used to denote cultural diversity in Norway. Although the term is meant to describe the mix of cultures in society, it is often applied to subjects who represent the non-Western contribution to this diversity, as in ‘multicultural artists’. Odd Are Berkaak has argued that the word acts as a kind of camouflage for discussing ‘persons from the former European colonies’ (Berkaak in debate on the upcoming *Year of Cultural Diversity*, Stiftelsen Horisont, November 2007).

different stories about what it meant to be an immigrant artist in Norway, but also showed divergent versions of the place and representation of immigrant musicians on Norwegian popular music scenes.

Another way of saying this is: This was an observation of immigrant performers taking part in different *discourses* when representing themselves musically. While I became more theoretically explicit about this idea at a later stage of my research process, already at this point I realized that there were very different issues being treated here, and I felt a need to understand this more clearly in the process of selecting performers to observe for my study. As many researchers—such as Repstad (2007), Postholm (2010), Corbin & Strauss (2008 [1990]), Fangen (2004) – have pointed out, analysis does not take place *after* data collection or fieldwork; on the contrary, it is always present, particularly in the process of selection.¹⁰ The analysis that started to emerge in this observation at this very venue was a hunch that the absence of youth from certain cultural arenas was somehow significant. And also – what could be called an implicit hypothesis – that this absence might be connected to the kind of roles, or image, or *representation* they wanted or did not want. I wondered further if there was a shift – between generations, or just happening at this time – in how representation of *difference* was taking place or manifesting itself. At least, there were simultaneous, alternative representations available: How did immigrant artists choose between them? I was curious about how this process of selecting a mode of representation took place, as it clearly placed the performers in very different discourses about themselves and their contexts.

¹⁰ Unless you do a quantitative research project with a random sample, which still requires an analysis of what ‘random’ means in respect to the hypothesis.

Discourses of difference or sameness

Following this analytical interest in discursive approaches to performance, I will briefly sketch here how I see these three venues treating, in a general sense, discourses of cultural or ethnic difference.¹¹

The stage at ‘Arbeidersamfunnets plass’ did its best to promote and address cultural diversity in a cultural, pluralistic and inclusive manner. This was manifested through its ‘lunch buffet’ approach to the world of music, putting all styles and genres – and, not least, mixes of styles – on the table at once, to be enjoyed alongside each other. For reasons I will return to in Chapter 2, I will call this a ‘world music’ approach, one which makes certain statements about the universality of music and focuses on ‘tradition’ as a tool or common denominator to enable this particular intercultural linking.

The ‘African’ venue, on the other hand, tried to promote a unitary, cosmopolitan idea of ‘African-ness’ across generations, continents and genres. While careful to embrace its non-African aficionados by appealing to ideas of unity, or just general ideas of counter-culture and resistance,¹² it still rested on a discourse of race, identity and diasporic bonds. This is also a defined policy of the facilitator, *Afrikan youth in Norway*, or AYIN, who express their mission as offering young people of African heritage in Norway an experience of belonging to a community.¹³

While, in contrast to both these venues, the ‘hip hop’ stage did not address diversity or difference at all – at least not explicitly – it was the most diverse. At ‘Morradi’ the transitions and mixes between artists with and without immigrant

¹¹ See Chapter 2 on a *theory of difference*. Based on Milner and Browitt (2002), I see the term ‘difference’ as a foundation for the discursive positions of ‘otherness’.

¹² Such as when two fighter jets circled over the city (in itself a rare thing in Oslo), distorting the announcements through their noise, the DJ announced, with some Rasta references: “Let them do their Babylon, they can never keep us down.”

¹³ By AYIN’s focus on self-expression and reflexivity, the organization has been a springboard for a number of young artists on the Norwegian music scene, particularly through the R.I.S.E. project.

backgrounds appeared seamless, possibly intentionally, but still significantly different from the other venues in that cultural and ethnic *difference* was not addressed, either to manifest multicultural solidarity or unity or to constitute some kind of a common diasporic cultural identity. There was, in other words, no ‘music without boundaries’ theme. If the staging itself represented a discourse about immigrant youth in Norway, it was that they were the norm rather than the exception, a discourse of being ‘Same’ rather than ‘Other’.

Using a mainstream (though exclusive) cultural expression, the performers likewise claimed a central ground, rejecting – consciously or not – the margins of ‘alternative’, ‘traditional’ and ‘diasporic’ culture altogether. Still, through lyrics and expression many artists did treat experiences of difference and marginality in the context of young, unsettling urban life. This diasporic and generational discourse is already present in the street credibility image inherited from African-American artists developing the genre. Or, rather, developing hip hop *culture* with all its expressions and genres, yet with a somewhat consistent set of contextual images referring back to its African-American origins.

From observation to research design

So where did this early observation leave me? First of all, an analysis of a public scene for immigrant performers in Norway – and I regard this mobilization of artists as somehow representing a broad, more general public sphere – revealed that there were many different representations being played out by or for immigrant performers in Norway.¹⁴ What particularly caught my attention was

¹⁴ There are some differences between my general focus on Norway and the specific place of Oslo as the capital and largest city. This factor does play a certain role in this observation, as Oslo is also the most diverse city in the country, and therefore these observations naturally represent a more specific context and diversity. These, for example, appear in the observations of youth, who might in particular express their affiliation with the multi-ethnic urban youth reality of Oslo rather than with the general discourses of being and belonging in Norway. However, I argue this observation as a way of ‘stirring up’ questions and perspectives for further investigation. I am aware of the specifics of Oslo as a place, although it is sometimes difficult to distinguish national discourse from the local Oslo discourses, as

how these represented different discourses on the immigrant ‘self’, on Norwegian society, and on the place of these ‘selves’ in that society. I saw discourses on ‘otherness’ and ‘sameness’ being treated in different ways, which led me to think that there were divergent approaches to these critical issues among immigrant artists, and that these divergences somehow represented differing artist *strategies*. These strategies I wanted to explore: what kind of discourses immigrant musical performers took part in when creating their practices, how they handled them or how they utilized them to situate themselves in a new context.

Exploring this is a way of operationalizing my opening research question: *How do immigrant musical performers construct their practices in Norway?*

The particular ways in which immigrant performers took (and take) part in discourses through their artistic practices were certainly more than those experienced and briefly analyzed here. But these observations served to inform my selection of artists to observe by directing my attention towards certain topics that were subsequently adapted in the process of sampling a set of artist practices that would – hopefully – reveal a variety of strategies to explore.

Theoretical sampling of research participants

The analysis of the early observations described above is a stage in grounded theory methodology known as *theoretical sampling*, in which I go from finding certain analytical categories (and above, particular *discourses* as categories) and move on to selecting a sample of research participants based on the selection of topics to treat.

most major media channels are located there and tend to dominate the ‘national’ agenda (apart from when this is countered by the specific anti-centralist, ‘district’ definition of what constitutes Norway). The subsequent observations in this work are made at many different locations in Norway, although the majority are made with touring artists living in or near Oslo. Nonetheless I reckon that the context of my study is mostly Norwegian, and the discourses national.

The three venues pointed to at least three different discursive strategies employed by immigrant musicians in creating a musical practice: a ‘multicultural’, a ‘diasporic’, and a ‘mainstream’. When moving from these observations to a research sample, I did not just create three case studies to resemble these three venues (‘Diaspora’, for instance, turned out to be an overarching concept). Rather, I used this and other observations to become aware of some variations in discourses and artistic strategies that I wanted to cover in my research setup, thus already circling in on certain analytical categories. Combining the observations of this day with my previous screenings of artists, I decided to create a multi-sited study and observe at least one artist working from a ‘multicultural’ perspective, which I found was best represented in programmes promoting cultural diversity, such as Rikskonsertene’s school concert series.¹⁵ Second, I wanted to observe a more independent practice, i.e. a practice not aimed at ‘conveying culture’ in the didactic-political sense. Third, I wanted to find someone who operated on a more mainstream scene, preferably a young artist. Of course these categories are not necessarily separate or incommensurable, and could in theory all be part of one artist’s various practices. But since I did not find one artist or group encompassing all these factors, I ended up selecting three artists who somehow covered this setup, although they also exceeded the limitations of my definitions and early field experiences. What I wish to demonstrate here is how this selection is part of a gradual building of research categories from data analysis.

Research participants selected

The first one I asked was Nasibu Mwanukuzi, a Tanzanian performing artist living in Norway since the mid-1980s. Many of the people I met mentioned him as an individual who had been active on Norwegian popular music scenes for a

¹⁵ Rikskonsertene is a governmental, national concert producer and provider. It is known in English as *Concerts Norway*, and formerly as *The Norwegian National Concert Institute*. See www.rikskonsertene.no

long time. I was told he had been working on ‘his own thing’ for a long time as a reggae and soukous artist performing mainly in clubs.¹⁶ A few months later I asked Kossa Diomande, a drummer born in the Ivory Coast, to participate in my study, approaching him primarily because he was very involved with Rikskonsertene’s concert series for school children. He also had his own band, which I thought would allow me to compare representational strategies of an immigrant musician inside and outside the frames of a governmental cultural organization. I also wanted to observe a young artist on the hip hop scene for the reasons mentioned above, as ‘otherness’ seemed to be treated very differently here than in my other observations. Yet, since I was already observing two artists ethnographically – each with two ensembles – I allowed myself to follow the ‘funneling’ logic of grounded theory methodology, and chose to enter this part of my fieldwork at a later stage when the analytical categories were more defined. In this dissertation these last observations then serve to tie the existing themes together while also creating an opening for further research. The approach here is that of a shorter ethnographic study of the practice of Kenyan-born hip hop and pop artist Stella Mwangi in 2009,¹⁷ combined with studying other sources, including blogs, YouTube videos, interviews and other media presentations.

After completing this selection process, my core research sample consisted of three African musical performers living in Norway, with over twenty band members and affiliates whom I have encountered through their practices. The risk of such a design is that it may become too broadly targeted for the framework of a PhD dissertation. I have tried to handle this challenge through adopting an increasingly strategized ethnographic methodology in which the grounded categories enable a more selective approach as my research evolves.

¹⁶ I learned he also had a second ensemble and various practices actually closer to the practices here described as ‘conveying culture’, which offered an unexpected comparative value.

¹⁷ Before gaining celebrity status in Norway through competing in the 2011 Eurovision Song Contest, as this appearance is treated more like an afterthought.

Although not necessitated by my initial broad focus on ‘immigrants’ (in the popular sense of the term; the non-Western *Other* residing in Norway), the selection of three African¹⁸ artists allowed a comparative take on some particular discourses on African-ness and diaspora, which in turn generate a narrative across the three different case studies.

While each of the artists mentioned was selected on the assumption that he or she covered differing strategies (a term which I will discuss later), I tried to start afresh with an open outlook by producing ‘thick descriptions’ in my new observations of their performances and rehearsals, which were in turn analyzed to generate analytical categories. What has been taken from this initial phase, however, is the whole idea about representation and discourse which is illustrated in how my observations led to my analytical focus on performances as discursive acts.

These reflections on an early fieldwork experience thus sketch out the base for my research *field, theory, questions* and *methodology*. The *field* of my study is, broadly defined, the musical representation of immigrant artists on popular music scenes in Norway. More narrowly, I will focus on African immigrant artists, which allows for more particularity and a comparative element with respect to how their practices process discourses of being African, and of being an African in a global diaspora. The dimension of *theory* in this study is approached through grounded theory; the idea that the main theoretical perspectives should derive from analyzing research data. These analyses then lead me to apply theoretical analytical tools like *discourse, power, agency* and *diaspora* at various points. These are also recurring terms in a history of postcolonial theory and discourse. My research *questions* address the issue of ‘otherness’ found in artistic representation in Norway. Finally, the manner of

¹⁸ Although ‘African’ as a concept and category lacks precision and contains generalizations that make a vast continent be perceived as a country, ‘Africa’ and ‘African’ make up a set of ideas, representations and discourses that these artists encounter and engage with in Norway. I therefore argue that although they do not belong to a common ‘culture’ (other than Norwegian), they do actively relate to ‘African’ both in how they are defined and how they define and represent themselves.

selecting artists as research participants is part of my *methodology* – how I approached performers whose practices seemed to respond to the topics and questions gradually emerging from my observations.

In Chapters 2 and 3 I will discuss in more detail the elements introduced here narratively; research *field, theory, questions* and *methodology*. Still, I reserve some of the theoretical and methodological discussions for later chapters, as I wish to put them to work where applicable in the text, thus not separating theory and methodology from empirical presentations and analyses.

Recurring ‘thematic strands’

Before providing a brief outline of each chapter, I will point out three major ‘thematic strands’ in this dissertation that appear through all the different chapters: the world of ‘world music’, Africa on stage, and Norwegian society and culture. These all relate back to the narrative and perspectives already introduced in the discussion of my observation of the three venues at ‘Musikkfest Oslo’ in 2007.

So far I have applied the term ‘discourse’ without offering any further definition or explanation. I will discuss my application and understanding of the term in Chapter 3, from a Foucauldian tradition of seeing discourses as ways of constructing realities as much as describing them, which also implies that ‘discourse’ is seen just as much in terms of actions as of statements. Instead of applying some kind of ‘discourse analysis’ to music or statements as ‘texts’, I consider the ways my research participants choose to represent themselves artistically as ‘discursive acts’ serving to construct them by their becoming connected to history, places, people or ideas. As I demonstrated above, the way artists represent themselves actively connects them with larger bodies of discourse circulating in society and throughout history. Tracking and describing these connections to ‘bodies of discourse’ then make up what I will call

‘thematic strands’ in this dissertation that are followed among the many sites and instances described.

The world of ‘world music’

As I will describe in Chapter 2, the ‘world music’ term kept surfacing in the early stages of my fieldwork and research, eventually becoming a term in relation to which I needed to position my work. It also makes up a set of critical discourses and literature that I will discuss in Chapter 2, relating my work to a critical, postcolonial discourse on how the ‘Other’ is presented to Western audiences. Grappling with the world music terminology also served to open my field, in the sense that I wanted to go beyond it by observing *differing* strategies of immigrant musicians. At the same time, the discourses surrounding the world music term and phenomenon remain a ‘thematic strand’ by their posing critical questions to various aspects of the practices I observe. This point may be particularly seen in the recurring questions surrounding which markets and representations are available to non-Western (and specifically African) musicians in Norway.

More specific world music markers appear in the analytical categories developed through my music and performance analyses. In Chapter 5, for instance, my analytical categories resemble the world music properties, such as musical hybridity, metaphors of travel and cosmopolitan audience strategies, presented by Tim Taylor (2007) and Bob White (2012). In this observation such connotations make up a strong framework for a festival performance, strongly tying the performer to discourses on tradition that he seeks to transcend. In the analysis of the composing process leading up to the festival performance, my analytical category of ‘sonic markers’ further relates to Taylor’s observation of world music’s increasingly becoming a set of separate sounds through sound libraries (T. D. Taylor, 2012). This world music strand thus relates to most of what I am describing, from the critical issues of representation, down to the sounds that mark and sell ‘otherness’ in particular markets.

Africa on stage

The second strand is what I call ‘Africa on stage’, which runs from ‘Afrikan history week’ in Sofienbergparken to all the performances and practices observed. While my work relates to a larger discourse on immigrants and cultural representations in Norway, my selection of *African* immigrant artists adds a level of specificity to this general discourse. The term ‘Africa’ is in itself a vast concept, as is ‘African’. And although it is possible to conceptualize ‘Africa’ (usually meaning Sub-Saharan Africa) in terms of history, geography, and possibly also cultural similarities, before moving into describing regions and particular cultures, I try to avoid applying ‘Africa’ or ‘African’ to define my research sample in any categorical manner. Rather, I seek to observe how the agents apply these concepts – and how they are applied to them – through verbal and non-verbal discourse. It is thus the Foucauldian term *discourse* that enables sampling and juxtaposing these artists under the heading ‘African’. While they originate from very different African contexts and countries – Tanzania, Kenya and the Ivory Coast, urban and rural, young and middle-aged, East and West, traditional and popular musical backgrounds – and have arrived in Norway under different circumstances and at different times, my hypothesis is that they still enter into many of the same discourses of being ‘African’ in Norway. These discourses are entered from two angles: 1) they label themselves as African and thus join in a discourse on the global African diaspora, and 2) they are *labelled* African by others. Both of these factors place them at risk of entering into essentialist discourses on origin. This situation also points to two different conceptions of ‘Africa on stage’. One is found in the history of Africans staged for Western audiences, from minstrelsy in the late nineteenth century, to the claims that today’s world music scene is an extension of the same colonial gaze (Erlmann, 1999b). This perspective is critically scrutinized in Chapters 2 and 6 in particular. Since my observations in this dissertation mainly concern Africans performing for Norwegian audiences, a critical perspective addressed is how this history of African representation to Europe, or the West, resonates in these practices and how the performers deal with, or navigate, this critical history.

The other conception of ‘Africa on stage’ concerns particular discourses on the African diaspora, or how people of African heritage worldwide identify themselves as Africans, and utilize and build diasporic bonds to maintain – among other things – an idea of African diasporic performance. Reggae, soukous and even rap are examples of expressions that contain a history of transatlantic travel through African diasporic networks, or what Paul Gilroy calls *The Black Atlantic* (Gilroy, 1993; White, 2002). This particular conception of ‘Africa on stage’ develops through my observation of performances in Chapters 7 and 8, forming an important perspective on *diaspora* in order to understand the practices and artist strategies that I observe.

Thus observing various African immigrant artists – although from different countries – allows me both to make comparisons between the observations and to accumulate perspectives between them in analysis.

Norway: Contexts, society, policies, discourses

All the observations referred to in this work, are of actions carried out in a Norwegian context. Or, rather in various Norwegian *contexts*, meaning different locations, scenes, types of media and discourses. My working hypothesis is that the *discursive acts* of my research participants are part of a process where the artists are trying to make sense of their own place in a particular context.¹⁹ This also makes understanding and discussing Norway as ‘context’ in various ways a recurring theme – or ‘strand’ – in this dissertation. This particularly concerns the discourses on cultural transformations in Norway that demographic changes over recent decades have generated. Yet the aspect of what Norway as a country *represents* is not presented broadly as such. Given that my primary focus is on the agents and their actions – i.e. a select group of African immigrant performers who operate within and relate to the context of this country,

¹⁹ See hypothesis and questions at the end of Chapter 2.

including its discourses, and its policies – the aspect of Norway as a nation, society or culture remains implicit to a large degree throughout the study.

However, when the ideas about Norway, Norwegian-ness and Norwegian immigrant discourses are more than a context in which the actions are carried out, i.e. when they play an important role in my analysis, I do explicate how I understand these ideas. This occurs in Chapter 2, for example, when the term ‘immigrant’ is discussed in relation to Norwegian identity discourse which, I argue, defines both Norwegians and immigrants based on a particular discursive linking between origin and identity. Or in Chapter 4, where I discuss Norwegian cultural policies that address the country’s culturally diverse society in relation to the claims of utopian visions of diversity in critical national discourse, ones which relate these policies to multiculturalist ideologies and discourse.

Moving on, Chapter 5 contains observations of a performance given at a Norwegian folk music festival, exploring how ‘tradition’ – although seemingly a common denominator – constructs Norwegian-ness and African-ness in different ways. And Chapter 6 contains an exploration of African artists performing for schoolchildren as part of Rikskonsertene’s school programmes. Being a governmental cultural organization with a mandate and obligation to address and promote cultural diversity, the context of this performance is, in various ways, saturated with Norwegian cultural and educational policies, prompting a discussion about the relationship between artists’ agencies and larger structures of power – such as Norwegian politics. Extending this agency aspect, Chapters 7 to 8 explore how artists go *beyond* the expectations to contribute to particular visions of a culturally diverse Norwegian society. This strand concerning Norway as a context is followed all the way to one part of a two-part conclusion, or *grounded theory*, seeing how these artists both enter and evade particular national discourses in constructing their practices.

When Foucault (1965) claims that defining the ‘abnormal’ serves to confirm the normality of the rest, my approach²⁰ reads this statement backwards: To the extent that this is a study of Norway and Norwegian society and culture, I am studying Norway through its Others.

The researcher as insider or outsider

Although research presentations should not be about the researcher, I will – in order to give the reader some idea about ‘who is talking’ – offer a brief outline of my encounters with the field I am now engaging with through my research for a Ph.D. dissertation.

In ethnographic work, there is sometimes a discussion about the researcher as an insider or outsider. As far as most of this is concerned, I am an outsider to this field of African immigrant musical performers in Norway; I was born and raised in this country, and although I sometimes miss being able to tell which particular place I ‘come from’ (a Norwegian virtue discussed in Chapter 2), my genealogy goes back as many generations in this country as can be counted. So I have no insider claim to being African, or immigrant, and barely to being a performer: although I do perform music from time to time – currently as the singer in a band – this is not how I try to make a living. If this weren’t enough to make me an outsider, I even agree with Bourdieu’s perspectives on participant observation referred to in Chapter 3: that the researcher is *always* an outsider, regardless of which group of people the research is done with.

The field I am encountering is, on the other hand, in many ways one in which I have been actively engaged. I wrote my master’s thesis (Anundsen, 1996) on my work with the choir and cultural group *Inkululeko* in Oslo, which had a history of performing South African protest songs in Norway as part of the anti-

²⁰ Although in my view it is ‘softer’ in context and contents than Foucault’s research on madness, delinquency and sexuality.

apartheid movement of the late 1980s and early 1990s. Yet when I took over as artistic leader and conductor in 1994, Mandela had become president in South Africa and apartheid laws were abandoned. So what does an anti-apartheid cultural group do when there is no apartheid to fight? This question led to a critical and practice-based exploration of the ideas of embodying political struggle and translating culture between South Africa and Norway, of what ‘conveying culture’ might entail, and of the difficult navigation between exoticism and more productive types of cultural encounters, which – if we are not to succumb to the slogan of apartheid to ‘let cultures develop on their own terms’ – would be needed in society in one form or another.

Later, through my work as Assistant Professor and leader of different international collaboration projects at the University of Agder, I have encountered the concrete challenges of trying to establish and carry out projects in a cross-cultural field. A major project was a collaboration involving a musical education in Norway and one in Zanzibar, Tanzania, which contained efforts to establish international study opportunities and formal study programmes based on local knowledge and musical practices. Engaging in such a field of imbalance was a challenge, to realize that academia exerts power through its definitions of what the validated knowledge systems are, i.e. what types of knowledge that may lead to formal degrees. Another issue has been that of inviting guest lecturers to teach and perform at our university, where it has been frustrating to see how we often fail to offer visiting non-Western guest lecturers real working tasks, but keep workshopping and setting up ‘interesting’ cultural ‘encounters’.

I include this experiential and working background to demonstrate two things: one, that I am actually also an insider, in the sense that I have first-hand experience of some of the challenges in the field of cross-cultural musical production and performance, and, two, that my critical voice in this dissertation is also a way of criticizing my own practice, which has struggled with many of the same issues as those discussed in this work. Through the scrutiny of these critical issues I hope to cast light on how there might be alternative ways into

understanding and even carrying out musical performances and collaborations in culturally diverse contexts.

Chapter overview

“How do immigrant musical performers construct their practices in Norway?” This question is an early focal point for a multi-sited exploration of the practices of three African-born artists in Norway. The dissertation has grown out of a period of fieldwork involving these key research participants during the years 2007-2010, the major empirical work being carried out in 2008.

Chapters 1-3 comprise the introduction to this dissertation.

Chapter 1 presents a narrative introduction to my field, questions, methodology and theory. I first offer a glimpse of an early fieldwork experience where I was searching for research participants, and use this example to illustrate two major points: my selection of grounded theory as an overall methodological approach, and the term ‘discourse’ to describe the connections between the various sites and stories presented. The narrative also connects to the major ‘thematic strands’ in this dissertation: the world of world music, Africa on stage, and Norwegian society and discourses.

This adaptation of grounded theory methodology implies that key questions emerge from analysis of early ethnographic observations, which are followed up by more empirical explorations to target those particular questions from different angles. This chapter describes how the process of going from observation to questions to further exploration has led to my sampling of research participants for this study, a process referred to as ‘theoretical sampling’. Based on the first rounds of broad screening and observations of ‘immigrant’ musical performers, I selected performers who I thought would represent a variety of artistic strategies. Finally, I discuss my own position in this field as an outsider/insider, before presenting this overview of all chapters.

I realized early on that the field I was approaching involved critical discourses. Therefore in Chapter 2 I discuss positions and approaches to the music of the *Other*, revisiting the term and phenomenon of ‘world music’ in order to take up certain relevant discourses, particularly those on *representation* and *power*. Apart from being a term that kept coming up in the first part of my work, ‘world music’ challenged me to understand how these discourses influenced my work and possibly that of my research participants. The literature on world music also contains a lengthy and weighty discourse on representation that sheds light on my own inquiries. The chapter sums up some of the major points of the debate, from Timothy Taylor’s key understanding of world music as a market rather than a genre, Steven Feld’s critical analysis of how this market deals with representation and the invisible originator, to later writings deriving from this discourse which address the position of the ‘Other’ in musical representations and production. This is all part of a larger field of postcolonial discourse, for which I introduce the framework and assumptions.

The second half of the chapter presents a theoretical framework for the dissertation by pointing forward to four analytical categories that stem from subsequent analysis: *origin*, the *Other / Same dichotomy*, *decontextualization* and *re-contextualization*. By discussing these categories in relation to theory and literature, I pose my research questions more explicitly. Still, I emphasize that the questions are a result of a dialectic process between observation, analysis and reflection rather than questions posed prior to research.

Chapter 3 returns to my methodology and research design, mapping out an ontological, epistemological and methodological model that represents my adaptation of grounded theory methodology. My adjustments to grounded theory mainly consist of bringing Foucauldian ideas of *discourse* and *discursive practices* into the analysis, as I find that the concepts and questions emerging from analysis also point out of these contexts and into larger discursive fields.

In Chapter 3 I also situate myself in the disciplines of ethnomusicology and popular musicology. Based on recent writings that discuss these disciplines’ development, I argue that in this study I need both the ethnographic

groundedness of ethnomusicology and the hermeneutical analytical tools of popular musicology. I argue how these may be fitted to one another, theoretically, methodologically and epistemologically speaking.

Chapters 4-8 make up the empirical basis for this dissertation.

Chapter 4 presents an observation of a performance by Nasibu Mwanukuzi performing with his ensemble *Mandingo Trio* at a local church. This performance emphasizes African *origin* through music, instruments, clothing, storytelling, dialogue and behaviour – a combination enthusiastically received by the small audience in attendance. In interviews, however, Nasibu describes this kind of representation as problematic; although it meets the expectations of both audience and organizers, it does not create a market for his music of choice, mainly reggae and soukous, which he feels people regard as “not being African enough”. This discrepancy between artists’ expressed ideas and their performances invites a critical and Foucault-inspired analysis on how a discourse of ‘origin’ and ‘difference’ is played out between stage representation and *governance* through the power of performance funding schemes. This chapter then serves to elaborate on the more critical questions in my study, and also discusses their background in multiculturalist discourse and Norwegian cultural policies.

Deriving as it does from presenting this first performance analysis and from the critical literature on world music, my first approach to writing up my research thus takes on critical questions concerning the discursive contextualization of immigrant African musicians in Norway into images of tradition, origin, childishness, and the whole world music approach of musical universalism and exoticism. I have linked this part of my approach to postcolonial discourse, which is a critical reading that I regard as necessary to take up and difficult to avoid. A second and somewhat alternative aspect of my analysis that keeps working its way up through these critical layers is a more agent-orientated, or phenomenological, perspective that is necessitated by the groundedness of my work.

In the course of my writing I turn from a critical, postcolonial analysis and gradually allow the other perspective to come to the fore by shifting my outlook from a position of critically theorizing representation to observing the processes in which the performers are engaging: their re-contextualizing and reconstructive work of situating themselves in practice in Norway, the maintenance of their diasporic bonds through reconnective practices, and the various ways in which their artistic practices transcend the discourse of ‘origin’.

One such re-contextualizing process is observed in Chapter 5, where I examine the rehearsals for a performance by Kossa Diomande and his ensemble at a major Norwegian folk music festival, where he delivered a commissioned work. This festival setting invites a critical analysis of the discrepancies between the expectations of ‘tradition’ and the agency of the performer to demonstrate an extended musical expertise that he has acquired from his long practice in Norway, and particularly through his collaboration with the musicians of this ensemble. The analysis points to the marginalizing effects of a discourse of origin that seems to permeate the scene in Norway for African and perhaps immigrant performers as such. The chapter also demonstrates in some more detail how I build qualitative analysis within grounded theory methodology through focusing on recurring analytical categories in my observational data.

Chapter Six follows Kossa and his colleague Raymond Sereba into Kossa’s most active performance practice: performing for school children as part of Rikskonsertene’s national school concert programme series. In this setting Kossa takes on the role of the ‘traditional’ African performer (which he sought to go beyond in the practice described in the previous chapter), dressing up in African garments and playing djembe and hand drums. Although discussing the apparent stereotypical representation of African-ness and its relation to the task of promoting cultural diversity by employing discourses of *origin*, I also observe how these performers have developed a particular methodology, how they systematically deconstruct and reconstruct African elements of music and dance – and even of teaching methods. This also represents a point where I consciously shift my focus from looking at *representation* to looking closely at

performer *agency* in a more phenomenological manner: What do the performers achieve, and *how do they construct their practices?* This opening question takes a more literal turn, seeing that what they are doing in performance is ‘reconstructing Africa’ from many different fragments, incorporating audience images of Africa with their own experiences. Focusing on the consequences of such a shift, I also discuss the limitations of postcolonial perspectives on performance, offering a critique of the theories that I started out with.

Chapter 7 returns to Nasibu Mwanukuzi and his main stage persona *Ras Nas*, examining the function and construction of *diaspora* by observing how he creates a cosmopolitan African representation through his reggae and soukous performances. This chapter also demonstrates how the concept of diaspora is both a matter of constructing imaginary landscapes and a vehicle for cosmopolitan identities, as well as a concrete matter of reconnecting, in this case a musician’s reconnection with Tanzania and the popular music scene in Dar es Salaam. The chapter thus starts building theoretical models of performer strategies that go beyond the *national* discourses and contexts.

Chapter 8 introduces a new artist, Stella Mwangi, as I address my question of generation, or youth, and my assumptions of the non-essentialist approach to musical performance on the hip hop scene. In looking at how ‘urbanity’ is constructed, my analysis of a local performance observation draws connections between the local and global. Urbanity is a core feature of hip hop self-understanding and image, having a contextual approach to the urban here-and-now rather than focusing on ‘origin’. However, what brings urbanity to the scene is, in Stella’s case, her connection with Kenya and Nairobi.

This point reintroduces the concept of diaspora discussed in Chapter 7; yet in this case the diaspora is more visibly a tool for creating a desired global dimension, since the global African-ness or Kenyan-ness in Stella’s practice is also a clear diasporic strategy or a way of creating a practice that goes far beyond the local or even national. On the other hand, her music at this time contains clear ties to East African ‘sound’ and production.

An analysis based on the music – including some of its East African sonic markers and some of its reception as ‘cheap sounds’ – leads to a discussion on the reciprocity of gaze between, in this case, Africa and the West, or between ‘tradition’ and ‘modernity’. This point is paralleled and accentuated by the fact that Kossa produced a separate CD and video for the market in the Ivory Coast containing synthetic instruments and images of Western modernity. These perspectives of reciprocal gazes, diaspora and the global orientation (or ‘projects’) of my research participants lead into the final, conclusive chapter.

Chapter 9 starts out with my summary of the concepts developed in Chapters 4 to 8, ranging from the diverging models of thought that seem to be at the heart of the problems of stereotypical representation, to the alternative perspectives derived from these artists’ practices by analyzing in each chapter a particular position achieved through performance. This reveals a discrepancy in the general approach between a discourse on *origin* – and the representational bias that comes with it – and artists’ agencies of creating practices as reconfigurations of the whole of their experiences.

Formulating *a* grounded theory represents the theoretical formulation of my conclusions. The first part of this grounded theory is a model for how the artists observed are all establishing some kind of community, or *sameness*, through their practices. The second part concerns how the artists are all establishing different forms of cosmopolitanism by connecting to diasporic networks, or by creating spaces of diasporic memories. The conclusions of this work thus concern how these artists’ ways of constructing their practices create both a subjective space and global connections, thus going beyond the ‘national’ as a discursive framework for their practices; as such, they are not confined to taking part in the broader Norwegian national project of creating a harmonious, culturally diverse society.

CHAPTER 2: APPROACHING THE MUSIC OF THE *OTHER*

In this chapter I will discuss core aspects of the theoretical concepts that I am developing in this dissertation, focusing on discourses of otherness and marginalization in musical performance, and on the actual subjects who have their musical practices in such fields of tension. Through four categories that arise from my subsequent analyses I will establish theoretical frames of reference and position my work in current scholarly discourse.²¹ Finally, I will employ these categories, and the theory I use to discuss them, to explicate my research questions.

The analytical categories that I am highlighting in this chapter are: *origin*, the *Other/Same dichotomy*, *decontextualization* and *re-contextualization*. The first, *origin*, is an initial analytical category derived from my observations.²² It leads conceptually into postcolonial discourse, where the *Other/Same dichotomy* is a fundamental model that will be discussed as an implemented, or extant, category in this chapter.²³ Together with the apparent *decontextualization* observed and discussed in this work – of migrating sounds and performers – the first three

²¹ From Chapter Four to Eight I will demonstrate how my analytical categories are rendered and developed through analysis, to concepts forming a concluding *grounded theory*. In order to serve an initial theoretical discussion, however, I will introduce some of these categories ahead of their empirical context. To follow the reflection process more chronologically, this chapter could alternatively be read before the last chapter.

²² Particularly derived from the observed performance in Chapter 4, but also from data presented in the other empirical Chapters 5-8.

²³ Chapter 3 on grounded theory discusses the difference between in-vivo, observed categories, and ex-vivo, extant or ‘added’ categories (or theories). However, my experience is that this distinction becomes less relevant in the process of analysis, which becomes a dialectic process between observing, reflecting, reading and writing – what Alvesson and Sköldbberg refer to as *abduction* (2009, p. 4).

categories operate within existing postcolonial models of discourse. The fourth, *recontextualization*, grows from an analytical category to a core concept that will be followed throughout the entire dissertation. It represents my developing research focus on observing the actions of the subjects I am following, how they are *dealing with* the processes consequent on their decontextualization and re-establishment in a Norwegian context and how this is acted out in performance. This take represents a phenomenological turn to reading actions as strategic and rational (Frykman & Gilje, 2003) and is where I claim to go beyond postcolonial discourse and perspectives.

Before moving into these analytical categories, I will approach my field through literary discourses. A relevant literature for the theoretical considerations that I am presenting comes from a field of critical discourse on the phenomenon *world music* – a term with which both I and a number of writers have grappled. I point to the postcolonial discursive formations upon which this literature rests, and subsequently show how my theoretical concepts – the ones being derived through my data analysis – conceptually relate to yet analytically deviate from these discourses. The presentation of literature and theory in this chapter thus lays a foundation for discussing my observations in relation to existing research and discourse, yet does not aim at offering an in-depth presentation of this literature.

“Is this world music to you?” Entering a field of critical discourse

In this study I started out with a desire to observe a musical ensemble ethnographically, one that somehow reflected the current dynamics of cultural change in Norwegian society. So I began by inquiring about musicians who represented processes of cultural change, hybridity, or new demographic constellations in one way or another; going to musical organizations, contacting people in the music business and academia, performers, friends and acquaintances, as well as immigrant organizations.

This activity started me on a process where I had to consider the term *world music*. Was this a good way of defining what I was looking for? Discovering that *world music* was a term most musicians shunned, not least as a label for their own practices, I too tried to avoid using it when inquiring about ensembles. Yet ‘world music’ still surfaced, particularly in the anticipation from those that I met of what *I* was looking for; for example, after a performance, a producer who had invited me based on my expressed area of interest asked: “*So, is this world music to you?*”

This statement illustrates how ‘world music’ seemed to advance from being a term difficult to grasp to my own gaze defining certain artists’ practices. Establishing a framework for one’s research is, inevitably, a process of *constructing* a field. This has been discussed and dealt with in qualitative research methodologies, taking constructivist approaches and researcher subjectivity into account (Charmaz, 2006; Fangen, 2004; Gadamer, 1998 [1960]). However, what I faced in this process was a different dilemma: that of a researcher whose outlook anticipated a particular categorization of music making. I feared that putting the label of ‘world music’ onto my field of interest, even as some kind of working title, risked locking the research subjects in a specific framework, one that, according to some scholars, represented a projection of essentialist ideas about the cultural or racial *Other*.

The ‘Other’ in musical production

My initial readings in the literature fed this scepticism:²⁴ Steven Feld (1994a, 2004) saw third world artists extensively exploited for their sounds and musical

²⁴ In Chapter 3 I discuss my initial readings and reflections on world music as my own ‘prejudice’, in Gadamer’s sense of the word, influencing my initial outlook or ‘horizon of understanding’. Challenging these initial assumptions thus becomes an important part of my methodology.

ownership in world music²⁵ systems of musical production and circulation. In addition, he criticized the world music industry's exotic depictions, presenting artists with no names and without the framework of cultural understanding or individual artistry. These nameless artists were then easily merged into the productions of Western artists *with* names, culture, artistic creativity and musical ownership, as is seen in his discussion of Paul Simon's *Graceland* (Feld, 1994b). Considering exoticism, Veit Erlmann saw world music as a system producing the difference that it sought to promote (Erlmann, 1993, 1996). He thus challenged researchers of world music to investigate particularly this 'production of difference'. Taking on this challenge in *Global pop: World music, world markets* (1997), Timothy D. Taylor mapped out the field of world music production, marketing and consumption, demonstrating how the record sales category of world music would often rest on essentialist readings of non-Western cultures that were rather racist in nature, as musicians would be "categorized by their ethnicity rather than their music" (p. 17). He pointed to the dilemma of how this label then functioned: "While world music and world beat are putatively labels for musics, they are more often used to label musicians" (T. D. Taylor, 1997, p. 16).

Analyzing the selections of the guidebooks shaped by the world music industry's outlook, such as *World Music: The Rough Guide* (Broughton & Burton, 1994), Taylor also noted that major popular music forms and practices – such as karaoke in Asia – were not represented in compilations of the presumably descriptive and all-encompassing presentations of musics from the areas being promoted through the world music category. Taylor thus concluded that the category of world music only covered the commodifiable, or what would sell in the West as a representation of the non-Western Other, to fill the

²⁵ In publications in the 1990s, Steven Feld (and in part Timothy Taylor) distinguishes between 'world music', which leans towards the 'authentic' and traditional, and 'world beat', which explicitly conveys popular music forms. Still, both are seen as disseminating the same discourses and problematic representations. This distinction in terminology seems more apt in the USA, and in a historical context of the terminology, which is now increasingly just 'World'.

spaces of what the Other supposedly possessed and could contribute; “...rejuvenation, novelty, authenticity, originality, the ‘real’ and the spiritual” (T. D. Taylor, 1997, p. 19).

World music: distance and marginalization

Sigbjørn Nedland, who is on air every week on NRK Radio P2 with the programme *Jungeltelegraf*,²⁶ presenting music that would usually fall into the world music sales category, makes the following observation on the world music term: “The further away the origin of the music and artist, the more likely the music is to be called world music. And the more money the artist makes, the less likely the music is to be labelled world music.”²⁷ This frames the world music term along the lines of distance and marginal market segments. Both may explain why artists generally shun the term, and how some artists acquire the power to escape the category through growing in popularity.

In an NRK popular music TV magazine called ‘Lydverket’ (NRK & Riise, 2007), British artist M.I.A. described her discomfort at being edged too close to the world music category despite receiving assurances that this meant ‘new’ world music, or ‘cool’ world music:

When I first put the Galang record out, that’s exactly the issues the press had with me, that’s exactly the issues the shops had with me, that’s exactly the issues the people in music and the music industry had with me. (...) Because where I came from took over for the music that [I was] making.²⁸ (NRK & Riise, 2007)

Simultaneously, the story tells how she refused to front a campaign against racism on the cover of music magazine NME because she found it “insulting”. We implicitly understand that she, as a daughter of a Sri Lankan Tamil

²⁶ Literally ‘The Jungle Telegraph’, which is a parallel expression to ‘the bush telegraph’ or ‘the grapevine’: word of mouth or inside information about what is happening on a small or local scene. Still, the ‘jungle’ metaphor does contain certain world music connotations.

²⁷ Sigbjørn Nedland in a lecture at *Folkelarm*, Oslo 26 September 2008.

²⁸ Parenthesis marks in quotes here represent a fair guess made regarding wording that is not entirely audible.

immigrant, did not want to be the one representing ‘race’ in the British popular music world, explaining:

I sometimes find things like that a bit insulting, because it’s like: “Yeah, you can be in music, but you have to have your own little place in it.” (NRK & Riise, 2007)

The last statement accentuates the critical world music discourse: how the invention of a category to help non-Western musicians sell their music implicitly relegates any music associated with otherness – be it non-Western musics or musicians – to the marginality of a particular, and usually rather meagre, market. The invitation to a market where you can “have your own little place” thus may work to further marginalize the already marginal, where even an invitation to ‘fight racism’ becomes an insult as it demonstrates how some artists are seen as representing ‘race’ before ‘music’.

Johannes Brusila (2003) introduces an apt phrase for the world music marketing category, which he picks up from an enthusiastic radio announcement; “*Local music, not from here!*” This one sentence illustrates the entire problem contained in the term, as the gaze from afar becomes the defining position. This also explains why ‘folk music’ – despite its marketing as a European counterpart to the music of the non-Western Other, both united in their pre-modernity – has difficulties becoming ‘world’, unless it has an audience that is foreign to it. So despite its claimed attachments to the local or traditional, as in Richard O. Nidel’s definition: “...the many forms of music of various cultures that remain closely informed or guided by indigenous music of the region of their origin” (Nidel, 2005, p. 2), world music can hardly be part of tradition or local music practices, as it is ‘not from here’. Rather, world music is defined by its very distance, referring to the locality of somewhere else, or even some other era. The world music labelling is thus not just a description of distance but also an act of distancing.

Postcolonial perspectives in world music discourse

Seeing world music production and promotion as an act of distancing is a typical postcolonial perspective, similar to the way Edward Said (1978) depicts orientalism: observing how an interest in the Other turns into a process of marginalizing the viewed subjects when the spectator's gaze desires distance or difference. As Foucault (1965, 1973) has also pointed out: defining and classifying the abnormal, the deviant, works to confirm the normality of the rest, or, in postcolonial terms, those who are 'same', 'us' or 'self'. From this perspective, redefining the 'abnormal' to an object of positive interest or desire, as in world music production, does not alter how this outlook contributes to colonial discourse. As Homi Bhabha argues:

My reading of colonial discourse suggests that the point of intervention should shift from the ready recognition of images as positive or negative, to an understanding of the *processes of subjectification* made possible (and plausible) through stereotypical discourse. To judge the stereotyped image on basis of a prior political normativity is to dismiss it, not to displace it, which is only possible by engaging with its *effectivity*; with the repertoire of positions of power and resistance, domination and dependence that constructs colonial identification subject (both colonizer and colonized). (...) In order to understand the productivity of colonial power it is crucial to construct its regime of truth, not to subject its representations to a normalizing judgement. Only then does it become possible to understand the *productive* ambivalence of the object of colonial discourse – that 'otherness' which is at once an object of desire and derision, an articulation of difference contained within the fantasy of origin and identity. (Bhabha, 1994, p. 67. Italics as in original)

I read Bhabha's argument as a critique of the celebration of cultural diversity, which he sees as a continuation of colonial discourse through its reactivating of stereotyped images. I find this type of celebration in symbolic cultural practices in Norway, where immigrant artists are invited onto the stage to mark and celebrate diversity. I interpret such practices, or such discursive framings of performance, as stemming from a multiculturalist approach to cultural difference or diversity.²⁹ This type of celebration is also found in world music promotion; celebrating music for being 'different' and thus something positive. This type of

²⁹ See specifically the performance discussed in Chapter 4 but also similar tendencies in Chapters 5, 6 and 7.

logic is what Bob White calls “[world music] consumption as a gesture of solidarity” (2012, p. 196), in one of the three discursive patterns, or ‘figures’, that he finds in world music promotion.³⁰

Hybridity and the global imagination

When revisiting the world music term in 2012 under the heading *Music and globalization – critical encounters*, Bob White, Tim Taylor, Steven Feld and others pick up on the term and its surrounding discourses (White, 2012).³¹ While world music as a term and the critical discourse surrounding it since the 1990s may seem a bit outdated, the authors find that much of the critical discourses and practices – and not least sounds – of world music have stayed the same. However, one aspect that has changed over the years is the interest in the distanced or ‘genuine’ Other of world music, or the above-mentioned ‘celebration of difference’. In revisiting the concept more than a decade after *Global pop* (1997), Timothy Taylor presents how the initial emphasis on authenticity – of ‘genuine’ or ‘local’ practices – has gradually been replaced by a demand for ‘hybridity’; the mix of local flavour with mainstream popular music expressions, i.e. rock or pop. This development complies with White’s second main ‘figure’: “Hybridity as a form of authenticity”. But does this development imply that world music today reflects less spectator exoticism and more of an increased idea of sameness or identifying with actual diversity? Have postmodern perspectives on culture as something in flux been appropriated by world music production and promotion, observing how cultures mix, appropriate new elements and take different forms? Veit Erlmann’s early analysis of this hybrid or crossover element in world music calls it a narrative of ‘the global imagination’, creating an imagined, utopian ‘global ecumene’, or community (1996). The reality of this imagined community, he argues, is the Western

³⁰ The other two being “Music as a universal language” and “Hybridity as a form of authenticity”.

³¹ I will refer to each chapter under the author’s name, for example (Taylor, 2012).

consumer designing the image of the world that suits his own orientation. This seems to fit Taylor's recent analysis of the world music audience: applying Bourdieu's theory of cultural capital, he depicts a Western consumer group with 'global cultural capital': well-travelled, well studied, middle-aged and (fairly) well off (T. D. Taylor, 2007, 2012). Thus the global cultural imagination, or the imagined ecumene of the 'global same', may actually be a narrative for the few.

Points of departure

In sum, in this critical discourse world music is seen as "...the music of the Other produced for Western consumption" (T. D. Taylor, 1997, 2012). The authors all point to how this commodification of the music of the Other has mechanisms that put non-Western artists in a position where they are – or at least run the risk of being – essentialized or exoticized in order to gain access to Western markets.

My point of departure was thus to see world music not as a genre or style, but rather as a marketing category, serving a market with the power – financially and rhetorically – to create the Other in a particular, desired representation. Wanting as I did to study the realities of cultural diversity, I reckoned that world music was not simply the musical side of globalization and cultural diversity – as Bohlman (2002) would have it³² – although it was somehow part of the same reality of globalized and changing cultures, and of travel and new encounters.

³² Unlike the above-mentioned scholars, Philip Bohlman argues that 'world music' has a substantial meaning as a musical category or genre (Bohlman, 2002; Nettl, Capwell, Bohlman, Wong, & Turino, 2004). Asserting that world music is "all of this, and more" (2002), he equates the market category of world music emerging in the 1980s (or, being agreed upon by record labels in the second floor of a London pub in 1986, as the story goes), and the academic use of the term in 'world music studies'. The latter is, according to Taylor (1997), a 'softer' version of ethnomusicology that emerged in North American music departments in the 1960s (see also Feld 2001, White 2012, p. 3). This discipline seems more focused on musical styles than on interpretive ethnography. Perhaps this more naïve side to

Turning to subjects and actions

Trying to get to ‘diversity’ without using a terminology projecting essentialism, I needed a way of observing musical practices without an outlook that checked what I saw against pre-conceived definitions, or worse – projecting particular assumptions onto the ‘field’, or on a group of people. In *Africans on stage* (Lindfors, 1999), Z. S. Strother discusses a similar researcher dilemma when retelling the story of Sara Baartman, known in early twentieth century ethnological exhibitions as ‘The Hottentot Venus’. Both the retelling by the researcher as author and the re-enactment in a discussed contemporary theatre piece “... highlights the dilemma of many scholars, who have not yet found an easy means of discussing Baartman’s experience without replaying the prurience of her initial exhibition” (1999, p. 2). Although reflecting on cultural practices a hundred years later – and practices hardly as harsh as the sheer display of the Other for the lust of the spectator³³ – my dilemma seemed similar: How could I take an interest in and write about music often labelled *world music* without first producing it as an object, and secondly, reproducing the exoticism and essentialism found in observing or promoting it?

My idea became that of finding and observing the *people* who put ‘world’ into ‘music’, rather than defining what kind of music they were playing. This represented a phenomenological turn to subjectivity, agency and the actions and experiences of individuals. Somehow this possibility is already pointed to, implicitly in the critical literature referred to: Taylor (1997) devotes ample space to describing how individual artists are moving within and utilizing world music systems of production and promotion. Simon Frith, in summing up world music discourse in *Western music and its others* (Born & Hesmondhalgh, 2000), suggests that Taylor represents a more optimistic view than Erlmann’s, in that

ethnomusicology – the simple interest in ‘other cultures’ – is threatened by critical discourse for its relative closeness to the otherizing spectator gaze of the world music market.

³³ Although Veit Erlmann draws parallels between early twentieth century ethnological show business (including the concurrent and overlapping minstrel scene) and today’s world music market in the same edition (Erlmann, 1999b).

world music production allows the individual artist “to occupy different subject positions” (Taylor quoted by Frith in Born & Hesmondhalgh, 2000). But even Erlmann points to the subjects’ power to navigate and utilize fields of marginalizing images, when describing how South African artists, in late nineteenth and early twentieth century popular music scenes, *appropriated* minstrel expression and forms. These were originally all white comic representations of blacks, depicting people of African descent as simple, cunning or lazy. Appropriating and developing minstrel forms and expressions into local popular forms allowed African artists to express their identities and views of themselves, creating ‘mirror images’ that returned the gaze of the Western Other:

Thus, the aesthetics of the minstrel stage not only enabled whites to fantasize about blacks, but in turn also helped blacks to define themselves in opposition to whites. Because the constrained conditions of imperial rule restricted black parody of white behaviour to more hidden means of expression, Africans often had few alternatives other than manipulating the representations whites had created of them. (Erlmann, 1999b, p. 121)

This single observation illustrates how empowered the subject position might be, even within structures of power, pointing to a line of thought I intend to follow in this work: to look beyond the established, critical view of world music as a marginalizing field of musical production and observe rather what subjects make out of their positions in various areas of production, performance, and processes of creating artistic practices in contexts where they are identified as ‘others’.

From genre to methodology

My initial dilemma regarding how to approach the music of the Other – whether called world music or not – brought me to three starting points:

The first was grounded theory, which guided me to avoid definitions, find a context to observe, and derive theories and concepts *from* my observations. The second was, consequent on the phenomenological foundations of grounded

theory, to focus on agents, actions and contexts rather than pre-defined frameworks like ‘genre’. This implied consciously overstepping the boundaries of what might have been labelled world music – most noticeably by including some hip hop – in order to explore the themes taken up in a somewhat broader context, observing how artists navigate marginalizing or otherizing discourses in a variety of practices and genres. The third was – combining the idea of the subjective agency with open-ended or grounded questions – to look for artist *strategies*. This led to the early formulation of my research question: *How do immigrant musical performers construct their practices in Norway?*

This research process would eventually lead me back to some of the same discourses surrounding world music, although from a more context-specific and agent-oriented angle. This methodological setup – which will be laid out in Chapter 3 – also implied critically examining my points of departure, inspired by Gadamer’s sense of *prejudice* (Gadamer, 1998 [1960]). My appropriation of perspectives from critical world music literature is thus a major ‘prejudice’, or point of departure, that needs to be critically challenged through empirical scrutiny.

The second part of this chapter moves from these points of departure to the theoretical perspectives being developed through the analytical processes of my research.

Theoretical framing

In this part I will discuss the four analytical categories introduced above – *origin*, the *Other/Same dichotomy*, *decontextualization* and *recontextualization* – and examine their theoretical roots and discourses in order to further expand the backdrop of theoretical landscape and literary discourse to which this dissertation intends to speak.

Essentializing ‘origin’

In my analyses of performances in Chapters 4 to 6, *origin* stands out as a major analytical category. Origin is also an implicit property of the *immigrant* term, which I will discuss here. My initial strategy to deal with the exoticism of world music was to avoid using it as a definition of my field, turning rather to something more tangible or neutral: immigrant artists. I thought that by studying actual artists rather than a slippery genre, I would be able to ground my observations and avoid essentializing assumptions. When it comes to turning to subjects rather than genre assumptions, I still think this is a useful approach. When it comes to the term ‘immigrant’, however, I couldn’t have been more wrong about its neutrality. First, it is highly inaccurate for describing the causes and acts of immigration and does not distinguish between people seeking work, political asylum or family reunification, nor does it distinguish between people granted admission and those still in asylum quarantine. Furthermore, in Norwegian discourse ranging from anonymous web discussions to politicians exercising the ‘immigration debate’, the term is almost exclusively applied to non-Western immigrants of first and second – or virtually any – generation. This implies that anyone who has a non-Western cultural and/or ethnic³⁴ background is subsumed under the *immigrant* term without much questioning or debate. Officially, however – i.e. as used by *Statistisk Sentralbyrå*, or Statistics Norway – the term *immigrant* comprises all persons who have relocated to Norway. In 2007, this also included their offspring:

Immigrant population includes persons who have two foreign-born parents, or more precisely: Persons who neither have parents nor grandparents born in Norway. The immigrant population thus covers first-generation immigrants and persons born in Norway of two foreign-born parents. (Statistisk Sentralbyrå, 2007)

On the other hand, the popular use of ‘immigrant’ as a way of categorizing the non-Western Other may be understood as a way to denote essential otherness

³⁴ Thomas Hylland Eriksen (2006) points out that ‘immigrant’, or the view of being ‘other’ is rarely applied to people of non-Western descent adopted by or growing up with Norwegian parents. So it is not an entirely racial term, but contains an assumption of essential difference when both cultural and ethnic backgrounds are perceived as being ‘other’.

without having to refer to ethnicity, and a way of categorizing a wide variety of ethnicities and cultures under one heading: foreign. But the immigrant term may also have ended up in common use for statistical reasons, as non-Western immigration has been dominant:

The increase in immigrant population is mostly a result of immigration from non-western countries. Three out of four persons in immigrant population have a non-western background, or 6.6 per cent of the total population. At the beginning of 1986, the non-western immigrant population made up 1.1 per cent of the total population (2007).

When the non-Western immigrant population went from 1.1 to 6.6 per cent of the total population in the course of merely two decades in Norway, it represented a noticeable change. Add to this fact that the majority of immigrants settled in the major cities – and often in particular city areas – a rapid and dramatic growth in the non-Western immigrant population became a perceptible reality for many Norwegians in what is popularly called ‘a generation’. In 2011 non-Western immigration was decreasing, while immigration numbers kept rising:

The number of immigrants and Norwegian-born to immigrant parents grew by 54 200 in 2011, which is the highest growth ever. At the beginning of 2012, there were 547 000 immigrants and 108 000 Norwegian-born to immigrant parents in Norway. Immigrants come from 219 different countries and independent regions. (Statistisk Sentralbyrå, 2012)³⁵

What is notable in the last statement is the official change of terminology, from uniting first- and second generation immigrants in the ‘immigrant’ category in 2007, to 2012, when it only encompasses someone who actually emigrated to Norway from somewhere else, i.e. only counting and denominating first generation as ‘immigrants’ per se. Moreover, since late 2008, Statistics Norway has abandoned the use of the categories ‘Western’ and ‘non-Western’, replacing them with descriptive (and extensive) terms of actual continents and land areas. Becoming increasingly aware of popular discourse, SSB also points out

³⁵ Numbers are shown as in the original text and reflect a Norwegian way of displaying thousands by space. 54 200 means 54,200 etc.

proportions: “More immigrants come from Poland alone than from the whole of Africa” (2012).

The ‘immigrant’ and Norwegian discourse of origin

My argument regarding the term ‘immigrant’ is not just that it – apart from in official statistics – is almost exclusively applied to non-Western immigrants. Rather, my reading of the broad application of the term is that it reveals an emphasis on *origin* in Norwegian discourse – from everyday speech to official statistics. What is an immigrant? It is someone who by definition comes from somewhere else. And who is still defined by that other place, their place of *origin*. Even if they have spent most of their lives in Norway, have acquired Norwegian citizenship, or have even been born here, they have still been defined as essentially ‘not from here’. This illustrates how the otherization takes place through terminology – Foucault would have said *discourse* – in this case a terminology focusing on the process of movement, from *origin* to *locality*, though without becoming locals. When employing the immigrant term in discourse, *origin* makes the idea of essential otherness seem neutral or evident. Alternative, less used definitions illustrate the discursive construction: the often self-applied term ‘minority’, for example, evokes connotations of civil rights and permanency rather than demands for integration and adjustments – or downright assimilation. Discursively, the term even links new minorities to the existing ‘national minorities’, who, by ratified conventions, have the right to be protected and to maintain their way of life.³⁶ At other times hyphenated identities like ‘Norwegian-Somali’ are used, inspired by the US denomination (like ‘African-American’, though in reverse order). Such hyphenations are usually only applied to large immigrant groups over generations, for example ‘Norwegian-Pakistani’. Finally, although simply using ‘Norwegian’ to apply to

³⁶ In 1999, Norway ratified the European Framework convention for the protection of national minorities (Council of Europe, 1994). The official national minorities are those who have retained their cultural identity and possibly their own language over generations; “...kvener, skogfinner, jøder, romanifolket/tatere, og rom/sigøynere” (Lund & Moen, 2010, p. 7). (The Sami population is in this respect regarded as *indigenous*.) But when will the Pakistani minority be regarded as a national minority?

anyone with the same citizenship has been suggested, this proposal has been stranded in debates on how to distinguish between discussing ethnicity, culture and national affiliation.³⁷

Origin in Norwegian identity discourse

“Where are you from?” is a common question asked between Norwegians, being regarded as a sign of positive interest. The respondent is expected to have a single – meaning *one* – very precise locality to refer to. Although many people move across the country, this one place of ‘being from’ could be where they were born, where their family considers themselves as belonging, or where they grew up or lived at a formative age. In either case, it is closely related to dialects – how people speak Norwegian – which has nuances that sometimes distinguish between communities just a few kilometres apart. Jan Svennevig (1999) observes that this question of ‘where one is from’ is one among a first few questions that young people in Norway ask each other if they are not acquainted, particularly if one of them has a dialect that locates them outside the larger capital area. So the idea of *origin* as something essential is not just applied to foreigners. On the contrary, I would argue that it is a fundamental perspective in Norwegian identity discourse that is simply applied to everyone.

Similar to many other observers, anthropologist Julian Kramer has argued that Norwegian national identity is based on a ‘re’-constructional process from independence in 1905 and onwards after centuries of being the weaker part of unions with Denmark and later Sweden. He even points to the German occupation in 1940-45 as a continuation of this colonial experience in Norwegian consciousness and discourse (Kramer, 1984). Drawing a parallel with other nations’ decolonizing processes, he points to the references to pre-colonial glorious pasts as an important feature of the reconstruction narrative and the importance of re-identifying the old virtues as surviving in local

³⁷ However, this topic has reappeared in the public discourse in recent years, particularly after the terrorist acts on 22 July 2011. In response to aggressive rhetoric about immigrants posing a threat to Norwegian culture, the prime minister and other public persons have explicated that we need to find ways of defining – and thus creating – the ‘larger we’.

traditions, language and ideas. Kramer observes – after years of his own immigrant experience as a South African in Norway – that the continued construction of postcolonial ‘Norwegian-ness’ is ultimately linked to locality; “You can, in other words, not be regarded as a genuine Norwegian unless your roots are in order and attached to the right place” (p 94, my translation). This, he argues, stems from a ‘tribal ideology’ where the national is defined through the individual’s belonging to a group and a place. Written as they were in 1984, Kramer’s perspectives may be a bit outdated, and he even points to how this ideology will be challenged by cosmopolitan strategies and identities – not just from immigrants but also from Norwegians defining themselves less in terms of locality, when there is no longer a need for the postcolonial reconstruction project in new generations who do not share the colonial experiences of their parents and grandparents.

My analyses in the subsequent chapters indicate that this Norwegian identity discourse with its emphasis on *origin* still serves to tie people of non-Western heritage to essential otherness. The question then is how they handle it, in my case: how immigrant performers deal with or participate in the discourses of origin to which they are – in one way or the other – being linked. While this discourse on origin may seem old-fashioned, it is even more relevant and interesting to study, as the observed actions are happening at a time when Kramer predicted that there would be a change of discourse from origin to something else, some other kind of construction of national narrative, or of cosmopolitan, individual self-creation.

The Other/Same dichotomy in postcolonial discourse

My second theoretical category to be discussed in this chapter, the *Other/Same dichotomy*, is already an implicit analytic model in the above discussion of the ‘immigrant’ as an essentialized figure through the discourse of origin. What I wish to point out here is this dichotomy’s foundation in postcolonial theory and

discourse, which is the framework – implicitly or explicitly – for most scholarly treatment of these issues.

According to Milner and Browitt (2002), the origin of the new, post-Said and post-colonial³⁸ writings on the ‘Other’ stems from *difference* as a key concept in poststructuralist theory. This has in turn inspired the ‘politics of difference’ of new social movements, which seek to counteract (or ‘decentre’) the previous dominance of “white, straight, male cultural authority”, offering perspectives that have subsequently been adopted across the social sciences and humanities; “...radical feminism, queer theory, postcolonial theory, black studies and so on” (Milner & Browitt, 2002, p. 128). The authors label the foundation of this development a ‘difference theory’ – and go on to see how *difference* relates to *identity* and how these concepts figure (and are refigured) in cultural theory.

Postcolonialism as ideology and social theory

Postcolonialism has inherited its defining term from the historical emancipatory processes of the states formerly and to a great degree colonized by European countries, hence the ‘post’ (after) and ‘colonialism’. As Leela Gandhi argues in *Postcolonial theory – a critical introduction* (1998), the term *postcolonial* requires a definition – or rather, examination – of *what* it is ‘post’, that is, what it moves away from or takes its stance against, namely colonialism and colonial discourse. Therefore postcolonialism is not just taking place after colonialism; rather, it is a place and mode of argument, as colonial discourse did not disappear with the colonies.³⁹ Gandhi thus argues that postcolonialism has a twofold application: On the one hand, nation states moving towards independence need to remember and analyze the colonial history they are trying to escape from (or possibly, shamefully trying to forget), in order to throw off

³⁸ Here I will just refer to ‘postcolonial theory’, as a general term encompassing – for the sake of abbreviated argument – postcolonial theory, feminism, queer theory, black studies and this family of counter-theories, not underestimating the difference in their approaches.

³⁹ Although the general view may be that our era is ‘after’ the colonies, Robert C. Young (2001) argues that colonies still exist in various forms – and not limited to Western colonialism – and that colonialism as a political reality is surprisingly alive and well, just in new clothes.

their historical subordination and create a new identity. On the other hand, taking the 'colonial' experience into account is essential for academics who – like myself – are venturing into fields that may contain biased 'othernesses' of cultures and subjectivities. Such a field would require an alertness to – and possibly analysis of – the inequalities of status, of validated knowledge systems and power relations that are as much products of the ideas of the colonizer or dominant 'Same' as they are experiences of the colonized or marginalized 'Other'. Addressing marginalized experiences and trying to establish more representative forms of knowledge thus become defining features of the family of counter-theories of which postcolonialism is a part.

From this brief introduction to the field of discourse, it is already apparent that postcolonialism, in addition to its claim to be an academic field, also has political and ethical dimensions. The terms 'postcolonialism' and 'postcolonial theory' are used somewhat interchangeably, which may hint at its double-sided application. The '-ism' points towards ideology, while adding 'theory' seems to be claiming academic or theoretical relevance. However, its ideological foundations may evoke questions as to whether it belongs in academia at all. The argument from the postcolonial side would be that any academic field has these dimensions, just that dominant views tend to mask their inherent ideology and power structures. Indeed, the whole way in which academic works long failed to make 'Western' relative, instead presenting Western knowledge as universal knowledge, was an immense exertion of power in itself, having vast political implications and consequences. Such implications were analyzed and deconstructed in Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1978), by many seen as the defining point of postcolonialism as an academic discipline. Prior to Said, several writers had argued against colonialism on a political and philosophical level – such as Mahatma Gandhi and Franz Fanon – but Said moved the discourse into the academic domain by claiming that Western colonialism was a consequence of Western academic epistemology, exemplified through the European (and later American) research being carried out on the 'Orient' and its fascinating otherness since the eighteenth century. According to Said, Western academia had defined a sensual, mystic and non-governed 'Orient' suitable for –

and even in need of – being colonized, and had, correspondingly, created ‘Oriental’ subjects in need of development through education and enlightenment that only the West could fully provide. As many have pointed out: The colonizer always comes with the self-image of being an educator and developer.

The subaltern subject

Said’s argument is similar to Foucault’s point that discourse constructs the object to which it refers.⁴⁰ Hence the later urge in academia to take postcolonial (and feminist etc.) perspectives into account, as societal analyses do not just mirror social realities; they also create them.

Said’s important contribution is establishing the connection between representation and power, which is an important underlying premise in all postcolonial discourse; critically examining images that limit the subjects’ possibilities to define themselves, locking them in particular representations or fixed positions, and – ultimately – denying them the option of governing themselves. This applies to all levels, from national government to the ownership of a song. According to Said and postcolonial theorists, the inequality of power is intimately connected with the ideas of other and self, as oppressive practices start with the view that the other cannot act or speak for himself.

Similarly, Paulo Freire (1970) argues that being oppressed is being in a relationship where you are seen *and see yourself* as ‘object’, in the grammatical sense; the one that is being acted upon – and defined – by a ‘subject’. Consequently, Freire argues that the liberation of the oppressed requires a process where the object turns into subject. Or, in postcolonial terms, where the Other turns into Self. But while Said forcefully argues that the West is responsible, Freire wants to emancipate the Other, or ‘the oppressed’, by having

⁴⁰ Although Foucault’s model is – as I will return to in subsequent chapters – more flexible, in that it does not set up a binary opposition between colonizer/colonized, or subject/object. In Foucault’s view all parts are taking part in a discourse, where power is acted out on all levels and directions, not just from one position to the other.

them take responsibility for the inequality of the relationship. This inequality, he argues, can only come about if the external gaze is accepted.⁴¹

Applied to postcolonial discourse, the role of postcolonial thinking may be seen as a way of undoing ‘otherization’ by bringing the experiences of the otherized forth, while establishing identities of self enables them to meet other selves in subject-subject relations; the ‘Orient’ looking back at the ‘West’ without sharing its orientalist gaze, even offering new perspectives on itself to the outsider.

Uses of postcolonialism

Thus postcolonialism provides an analytical awareness and discourse for political and personal emancipation in addition to its scholarly uses. According to Leela Gandhi (1998), the academic use of postcolonialism or postcolonial theory is, first, to balance the outlooks of academia by taking in other voices. This calls for presenting outlooks on the world from the position that Gayatri Spivak calls ‘subaltern’, in other words exploring the colonial experiences from the perspectives of the colonized and allowing other perspectives of the world take the place they deserve through simply allowing a broader and more representative sample of views, discourses, and ‘voices’; people of subaltern positions and experiences. Second, it should question dominant concepts of knowledge, and, third, reveal the situatedness and relativity of the dominant (such as the Western) views on concepts like knowledge, identity, or society.

Consequently, postcolonialism is not merely a political emancipatory tool, nor just an academic discipline – it is both. It is academic in the way sciences have always tried to increase the number of perspectives to get a more valid view of reality – be it a social or ‘natural’ reality (if we do indeed accept that the two are separate) – following a long tradition of scholarly discourse. Leela Gandhi

⁴¹ What may be argued against seeing Freire as a postcolonial theorist is the fact that Freire is focusing on internal power relationships within a society rather than discussing the colonial ‘Other’. But his argument is the same as Said’s regarding the link between view of Self and Other. Moreover, Freire’s avoidance of the perspectives of nationality and ethnicity may stem from Marx’ perspective that these were incommensurable with the overall idea of class, and thus obstruct the unification of the working class across nations and races.

places postcolonialism squarely within poststructuralism, as it is deeply indebted to writers like Derrida, Deleuze and Foucault – who revealed structures of power in language as well as the relationship between knowledge and power.

The critical world music discourse and literature referred to above places itself firmly within postcolonial discourse through its focus on representation, gaze, ownership, power and subjectivity. It is still my desire to both utilize and transcend this particular approach to discussing the music of the Other, or rather: the music-making subjects of some experiences and backgrounds different from my own.

Critique of postcolonial theory

In *Goodbye to tristis tropes* (2000), Marshall Sahlins, without mentioning postcolonialism explicitly, analyzes the popular notion of ‘the West and the rest’. This notion implies an acceptance of colonial perspectives as a foundation for postcolonial discourse, the idea that there *is* a non-cultural West that dominates the cultural Other. He does not question historical domination, but rather the idea that the West and the ‘rest’ are any different in how we should approach them culturally and historically. Consequently, as Homi Bhabha has pointed out: Escaping colonialism and colonial discourse requires a perspective that questions the otherness itself.

Sahlins’s critique necessitates a critical scrutiny of the basic assumptions of postcolonialism; whether the very split into categories of ‘same’ and ‘other’ – as in its classic dichotomies between the West and the Rest, or the Orient and the Occident – is any different from the colonial view of the world which it claims to oppose. Postcolonialism may therefore be seen as a continuation of colonialism because it fixes the world in relations like ‘the West and the rest’. Sahlins asks – rhetorically – what is so different about the West that we single it out as a special category, different from all other experiences? Does this dichotomy or binarity in itself not create the problems associated with colonialism? The argument is not, as one may suppose from critiques of

postcolonialism, that the West is degraded by such dichotomies, but that it is being kept in its place as unique and different from everything else. Whether 'the West' in this case plays the role of self-defined superior knowledge or that of the exoticizing spectator defined by postcolonialism has little to say – the static idea about the agents and their relations actually keeps them in place, preventing us from assuming a fresh take on understanding the world today.

Still, postcolonial discourse is part of an academic and political reality, and this is the way I will treat it – as a *discourse*, which I can recognize in the field and also argue with, against, or from within. Further, while I have come to see it as an incomplete – even limiting – analytical tool, it still makes an important contribution when it comes to raising our consciousness of the power of the dominant spectator who remains invisible to himself.

Decontextualization and recontextualization – of sounds and people

In the discussions and terminology above, *decontextualization* is an implicit factor: the immigrants' experience of leaving their context, or their places of origin. Decontextualization is also apparent in how the sounds of the Other travel the world while the originators lose control of their uses and, possibly, of their own representation. Steven Feld uses the terminologies *Schizophonia* and *Schismogenesis* to establish a critical discourse on world music and world beat (Feld, 1994a). *Schizophonia* or "the splitting of sounds from sources" is a term he borrows from the composer Murray Schafer. While Schafer worried about recorded sound losing its live qualities – inspired by Walter Benjamin's dystopian view on 'mechanical reproduction' (1970 [1936]) – Feld uses the term to describe how sounds are separated from their contexts and originators in addition to how world music markets contribute to alienation, loss of ownership and financial and cultural exploitation. *Schismogenesis* is a term borrowed from Gregory Bateson that describes complex consequences of actions between different agents in a society. Feld's point is how the commodification practices of world music markets have these dubious qualities of schismogenesis, the

unpredicted and unintended consequences or “vicious circles” of reactivity between the agents involved, such as dominance, exploitation and dependency. The two ‘Schiz-’ terms form a basis for his extensive series of writings on the de-contextualization of music through commodification, with the consequent lack of ownership, musical ‘borrowing’, and circulation and representation out of the control of the originators of musical sounds (Feld, 1994a, 1996, 2004, 2012).

While Feld’s terminology and focus regard the production of world music as decontextualization of sounds, my focus is on that of travelling *artists*. Obviously, while migration is a process of decontextualization, it also implies *re*-contextualization, the processes of adapting to or creating a new reality. What may distinguish my focus from most world music literature is my exploration of the recontextualization of artists and their strategies in this process, meaning how they actively adapt to or shape their realities.⁴² Much literature is dedicated to discussing the production and circulation of music and sounds in the global market. My focus is on people who are circulating in the global reality while relating to a new, particular context and its discourses. Focusing on recontextualization is therefore a way in for performer agency.

Recontextualization as an in-between space

In *Modernity at large* (1996), the globalization theorist Arjun Appadurai describes migration as global ‘flows’ of people and ideas, which create reconfigurations of identities, of narratives, and, implicitly, of what we may generally call ‘practices’. For instance, the practice of creating and performing music. What interests me is how this reconfiguration is handled by the individuals who carry the particular experience of being decontextualized from one place and – if you like – *culture*, and recontextualized into another one. To explore what happens when musicians establish themselves in a new context,

⁴² The term *strategies* is here used in a very basic manner: to describe actions that meet particular needs or challenges, yet from a phenomenological view that actions are somehow rational, although not necessarily explicated, verbal or conscious.

how they find a new home, musically, metaphorically, discursively and financially speaking. How are these processes of de- and re-contextualization manifested through their expressions and practices?

Appadurai refers to the results of such reconfigurations in a new context as *hybridity*, a term which has been greatly discussed, not least for its simple solutions to complex issues.⁴³ Tom Solomon (2006) calls this tendency ‘happy hybridity’, when the ‘will to hybridity’ (Born & Hesmondhalgh, 2000) becomes a new way of getting back to the long-lost perspective of authenticity, or a convenient analytical take for researchers venturing into cultural complexity or even a proposed solution to cultural conflict by harmonizing differences. I have come to prefer Homi Bhabha’s term “in-between spaces” (1994), as he explicitly invites us to explore not the ‘hybrid’ mix of certain ‘pure’ origins, but the uniqueness of the creation of a new space, which must be understood in its own terms – including its tensions – and researched as something particular.

This aspect of globalization – the reconfigurations of cultural identities and expressions – also challenges the Other/Same perspectives from the postcolonial area of critical theory. When things are mixed up, as when ‘the Other’ do not remain in a particular reality but travel and recreate themselves, and take part in the discourses about themselves (and about the majority of the presumed ‘Same’, for that matter) retaining perspectives that divide the world into such fixed binaries becomes increasingly difficult and irrelevant. This is not to preach hybridity as the new authenticity – as in Solomon’s ‘happy hybridity’ – but merely to take into account the observation that postcolonial theory will only take you this far: It will not reveal how individuals shape their realities in novel ways.

My critique of postcolonial theory and perspectives is that they seem too set on a poststructuralist *theory of difference* as the guiding concept for any analysis,

⁴³ As discussed in Timothy Taylor’s chapter “Whose hybridity?” in *Global Pop* (1997) and Thomas Solomon’s essay (unpublished): “Whose hybridity? Whose diaspora? Agency and identity in transnational musics” (Solomon, 2006).

when ideas and images of self might actually be more in flux, creating new positions and relational patterns. This, in turn, leads to my critique of the critical world music literature, which does have a great deal of relevant perspectives to offer, yet in many instances seems unable to move beyond the critical issues of representation and Other/Same positions.

The agent in structures of power

When Bob White (et al.) revisits the critical world music discourses (2012), the perspectives are broadened from the earlier focus on binary Other/Same constellations to a more dynamic perspective on how a globalized reality does – and always has – offered reciprocal influences. Nonetheless, the conclusions remain critical, and White sums up their critical approach to ‘global encounters’:

Whether in person or completely virtual, the encounters in this collection demonstrate how power actually operates in the context of cross-cultural contact, as well as how various types of “selves” and “Others” are constituted, misconstrued, and misunderstood through uneven forms of exchange and mutual self-interest. (p. 9)

Speaking from my perspective, while I do find the concept of analyzing power highly relevant in this field, I suspect that programmatically applying this perspective to any analysis risks exerting exactly the same defining power over the subaltern subjects they presumably wish to emancipate. By defining any field of cross-cultural musical encounters as “...constituted, misconstrued, and misunderstood“, the subjects concerned are not comprehended as capable of acting rationally or acting from an agent position within structures of power. When in the same volume Steven Feld concludes that: “...world music – whatever good it does, whatever pleasure it brings – rests on economic structures that turn intangible cultural heritage into detachable labor” (p. 41), he not only criticizes misrepresentation and exploitation in areas where they occur, but dismisses a whole field of musical production, including the artists who try to find a subject position for their practices within this field.

Contrastingly, Keith Negus’ (1999) perspectives on musical market genres contain a much more dynamic understanding of the market, as he is not merely following a power analysis of how ‘the’ market – as a one-dimensional entity

and force – turns music into commodity. Rather, he argues that any marketed ‘genre’ – however difficult it may be to define – is a result of negotiations between artists, audiences and enterprises. This perspective allows the artists a certain agency in power analyses and seems much closer to Foucault’s idea of power being enabled through discourse in a multi-directional manner. Anthony Giddens’ perspective on power likewise follows a structure-agency dialectic, where the agent – the performer in this case – despite unquestionably strong external forces, does have certain possibilities of utilizing and navigating any social structure, including those of power (Giddens, 1984). Veit Erlmann’s description of how South African artists redefined themselves through *appropriating* the degrading genre of minstrelsy illustrates this perspective to the fullest.

So, following a more Giddens-inspired perspective of seeing structures of power as any other social structure, where subjects may move within these structures in both liberating and – for the researcher – interesting ways, my focus will be on the actions of artists, more than on how they are (mis-)represented, studying the recontextualizing of artists in discourses of otherness from a perspective of agency. Although the postcolonial discourse, including issues of power and representation, does play an important role in my work, I am constantly trying to twist the perspectives into what the artists are making of it. This is my attempt to contribute to critical methodology: to also criticize the axioms of critical theory, which may – still – work to deny the described subjects any rationality or agency.

Recontextualization as hypothesis

The idea of recontextualization, the way I have applied it in my methodology and writings, implies a hypothesis, this being that immigrant musicians, being decontextualized, are re-contextualized into their new reality through their artistic practices in Norway. In this process, I propose that they are relating to

existing discourses of otherness, through their roles as immigrants, or ‘others’.⁴⁴ I thus read their practices as attempts at both situating themselves in the context(s) where they are now active while identifying how they can utilize or make sense of what they are or were part of in their contexts of origin. Anticipating the human will to be ‘same’, I will further investigate whether and how this recontextualization process may also enable artists’ roles that establish some forms of *sameness*.

Research questions

My initial, open research question was: “How do immigrant musical performers construct their practices in Norway?” Through the dialectic, analytical process of observation, dialogue, reading and writing, this initial question takes on different forms through this work. Applying the categories and perspectives discussed in this chapter, I will point to sub-questions and lines of thought that will be explored in the chapters to follow.

First, applying the concept of de- and re-contextualization, a broad question to be explored is:

- How do the musical practices of African immigrant artists in Norway serve to recontextualize them into their current context?

Consequently, from a constructivist point of view:

- What spaces or discursive constructions are they being recontextualized into?

When *origin* emerges as a core analytical category, a new question arises:

- How are *Africa* and *origin* treated as concepts in the observed practices?

⁴⁴ This hypothesis has developed as an analytical tool during my observations, and has not been posed prior to observations. It is thus not a hypothesis to what I would find but rather a hypothesis that frames both my questions and the developing analytical approach.

Applying a Foucauldian perspective on discourse, the question is also:

- How do the discourses that the artists take part in and disseminate construct *them*?

These sub-questions then circle in on the main questions, which, through my turning to subjectivity and agency, remain:

1. How do African immigrant musical performers in Norway navigate or utilize discourses of otherness, origin and African-ness in their practices?
2. Do they transcend these discourses and establish positions of 'sameness' or 'self' in their practices? If so, how?

CHAPTER 3:

ADAPTING GROUNDED THEORY

Methodology, epistemology, ontology

This chapter takes up the methodological considerations that correspond with what I have presented in the previous two chapters: the framing of questions to investigate, developed through a dialectic process between data collection and analysis, awareness of circulating discourses, initial researcher outlook and theoretical considerations. A sample of performance practices is explored through various methods, though within a general methodological framework of *grounded theory*. In this work grounded theory accounts for many stages of the research process: designing a methodological approach, selecting participants, developing the study, selecting and analyzing data, and, finally, writing the report. Yet I have made and acquired adaptations to this methodology to reflect recent discourses in the human and social sciences, and to fit my academic discipline(s). These adaptations will be discussed in depth in this chapter.

In *Explaining society* (2002), Berth Danermark (et al.) emphasize that a requirement of mixed methods, and, indeed, any methodological setup, is that its ontology and epistemology are consistent.⁴⁵ In order to clarify how knowledge can be produced through a particular methodological design, the ideas about the nature of the ‘objects’ explored through research need to correspond, as well as the ideas about the nature of this knowledge. Promoting a ‘critical methodological pluralism’, the authors state that:

⁴⁵ The authors argue the need for epistemological consistency somewhat more implicitly, as they start out with a strong focus on ontology, yet discuss both in practice.

[W]e would like to emphasize the importance of paying attention to the ontological-methodological link. We too want to see more methods in use – when necessary. However, there is a great risk that some conclusions will be drawn that cannot be drawn from the application of a particular method unless you have made the ontological base clear. (...) [T]his mix [of methods] must be governed not only by the research question but, and more fundamentally, also by the ontological perspective from which you proceed. (Danermark et al., 2002, pp. 152-153)

This chapter's discussions about how the different methodological elements are adapted and combined seek to establish this coherence. An emerging analytical approach of this work has been that the practices observed somehow work as *discursive acts*, which serve to contextualize the performers. Through this work, 'context' takes on both the meaning of place and, in the more virtual sense, of *space*, which exists through circulating discourses. These conceptions of context interrelate, for instance in establishing 'Africa' as a diasporic, cross-continental space through performance.⁴⁶ Presenting artistic practices – and selected parts of such practices, like performances or rehearsals – as *discursive acts* invites ontological clarifications of terms like 'discourse', 'performance' and even 'music', epistemological clarifications about how data are analyzed and understood in relation to such terms, and methodological clarifications on how data are collected or generated. I will address these issues by, first, discussing the strengths and weaknesses of grounded theory methodology, particularly relating to researcher subjectivity and the ideas about 'grounded' data. Second, how new elements may be integrated into a grounded theory analytical model, such as musical analysis and discourse theory. Third, I will look at how this adapted grounded theory approach places this study in relation to the disciplines of ethnomusicology and popular musicology. This is particularly found in the way grounded theory as data-collecting method invites a strategized ethnography, and how the analytical approach of grounded theory influences data analysis, including music and performance analyses that adapt some

⁴⁶ These concepts are described and discussed in Chapters 7 and 8, which move from 'context' as the concrete, local place, to the 'space' enabled through discourses. Paulla Ebron's discussion of how 'Africa' is constituted through performance (Ebron, 2002), describes the same matter in somewhat different terms.

analytical tools from popular musicology, yet stay within a phenomenological ontology in relation to the nature of the ‘objects’ analyzed.

The selection of grounded theory

Grounded theory research follows a thread of inquiry through varying methods, instances and sites, based on a constant feedback model between data collection and analysis. The logic of constantly developing research questions and concepts, where data analyses lead to the next steps of inquiry, fits an exploratory need in this project, particularly at stages where the ideas I have tried to investigate have turned out to be problematic or elusive.⁴⁷

Another explorative feature used is the way grounded theory methodology includes the detours and processes of arriving at a research sample or ‘field’ as a meaningful part of the research. This allows the reader to understand more of how the questions and inquiries have developed, and allows the researcher to take advantage of all the material that has been collected.⁴⁸ An example is the narrative presented in Chapter 1, which took place in the middle of selecting artists to present in this study. The questions and reflections being posed in such an early, yet formative phase of research also have something to contribute in the accounting for and presentation of the project. When grounded theory is known for the slogan ‘everything is data’, this refers to how a grounded theory approach allows for the use of varying forms of data, since the emphasis is on the analysis and coding rather than the types of data collected. This may seem like a ‘convenient take’ (like “anything goes”, Feyerabend’s anarchistic

⁴⁷ Chapter 2 comments on how I approached the concept of *world music*, and later try to deal with problematic concepts of otherness and otherization.

⁴⁸ The decision to select grounded theory proceeded from initially being *inspired* by grounded theory in what was planned as a participant-observation project to later explicitly defining the research as a grounded theory research project. If I had decided upon this earlier, some of these ‘detours’ might have been avoided, thus making data collection more efficient and strategic from the outset by analyzing earlier for thematic categorization. But even superfluous detours may provide interesting data.

methodological statement (1978)), so it needs to be justified, and in the following I will take Danermark's call for a consistent ontology (and, implicitly: a consistent epistemology) into account to demonstrate how this study connects various analytical approaches into a methodological design.

What is grounded theory?

Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss initially developed grounded theory (GT) as a method of generating theory from data (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). They contested the conventional sociological research procedure of the time, of first generating hypotheses or questions, which would subsequently be investigated through selected empirical research. According to Glaser and Strauss, having a question or hypothesis as a starting point meant applying or testing theory rather than generating it, thus projecting ideas on the data rather than extracting ideas *from* data. Grounded theory has built procedures starting with collecting some data, then analyzing the data for key terms (building codes, categories and concepts), which, through an interplay between new data and analyses, may generate theory. What is meant by 'theory' in this respect will be discussed later in this chapter.

The aim of being 'grounded' also implies linking explanations and terms closely to what is experienced 'in the real world', that is, among the people and contexts that are being studied. This ideal of staying close to the experiences and concerns of the participants demonstrates grounded theory's roots in Peirce's pragmatism and in phenomenology (Charmaz, 2006; Denscombe, 2007). Also, the outcomes of research should have some kind of relevance in the context where the research has taken place. This has ethical dimensions many researchers would subscribe to, but the consideration itself stems from a pragmatist view on scientific truth (Peirce, 1992).

Grounded theory terminology

The term ‘grounded theory’ – often with capital G and T – is commonly applied to at least three somewhat different things: the discipline or area of scholarly discourse, the methodology, and the theory this methodology is supposed to generate. In my terminology I try to distinguish between these. In line with Bryant and Charmaz (2007), I use the term ‘grounded theory’, or GT, to describe the general discipline of doing research through a particular methodology which I then refer to as *grounded theory methodology*, or GTM. When it comes to using the term grounded theory for the *theory* that is derived or arrived at through grounded theory methodology, some may prefer to call this a ‘conclusion’. Yet the point – particularly underlined by Glaser – is that this conclusion should be formulated in a theoretical manner in order to defend the methodological emphasis on theory development.⁴⁹ To make the distinction clear I refer to this as ‘a grounded theory’ or ‘the grounded theory’.

Methodological procedures of grounded theory

From the start, grounded theory has developed in various directions, starting when Glaser and Strauss split up, creating their contrasting views on what grounded theory ‘really’ was. The different branches or ‘schools’ of grounded theory have differing views on topics ranging from the use of literature (and when to read it), application of other, extant, theories, and to what extent researcher subjectivity influences the analysis of data.

Despite the many branches of GT, some recognizable common features remain, and in *The SAGE handbook of grounded theory* (2007), Jane Hood sums up these as 1) the use of theoretical sampling, 2) a constant comparison of data with theoretical categories, and 3) focus on the development of theory via theoretical

⁴⁹ When Glaser and Strauss titled their book *Discovering Grounded Theory*, this is the way they used the term in the title; theory that is discovered, or arrived at, through particular research procedures.

saturation of categories rather than substantial verifiable findings (Hood in Bryant & Charmaz, 2007, pp. 13, 174) . Through these core features Hood distinguishes grounded theory from other qualitative methods, such as ethnography;

Glaser and Strauss (1967: 46-47) even go so far as to say that after having developed one's core categories, one can save time on transcription by not transcribing material that is irrelevant to those categories (1967: 69). This focus on emerging theory and theory driven data collection is very different from data collection in conventional ethnographies which strives to provide thick description of all that can be observed in a given setting regardless of theoretical relevance. (Hood in Bryant & Charmaz, 2007, p. 155)

Precisely this feature, the strategized ethnography, is why I will not call this work 'an ethnography', although it is mostly (but not exclusively) ethnographical in its data collection, yet applying the logic of grounded theory in selection and analysis. I will discuss Hood's three core features to offer an insight into how this methodology is adapted.

Theoretical sampling

As introduced in chapter 1, a key feature of a grounded theory approach is *theoretical sampling*. This refers to how the research sample – such as sites or participants – is selected after the initial round of entering into the field, as the first set of data is analyzed. Theoretical sampling implies using the concepts and categories that are being developed in the analysis of early data to select the next stage of samples. Hence the selection is not based on whether the sample is representative, typical or extreme – as in case study designs (Denscombe, 2007; Yin, 2003) – but on whether it is relevant to the categories being developed; it is simply a matter of whether the new or extended sample may contribute to an understanding of the theory that is being developed. This of course runs the risk of selecting samples that confirm early assumptions of the researcher, which is why careful analysis is stressed to overcome possible predisposed theories and assumptions. The gain, on the other hand, is *relevance*, and an organic development of the research process.

Analytical feedback

A grounded theory research design evolves with the questions that are being developed along the way, constantly feeding back to the data. Martyn Denscombe (2007) emphasizes how data collection – particularly through fieldwork – is both a starting point and a continuing process throughout a grounded theory research process. He adds: “Concepts and theories are developed out of the data through a persistent process of comparing the ideas with existing data, and *improving the emerging concepts and theories* by checking them against new data collected specifically for the purpose” (Denscombe, 2007, p. 111, italics added). This conceptual feedback process, or narrowing of the scope through continuous analysis, is taking place through a dialectic between formal analysis based on a coding scheme, and the extensive memo writing that GT promotes – the researcher’s reflection on the analyses in writing. These memos are gradually and selectively absorbed in the actual text of the report, such as this dissertation. The point of analytical feedback thus also reflects the way I have written and structured this dissertation; to let the concepts and theories develop, even contradict initial analyses, as new perspectives are added from further explorations of the given concepts.

Analysis: from coding to theory

There are different paradigms of coding used in grounded theory, some very complex, but I have applied Strauss and Corbin’s definition of three types, or rather, *levels* of coding: *open coding*, which is the first categorization and breaking down of the raw data, *axial coding*, which means subsequent ways of putting data together based on the open coding, and *selective coding*, the process of selecting main categories and defining relationships to other categories, including the need for further investigations and refinements (Bryman, 2008; Corbin & Strauss, 2008 [1990]). Though this is not always done in three rounds, they are three different processes. The next step continues the theorizing process by going from selective coding, which builds categories, to *concepts*, which in the end will form *the* grounded theory.

This analytical process – from coding via categories to concept – is particularly demonstrated in Chapter 5, where, in analyzing a musical creation process, the code ‘tradition’ appears on so many levels of the data that it forms a category. In the further analysis, the many differing ways ‘tradition’ appears are utilized in building a concept. Such as when a goat horn – a Norwegian traditional instrument – is introduced in the ensemble to correspond with an Ivorian musical tradition. This becomes a sonic marker of tradition, which is used to address a particular festival audience. Yet in this context, ‘tradition’ also represents a discourse that constructs the performer in ways that he expressly wants to avoid. This analytical juxtaposition then builds the concept, developed through the chapter, of ‘transcending tradition’.

Formulating a grounded theory

This grounded theory research process, with selection and analysis of new data, continues as a funnelling of concepts until there is ‘theoretical saturation’, which means when new data seem not to reveal anything new, and the researcher is ready to conclude and formulate the theory. Yet in this analytical process the divergences between different GT approaches become increasingly significant. I will therefore take up the critique of grounded theory before moving into what theory and theorizing means in my methodological adaptation.

Critique of grounded theory: subjectivity and construction

The immediate critical question to be asked of grounded theory is how you get started at all, if all the researcher needs is an open mind, trying not to project ideas to the field. Glaser and Strauss were not as rigid on this as it may seem:

To be sure, one goes out and studies an area with a particular (...) perspective, and with a focus, a general question or a problem in mind. But the researcher can (and we believe should) also study an area without any preconceived theory that dictates, prior to the research, ‘relevancies’ in concepts and hypotheses. (Glaser & Strauss, 1967. Quoted from Denscombe, 2007, p. 91)

They thus distinguish between having an open mind, and just having a lack of focus or utter ‘blankness’. Creating such a starting point “without any preconceived theory” is the ideal, and early writings even advocate refraining from reading previous research or theory of the same field. Which seems a little extreme, yet it underlines the serious efforts of starting with data rather than ideas or implicit hypotheses. Strauss and Corbin – whose writings represent one of the current main branches of grounded theory – have later modified this by underlining the need to consider initial ideas, theories and concepts as *provisional* (Corbin & Strauss, 2008 [1990]; Denscombe, 2007). Still, I think this idea of the ‘theory free’ mind needs to be questioned, in line with the debates on researcher subjectivity that have accompanied scholarly discourse the last half century or so, and I will use Hans-Georg Gadamer’s perspectives on researcher subjectivity to nuance this position. Also, the idea – which Glaser seems to retain – that theory is naturally contained in the data, seems somewhat positivist.⁵⁰ This contrasts with a constructivist perspective on how meaning is *ascribed* to any interaction, both by participants interacting with each other, and by the researcher interacting with participants and later with data. In short, I see the need for updating a ‘grounded’ view on data to include researcher subjectivity, in line with qualitative research discourse.

The ‘neutral’ observer

The idea of the ‘neutral’ or objective research position has long been contested by postmodern and constructivist claims that any research is heavily subjective and influenced by the researcher, to the extent that we get ‘confessional’ ethnographies that report personal details in the ethnographer’s life to account for their possible influence on the observations. This contestation of objectivity also affects the ideas of grounded theory, which – in its original form – seems to

⁵⁰ Charmaz diplomatically labels Glaser’s school *objectivist*, distinguished by certain assumptions regarding the nature of data as independent of social context and researcher influence, but “real in and of themselves” (Charmaz, 2006, p. 131).

assume that in any object or situation there is inherent theory that will spring from the observation ‘itself’ if you neutralize all of your own assumptions. I don’t subscribe to this position, because it eliminates the constructional aspect of any knowledge, and tries to naturalize it. But I did find it very useful to carry out this exercise, to consciously lay initial ideas aside, and direct the attention towards what participants said and did. I also waited until after a number of observations to do interviews in order not to impose my ideas on the research participants.⁵¹ And when I did start interviewing, it was in the form of *feedback interviews*, focusing on experiences that we shared, asking them to comment on a concert recording, a TV programme, a performance, or a rehearsal – or simply things that had happened during my observations.

Neither do I subscribe to the total surrender to subjectivism in the most extreme postmodern theory, which reduces any ethnography (or any qualitative research) to poetry, or to representing only the perspectives of the researcher, without any generalizing claim.⁵² I find the subjectivity of the researcher is much better discussed in Bourdieu’s critique of participant observation – the ‘objectification of objectivity’ – where his critique is not that it is too subjective, but that it is not aware of its own agenda (Bourdieu, 1990 [1980]). The researcher can never be a participant, according to Bourdieu, because he does not have anything at stake in the situation in the same way as the participants do. What *is* at stake is the researcher’s academic career, publications, prospects of university tenure, etc. And without understanding our own practice – what we are up to as researchers in the act of researching – the outcome, what we present as our research, is highly obscured by that miscomprehension.

⁵¹ At the time, this, too, was a phenomenological influence, from Frykman and Gilje (2003): to observe what people do, rather than what they say.

⁵² In “Post-modern ethnography” (1986), Stephen E. Tyler describes and, seemingly, idealizes a research situation where ethnographic description and analysis is turned into poetry and allegories. To Tyler the ethnographic text’s purpose is not to *represent*, but to *evoke* a sense of the experience, like poetry – any description is just as true as any other.

Gadamer on subjectivity and prejudice

Hans-Georg Gadamer has a similar, though more optimistic, view on researcher subjectivity. Although he is not talking about ethnographic research, but rather historical and textual research in a hermeneutic tradition, the reflections in *Truth and method* (1998 [1960]) seem highly applicable to Bourdieu's criticism. Gadamer claims that no understanding is possible without a subjective researcher, even a researcher with a pre-judgment of what he will find. Indeed, this pre-judgment is inevitably part of any inquiry, or else there would be none, and the research process implies challenging these assumptions when engaging with the material and with the subjectivity of the other, the person or persons behind any historical text or expression. In Gadamer's idea of hermeneutics, the researcher can never fully understand this other subjectivity, never know what it is like to 'walk in another person's shoes', experience what the other experiences. For Gadamer the goal is rather to establish a subject-subject relation, where the *horizon of understanding* for the researcher is expanded, conscious of where he is observing from (in terms of his own historical context and personal experience), towards the horizon of the subject(s) studied. When the horizon expands, it might be able to overlap with the horizon of the other subject in order to create an area of shared experience, and thus, possibilities of understanding.⁵³

This process might seem a bit esoteric, but Gadamer's point seems to be to de-essentialize the researcher's understanding through a double contextualizing of it: an awareness of one's own context and horizon of understanding, and the same for the subjects being researched. That is why we always need new historical research, because it is about understanding our own context as well as the one studied, which will inevitably lead to new conclusions and insights all the way.

⁵³ The argument here referred to is found particularly in the section "The hermeneutic significance of temporal distance" (Gadamer, 1998 [1960], pp. 291-299).

So, there is always the dialectic between these positions: the context and subjectivity of the researcher, and the context and subjectivity of the researched, the agents. Trying to be aware of both of these positions makes me emphasize both ethnography, with its closeness to the agents, and a more hermeneutical analysis, with its awareness of distance. When it comes to understanding popular music practices, ethnography and hermeneutics have their strongholds in ethnomusicology and popular musicology respectively. And I find grounded theory offers tools to combine them, by tracing the threads of inquiry rather than distinguishing between different forms of data.

Conclusions on grounded theory: Researcher subjectivity and grounded theory ideals

In conclusion, I find grounded theory very useful as a way of moving from observations to theory, yet I disagree with the initial assumptions of the ‘open mind’ of the researcher. I think it is an illusion to think you can bracket your own ideas. It is, rather, *challenging* ideas in the light of observations that creates an interesting dialectic between data and theory. I do see the point that these observations should be allowed to speak ‘for themselves’, without too many preconceptions, in order to secure a grounded relevance. Of course, having an open mind is an ideal for any researcher, but the very idea that the researcher’s own ideas are not projected into the research has been so thoroughly examined and abandoned through scholarly discourse, that even reducing it to a methodological ideal seems to be a way of hanging on to old assumptions that in turn justify the whole methodology on not very firm ground. I find Hans-Georg Gadamer’s view on *foregrounding* and mapping out researcher ‘prejudice’ much more useful, as there is, inevitably, some reason for the researcher to start research in the first place, and in a particular context, which implies some kind of pre-judgement (Gadamer, 1998 [1960]). Seeing these preconceptions as useful rather than problematic creates a much more open space for investigation. As Gadamer points out: pre-judgement is there, you might as well make use of it. In this work, it is particularly the literary, critical reflections on *world music*

that make up the ‘prejudice’ that is first foregrounded and subsequently challenged through empirical research.

The early grounded theory ideas of refraining from reading I find particularly counter-productive, as I think we should not categorize along the binary lines of practice versus theory, defining some discourses as ‘belonging in the field’, while academic discourse is ‘outside the field’ per se. Despite the idea of generating theory *from* the field, grounded theory then stumbles into the old anthropological assumptions of the theory-free field, when it separates the academic from other vehicles of knowledge production.

Constructivist grounded theory

With this epistemological view on researcher subjectivity in mind, I have approached and made adaptations to grounded theory. Kathy Charmaz has been influential in outlining a ‘constructivist’ grounded theory as a third way between the positions of Glaser and Strauss/Corbin. I find myself closest to her grounded theory stance, which takes into account the various developments in qualitative research:

The integration of methodological developments of the last 40 years distinguishes Constructivist Grounded Theory. This version emphasizes how data, analysis, *and methodological strategies* become constructed, and takes into account the research contexts and researchers’ positions, perspectives, priorities, and interactions. (Bryant & Charmaz, 2007, p. 10. Italics as in original)

This implies that the researcher takes full responsibility for establishing and defending the methodological and theoretical framework for research.

Theory as subjective construct

What is meant by ‘theory’ in grounded theory takes on somewhat different forms, between the more positivist, or ‘objectivist’ stances (held particularly by the Glaser school) that seem to see theory predisposed in data, and more constructivist positions that see theory as being generated, or constructed, in an interpretational process between data and the researcher.

Charmaz (2006) stresses how theorizing – found particularly in the procedure of going from selective coding to concepts – is a process where researcher subjectivity is especially useful, as it moves analysis beyond classification:

(...) I argue that the bottom-up approach gives grounded theory its strength. The subjectivity of the researcher provides a *way* of viewing. Instead of arresting analysis at the coding stage, researchers can raise their main categories to concepts. (...) We choose to raise certain categories to concepts because of their theoretical reach, incisiveness, generic power, and relation to other categories. Raising categories to concepts includes subjecting them to further analytic refinement and involves showing their relationship to other concepts. (Charmaz, 2006, p. 139)

In line with a constructivist stance, Charmaz sees the nature of theory as the *interpretations* of reality, which people act upon;

This theoretical approach emphasizes practices and actions. Rather than explaining reality, social constructionists see multiple realities and therefore ask: *What* do people assume is real? *How* do they construct and act on their view of reality? Thus knowledge – and theories – are situated and located in particular positions, perspectives, and experiences. (Charmaz, 2006, p. 127)

The plausibility and relevance of *interpretational theory* are found precisely in its closeness to social life. Yet Charmaz underlines that “Rather than contributing verified knowledge, I see grounded theories as offering plausible accounts” (Charmaz, 2006, p. 132).

Delimitations

Further theoretical and historical conditions of grounded theory, such as its Glaserian and Straussian developments, or influences from symbolic interactionism and micro-sociological action theory, are not discussed in this dissertation.

Ontology: talk and text

In this part I will move the discussion from ontology to discipline. Two methodological and disciplinary questions were important at the outset of this work:

- How can ethnography as a method be incorporated in research designs, if you are not writing ‘an ethnography’, that is, a deep interpretation of a culture, based on long-term field research?
- How can the research methodology include the key feature of what the artists studied are concerned with: their music?

The questions also draw up two musicological disciplinary areas that I try to combine: the ethnographic, ‘fieldwork’ approach of ethnomusicology, and the music-as-text (or at least music as analytical *object*) that popular musicology has inherited and developed from historical musicology.

The first question is chiefly addressed above, through the selection of grounded theory methodology, where ethnographic methods are applied more selectively. In this process different types of data have been collected and analyzed: performances, interviews, recorded music, social interactions, dialogues, rehearsals etc. This is all part of an extended fieldwork approach, and documented through overlapping observation notes, recordings and memos. The analytical procedures of going from coding to categories to theoretical concepts are then applied in the same way to all types of data. The general assumption in approaching this diverse material is that it, despite its diversity, can generate something ‘whole’, such as a theory. This is where the call for ontological consistency from Danermark (et al.) needs to be considered, as there are two seemingly diverging theoretical roots or origins at work in this approach, namely ethnographic methods deriving from the social sciences, and more interpretational readings of musical expressions deriving from a hermeneutical tradition.

Phenomenology: Observing actions

Phenomenology is one of the ontological premises in grounded theory. It is known for directing its interest towards the subjective act of experiencing, rather than the ‘object’ that is experienced (Cerbone, 2006).⁵⁴ Frykman and Gilje (2003) describe how, in consequence, phenomenological research studies this experiential dimension through observing actions, rather than statements and objects. Accordingly, Charmaz (2006) recommends searching for action categories in grounded theory analysis. Ontologically, the focus on action means that data are approached from the angle of what is *done*. This phenomenological approach also implies that actions are seen as rational (although not necessarily conscious or explicated), which allows the subjects some agency in the research process. As described in chapter 1, when posing my early research question “*How do immigrant musical performers construct their practices in Norway?*” this was a move from defining a particular framing of immigrants (as representatives of a musical genre), to looking in various directions for differing strategies. The question thus reflected a phenomenological view that the artists had a subjective agency, or an active approach to their context and representation – they were not just carriers of ‘genre’ or ‘culture’.

Performance: music as action

A phenomenological or action-based approach to researching musical practices has also influenced a number of scholars in different musicological disciplines. The ontological argument for seeing music as action is found in Christopher Small’s term *musicking* (1998), and also in discussions on music as *performance*

⁵⁴ Phenomenology acknowledges the immediacy of experience as a source of knowledge, as opposed to ‘interpretation’, the search for meaning behind or outside the experienced. See also Gumbrecht’s call for more experiential – and implicitly phenomenological – hermeneutics (2004).

(Cook, 2003). Seeing music in terms of performance has been increasingly applied in studies across musicological disciplines.⁵⁵

After its ‘social turn’ from about the 1980s, a source of frustration in musicology seems to have been the loss of ‘the music’ as the primary object of study. This had implied studying music in linguistic terms as *text* – which analytically tended to give way to a sociological focus on social interaction and all that music meant in its *context* (Stokes, 2003). This development coincided with an increased academic interest in popular music. Susan McClary (1994) argued that studying popular music as a ‘social’ rather than musical phenomenon just represented a continuation of patronizing worries about the music of youth, and declared that: “the study of popular music should also include the study of popular music” (p. 38). Trying to overcome such divides between textual and contextual research, Nicholas Cook argues how (ontologically) turning to seeing music as *performance* establishes a focus on the relationship between music as sound and social interaction, without stumbling into old structuralist interpretations of musical structures *as* social structures:

But the problem disappears if instead of seeing musical works as texts within which social structures are encoded, we see them as scripts in response to which social relationships are enacted: The object of analysis is now present and self-evident in the interactions between performers, and in the acoustic trace that they leave. To call music a performing art, then, is not just to say that we perform it; it is to say that through it we perform social meaning. (Cook, 2003, p. 213)

This call in musicological works for seeing music as performance suggests replacing the old text/context dichotomy with a ‘talk and text’ dynamic: an ontological view of music as action including its ‘acoustic traces’, that is, music as sound and structure, yet placing this ‘text’ in a larger social and experienced function of ‘talk’ – what is done, interacted, heard and performed.⁵⁶ This

⁵⁵ See for example Ebron (2002); Kisluk (2001); Monson (1996). The phrase ‘talk and text’ is in itself borrowed from Stokes’ title (2003), in his discussion of the relationship between ethnomusicology and popular musicology.

⁵⁶ Cook’s other point, which he draws from performance studies, is that approaching music *as* performance is not a matter of observing a ‘work’ being ‘performed’. A Mozart symphony,

represents, I will argue, a hermeneutical-phenomenological ontology for studying and analyzing music in a broad sense of the experience without abandoning what is the primary focus for the performers and their audiences – and an essential interest of music scholars – *musicizing*, or the act of making, playing, listening to and performing music.

In approaching ‘talk and text’ as relational, I find the ontological base to move seamlessly between ethnographic description and musical analysis. This ontological approach stays close to the phenomenological side through the interest in performance and music as *action* (enacted and experienced), yet not excluding the idea of music as ‘text’ from hermeneutical research, just its modernist, essentialized role as an independent entity.⁵⁷ Studying the ‘talk and text’ dynamic, or the relation between music as action and sounding ‘object’ in a particular context at a given time, implies that when analyzing a musical performance my focus is both on what the participants *do* – musically, verbally, physically, visually, and in their interacting with each other and the audience – where we are, and what we (or at least I) experience *hearing*. Together this forms the total musical experience, or the *event*. This relational approach to all data thus enables combining different types of data, thus coding performance analyses alongside other data such as observations, interviews, or recordings. It also places this study in a disciplinary field between ethnomusicology, with its interest in musical action and context, and popular musicology, with its predominantly hermeneutical roots.

for example, represents an infinite number of possible unique performances that inscribe meaning in what is enacted between the stage and the audience in their particular context. While performance studies in the field of theatre have developed this strategy of studying the enacted work, i.e. the *event*, rather than the written text, the understanding of the ‘work’ as a textual entity seems somewhat more enduring in musicology.

⁵⁷ For a critique of the musical ‘work’ as a self-contained entity, see Goehr (2007)

Ethnomusicology, popular musicology and the culture term

Having already demonstrated how the focus on performance invites seeing the sounding music as more than ‘text’, and also how studying the musical *event* implies more than studying ‘context’ as separate from musical experience, it is also relevant to point out how this approach places this study in relation to musicological disciplines, in this case ethnomusicology and popular musicology. I will demonstrate what I employ from these disciplines, and how I position myself in relation to them.

Popular musicology

In the introduction to *The Ashgate research companion to popular musicology* (2009), Derek B. Scott presents the formation of popular musicology in the 1990s as a response to the neglect of popular music in historical musicology:

Popular musicology addresses this neglect and embraces the field of musicological study that engages with popular forms of music, especially music associated with commerce, entertainment, and leisure activities. (Scott, 2009, p. 2)

The three areas that Scott lists as being embraced are striking in that they all sound a tone of *low* culture; ‘*commerce, entertainment, and leisure activities*’. This goes further than a pluralistic acceptance of or interest in popular music, which was gaining academic ground; the radical shift was to *foreground* popular culture as the one musicologically most relevant and preferable to research, even from an aesthetical point of view.

What has been predominant in the way popular music came to be studied in popular musicology is an idea inherited from historical musicology: a perspective on music as a ‘piece’ to be analyzed, or, in the linguistics-style terminology, ‘text’. Although sometimes engaging in empirical research, such as ethnographic fieldwork, popular musicology tends to look at sound recording as

the “primary medium of popular music” (Scott 2009, p 6). This reflects a persistent idea of the ‘primary’ nature of music as an entity of sound.⁵⁸

The themes that popular musicology deals with are broad, but Scott offers two main strands; one is concerned with the mode of production, as the analysis of musical production yields rich details related to genre, intertextuality (making use of or referring to the works of others and other media), production technique, musical expression, history and artists. The other is more thematic, drawing on sociological discourses of popular culture: issues such as race, gender, sexuality, power, representation, place, space and identity (Scott 2009, p 3-12). It is tempting to read into this a text/context dichotomy, as one branch seems set on a textual approach of ‘close readings’ of music and production of sound, while the other is contextual, linking music to society through discourse. At its best, I find, popular musicology combines these approaches. It does so in the analytical sketches by Robert Walser, which I will present below as an example of analyses utilising subjective experience and the researcher *horizon*.

Musical analysis as a mapping of horizons

In Allan Moore’s (ed.) *Analyzing popular music* (2003), Robert Walser offers four examples, or rather *sketches*, of popular music analysis, in order to demonstrate his ideas both of popular music analysis, and of the discipline area as such. Since Walser is demonstrating his ideas about popular music analysis rather than explicating them by methodological instructions, his approach to analysis invites interpretation. So here I will analyze his approach to musical analysis. In my perception his analyses combine a grounded theory-type qualitative coding, structural analysis and a tracing of discourses, all while foregrounding the listening *experience*, which is a rather phenomenological approach. To me, Walser’s analytical position demonstrates a Gadamerian

⁵⁸ As observed, for example, in the rhetoric of Alan Moore’s title: *Rock, the primary text* (1993)

awareness of a subjective horizon being explored as well as that of the ‘text’ analyzed.

Walser’s first analytical sketch is of the 1991 country hit *Feed Jake* by Pirates of the Mississippi, in which a dying man is begging to have someone take care of his dog after he is gone. While easily dismissed as a ‘simple’ song, Walser’s analysis focuses precisely on how the song *produces* this simplicity:

The singer’s voice is one that has been cultivated and presented so as to seem uncultivated and unmediated. We’ve heard this sort of voice before, from Bruce Springsteen among many others, and its power lies in its projection of sincerity, honesty, directness. (...) An acoustic guitar provides the most prominent instrumental backing and contributes its own related associations: seemingly non-technological, used more by placid folk musicians than raucous rockers, perhaps rural, it is congruent with the vocals and supports them. So is the recording’s straightforward, economical bass playing, and its near lack of drums, which keeps its overall quality of motion gentle. (Walser 2003, p. 28)

Walser imagines the production process, and I imagine Walser’s research process, where this analytical description could stem from a qualitative coding procedure, based on repeated listening from various listening positions. In noting first level codes, ‘simplicity’ and ‘production’ would be recurring, both regarding instrumentation, voice, lyrics, the *image* of the artists, and the subjectivity the singer is taking on, narratively, as an earnest, simple man caring about his dog. Looking at the conceptual interrelation between codes represents what I have referred to as *selective coding* (Corbin & Strauss, 2008 [1990]), here seen in the way Walser starts looking critically at how this ‘simplicity’ is carefully and skilfully *produced* by applying quite complex playing and recording techniques.

Walser takes this point further – that is, into society – by suggesting that these ideals of simplicity correspond with the values or virtues of a particular audience, coming across as honesty and earnestness that this audience will identify with:

The song's fundamental message is a plea on behalf of caring for others, and it more specifically addresses these issues and values: fear of mortality, compassion, loyalty, danger faced bravely, hope of virtue rewarded. If we don't recognize how the song invokes and appeals to these emotions and values, we haven't analyzed it at all. (Walser 2003, p. 29)

Here Walser is carefully linking *text* (the recording), *experience* (of listening to the song), *horizon* (emotions and values that, he argues, a broader American public shares or identifies with) and *discourse* (the ideals of earnestness and simplicity, and how they are produced and in circulation).

Walser pulls the analysis of this song into that of the next, *Enter Sandman* by Metallica, as both songs make use of a common childhood prayer (*Now I lay me down to sleep*). To describe the contrasting claustrophobia and fear that he finds in Metallica's production, he not only links their distorted Phrygian guitar riffs to the subjective feeling of claustrophobia they evoke, but even offers a story of his experience of the prayer from his own childhood, where the line "if I die before I wake" filled him with fear that his own death might actually occur in this very place, this very night. Here Walser is radically Gadamerian, in the sense that he explores his own horizon, his subjective response and memories, then extends this horizon to meet that of the other subject, in this case the other listeners, anticipating some common experiences between himself and the audience of Metallica, through the contextualization of childhood and fear of death as an anticipated, or possibly produced, common experience.

Although representing a breach with analysis in historical musicology, dominated by harmonies and structural analysis, this way of analyzing music reconnects with a hermeneutical tradition that historical musicology is part of, yet taking into account more recent discussions on researcher subjectivity, and the phenomenological immediacy of *experience* as a foundation for analysis – thus entering phenomenological hermeneutics.⁵⁹

⁵⁹ Gumbrecht calls for more "immediate" and experience-based hermeneutics in *Production of presence* (2004), where he argues that we need to "get back to" experience and immediacy, ridding ourselves of the double layer of interpretation; the idea that there is the experience,

What I will employ from popular music analysis is, then, exemplified in Walser's sketches, first treating musical expression as any other data; coding it, looking for concepts, the same way as I will do with ethnographic observations or interviews, and then – following a grounded theory logic – comparing the analysis with other data to build concepts. Secondly, I am taking up the way popular musicology (at least in some instances) treats musical production as discursive, mapping out a broader horizon than just the one between the artist and researcher, but expanding it to a wider implicit audience: the discourse as it appears in a context of history and society. Such as, in the Walser example, how the ideal of 'simplicity' is appealing to a particular cultural context. Or, in mine, how artists link their stage appearances to larger discourses of African-ness.

Ethnomusicology

Ethnomusicology derives from the very same problem that gave birth to popular musicology: that the value hierarchies of historical musicology were excluding music outside the world of Western art music from its study. Yet it developed decades earlier, and with a different focus; ethnomusicology was not and is not so occupied with 'commerce, entertainment and leisure activities' (at least not the first two), or with the music industry. Rather, the focus has been the music among people, in culture. It borrowed its methods and focus from social anthropology and ethnology, which initially implied studying the 'folk music' of rural areas, and the music of non-Western cultures. Just as in the anthropological crisis, ethnomusicology has thus striven to come across as a discipline that is not limited to studying particular *kinds* of music, or even 'kinds' of people – the anthropological, cultural *other*.

and then there is "meaning" as a different level. Gumbrecht's stance represents a phenomenological turn in hermeneutics that historical musicology has barely taken up.

Challenges to ethnomusicology

Most definitions of ethnomusicology point back to Alan P. Merriam, who was formative in consolidating the discipline and defining it in scholarly terms (Merriam, 1964, 1977). Bruno Nettl points out how the concept of *culture*, as inherited from social anthropology, has been fundamental in defining the discipline:

Alan Merriam argued that ethnomusicology is the study of “music *in* culture,” and later suggested that this definition did not go far enough, that it is the study of music *as* culture (Nettl, 2005, p. 217)

In a 2003 article in *Ethnomusicology*,⁶⁰ Timothy Rice suggests new approaches for research in the discipline. Taking on Merriam and the very foundation of ethnomusicology, Rice goes to the heart of the matter by demonstrating how the concept of culture itself is being deconstructed and challenged, which has direct implications for a discipline that is set on studying music either *in*, or *as*, culture:

One venerable theoretical framework, dating from Alan Merriam’s 1964 *The Anthropology of Music*, seems to construct, in line with the anthropology of the day, a relatively simple world of bounded, isolated, shared cultures and relatively static social structures. (...) Most ethnomusicologists understand that today’s world, the world in which we and our subjects make, understand, and experience music, is either more complex than it used to be, or we are realizing that it was always complex and our ways of thinking about it were too schematic and blinkered. (Rice, 2003, p. 151)

Rice lists three challenges – and corresponding new directions – for a reorientation of ethnomusicology if the concept of culture is to be replaced or re-read.

The first challenge comes directly from abandoning culture as a ‘superorganic’ structure that governs people’s lives and actions. Referring to critique of the culture concept – such as Abu-Lughod’s “Writing against Culture” (1991) – Rice suggests addressing the deconstruction of ‘culture’ by moving into “subject-centered musical ethnography” (p. 152). This implies that rather than

⁶⁰ *Ethnomusicology* is the journal of the US-based *Society for Ethnomusicology*.
www.ethnomusicology.org

mapping out 'culture', the researcher should observe how construction of *self* is taking place – in relation to other people, to places, to societies etc.

The second challenge regards travel and space. This issue arises from researching an increasingly complex world – or what is often referred to as *globalization* – where people's life realities, narratives of self, and travel routes are getting increasingly multi-layered. Referring to Appadurai's theory of how different 'scapes' (ethnoscapes, ideoscapes, econoscapes, etc.) make up fluctuating systems in a globalized modernity (Appadurai, 1996), Rice points out how the movement and changing location of individuals and groups challenge the whole site-specificity of the culture concept. Referring further to James Clifford's critique of anthropology (Clifford, 1997), Rice points out how anthropologists and ethnomusicologists have had an increasingly hard task to isolate the 'cultural' entity or locality unspoiled by travellers, commercial interests, appropriated global cultural expressions, and migration, in order to get to that 'place of culture':

If traditional methods were blind to these interconnections, [James Clifford] proposes a new focus on routes rather than roots, on travel rather than dwelling, and on a serious ethnographic encounter with the agents and territories that anthropologists (and ethnomusicologists) encounter on their way to their imaginary, isolated locales: international travel, the city, and the cosmopolitans who visit or reside there, people such as school teachers, missionaries, doctors, government officials, traders, and producers of commercial sound recordings. (Rice, 2003, p. 153)

Consequently, ethnomusicologists should also travel with their subjects, or along the routes of the music they are exploring.⁶¹

The third challenge Rice finds in the mix of musical expressions and impressions. On the one hand this concerns "The simultaneity of every place in one place" (p. 155), the mix of sounds where every place in the world echoes with some of the same global music. On the other hand, the music of any place may be mixed with that of any other. Rice acknowledges that the phenomenon

⁶¹ As some already do. Rice mentions Jane Sugarman (1997) who explored Prespa Albanian wedding songs in Macedonia as well as in the US diaspora, and Thomas Turino, who travelled with migrating Andean musicians (Turino, 1990).

world music has challenged ethnomusicologists in particular ways, both from the perspective of colonialism (which I have discussed at length in Chapter 2), and in terms of understanding *locality* in the age of electronic media.

Rice concludes that “Although ethnomusicologists are increasingly narrating such stories [of a complex and mixed world of music], the implications of such narratives for theory and method are just beginning to be elucidated” (p. 155). He then proposes his own three-dimensional analytical model of *time*, *place* and *metaphor* in musical experience and, correspondingly, in ethnomusicological analysis.

Rather than adapting Rice’s proposed analytical model, I take him up on how these problem areas may influence theory and method. Rice’s problem areas follow a well-established structure-agency dilemma in the social sciences,⁶² and suggest a reorientation of ethnography through following individual agency. This implies that the role of the researcher is no longer to map out structures that *govern* action, but to observe individual actions, how and where these are performed, and what they construct or represent. Yet this view still implies that agency and action relate to social structures on some level, even if such structures – as for instance Appadurai’s ‘scapes’ – are not rigid or constant, and may enable actions rather than determine them.

On the level of agency, the methodological design of this study is such that Rice’s challenges are met through the phenomenological approach of grounded theory. But how can the structural level be incorporated or taken into account in a theoretical model exploring the *relation(-ality)* between agency and structure? For this discussion I will go back to the concept of ethnography, and discuss both the culture it was originally supposed to document, and what work it can do later.

⁶² This dilemma is discussed, among others, in Bourdieu’s practice theory (1990 [1980]) as well as in Giddens’ theory of ‘structuration’ (1984).

Strategized ethnography - from culture to discourse

What I employ from ethnomusicology is an ethnographic starting point to studying musical practices, and an interest in the people behind them. The question, based on critical discourse on the concept of culture itself, is how this is possible without losing sight of the individual, and without subscribing to totalist views on culture.

In the history of ethnographic fieldwork, the idea of the ‘field’ was initially that of *a* culture, and the work of the ethnographer was long considered to be describing, analyzing and understanding this culture in as much detail as possible. This idea has gone through many stages in the history of anthropology, reflecting changing ideas about culture, the individual, and researcher participation. The old, Malinowskian idea of fieldwork through participant observation, which dominated early ethnography, was to survey *everything* that came to the researcher’s attention, accurately and in detail. This became predominant in 1940s and 1950s anthropology, conforming to a ‘scientifically accurate’ ideal of truth. Based on this ideal, participant observation became important because it enabled the researcher to write accurately. The idea was that anyone who observed the same instance or culture would come up with the same story and analysis. This was a rather positivist ideal of science, which – despite well-established discourses on both culture and the role of the agent – still seems to influence much ethnographic research. This old ethnography had a ‘laundry list’ ideal, to observe and take note of every detail possible. Implicitly, you could not understand *something* about the culture whose study you were undertaking, without understanding *everything*. Malinowski’s own research demonstrated that you could not understand crafts without understanding spirituality, or understand storytelling without an understanding of kinship (Malinowski, 1944). Hence, this led to writing ‘an ethnography’, meaning *the* monograph, on a tribe, or *the* specific culture, described and analyzed.

This view was challenged by symbolic or interpretive anthropology, developed by Victor Turner and Clifford Geertz (Geertz, 1973; Strydom & Delanty, 2003). They *did* write about African tribes, but offered subjective, analytical

interpretations, which implied some kind of guesswork. This opened up into a new understanding of ethnography as a subjective construct.

Drawing on an *interpretive* idea of ethnography, which is not based on a structuralist view of culture, opens the way for more strategized ethnographical work, which means using ethnography as a tool to do work other than mapping out a whole cultural system. ‘Strategizing’ implies using a method selectively, being subjective, or addressing particular questions. Applied to the methodological structure of grounded theory in this study, ethnography serves to enter and establish a ‘field’, and continues providing data that serve to build a theoretical conclusion. Describing events, behaviour, concepts etc. may be called ‘ethnographic support of findings’. The research is not speaking ‘on behalf of’ a group of people in the Malinowskian sense. As a researcher I am speaking for myself, yet entering into a dialogue with someone else. The conclusions are then an outcome of negotiations of ideas, not a map of a cultural structure.⁶³

To the extent that it is interesting to apply ‘culture’ in this dissertation, it is so in Geertzian terms and in relation to the context where the actions observed are being played out. Geertz sees culture not so much as a superorganic structure: “The concept of culture I espouse, and whose utility the essays below attempt to demonstrate, is essentially a semiotic one” (Geertz, 1973, p. 5). By ‘semiotic’ Geertz refers to signs, expressions and actions rather than a given, underlying *system*. This guides the researcher’s focus to what people ‘say’ through their actions at a particular historical moment in a given place, where they interact with each other, with shared ideas, and also display conflicting interests rather than a unitary system of thought and behaviour.

The context this research project relates to – at least at its outset – is Norway, at a certain time in history when the country, for a few decades, has faced a

⁶³ This whole paragraph on strategized ethnography and the culture term derives from a talk I had with Professor A. J. Racy on these issues at UCLA in March 2009, and I acknowledge his substantial input.

demographic change that creates tensions and extensive public debate. What initially interested me was the very changing process of this context through the acceleration of global flows of people and cultural expressions; I have not therefore aimed at carving out a broad understanding of the context (either as ‘culture’ or some other type of system), but rather at tracing some particular agents and signs of alteration that relate to this context. Focusing on what these actions and expressions ‘say’ at a particular time and in a particular context brings a Geertzian critique of the culture concept to a Foucauldian reading of discourse.

Practice

It is against the background of these developments in anthropology and ethnomusicology – following from the larger discourses in the social sciences – that my application in this work of the term *practice* must be understood. Sherry B. Ortner points to how the turn to exploring *practice* sums up a historical development in social research – anthropology in particular – when turning from the larger structural theories of the 1960s and 70s to focusing on the actions of individuals in small systems. While Bourdieu (1990 [1980]) established a very specific theoretical modelling in his theory of practice – i.e. by *field*, *doxa* and *habitus* – Ortner argues that the term reflects a broader tendency in the social sciences to focus on action, experience and the agent:

For the past several years, there has been growing interest in analysis focused through one or another of a bundle of interrelated terms: practice, praxis, action, interaction, activity, experience, performance. A second, and closely related, bundle of terms focuses on the doer of all that doing: agent, actor, person, self, individual, subject. (Ortner, 1994 [1984], p. 388)

This follows from the move from structuralist and system-oriented analytical approaches, to seeing the acting individuals as the ones handling, shaping and strategically moving inside any such ‘systems’, thus transforming the former structure/agent divide into a question of how the two dimensions relate and also connect to a third dimension of *power*:

The modern versions of practice theory, on the other hand, appear unique in accepting all three sides of the [theoretical] triangle: that society is a system, that the system is powerfully constraining, and yet that the system can be made and unmade through human action and interaction. (Ortner, 1994 [1984], p. 403)

By taking these perspectives into account, ‘practice’ in this study has both a basic and a more complex set of meanings ascribed to it. First, it comes to mean something quite ordinary: how people act in their everyday surroundings, or in their professional lives, to establish and maintain certain ‘projects’ or autonomous fields of life – such as the artistic project of performing with a band. Second, the application of the term also relates to this overall approach of seeing the subjects as agents within some type of structure in society. Consequently, by studying practices, research explores the spaces in society that these subjects establish for their own actions. In this approach practices are thus not only seen as individual constructs or actions, but as an arena for negotiating someone’s relationship with society at large. The way this study is methodologically designed to connect actions to discourses thus seems apt for exploring *practice* as a site where the relations between the individual as an acting subject and the structures of power in society are being handled.

Performance and discourse

I will approach the *discourse* term by first going back to the discussion on ‘performance’. While Cook sees performance as an event- and action-based term for music, Paulla Ebron applies the term in an even broader sense in her study of Gambian kora players, or *jali*, in *Performing Africa*:

In this book, I use performance as a mode of inquiry on several different levels: first, in the analysis of formal events in which artists “perform” for audiences; second, in informal contexts in which one can observe the enactment of social categories; and third, as a way in which to analyze scholarly modes of inquiry. This last lens allows me to track the ways that notions about performance have framed Africa as an object, and to look at how ideas and categories surrounding performance produce particular effects. Throughout this book I ask how performance “works” to produce what one of my Gambian interlocutors humorously referred to as “The Africa,” a term that collectivizes Africa and marks the importance of representations that fix the continent as a homogeneous object. (Ebron, 2002, p. 1)

Ebron thus frames her analytical approach by adopting the term ‘performance’ as a wide category with implications on three levels, the third being how performances of ‘African music’ frame and construct Africa as an object. Ebron thus applies the performance term from the ontological to the interpretive and conceptualizing level of analysis.

In my work I find the same relationship that Ebron presents, yet in a Norwegian and diasporic context: how *Africa* is constructed through performance. However, I would argue that a more precise terminology for what Ebron is describing is how ‘Africa’ is constructed through *discourses*, which the performers enact or respond to through their practices. The discourse term is also less one-directional than seeing this construction as just an *effect* of performance. Rather, I will look at these performance practices in the light of how Foucault (1977) conceptualizes *discursive practices*; practices that actively generate and relate to discourse.

Discourse as constructing realities

Martin Engebretsen (2013) outlines how the term *discourse* is generally understood along two major lines in scholarly works. One comes from the linguistic tradition of exploring language and socially situated communication acts. The other approach is situated in sociological tradition, and tends to focus on the *contents* of the communication activity, the formulated ideas, opinions or ‘regimes of knowledge’ that circulate in society. This is in the tradition of Michel Foucault, focusing on how such ideas construct the conceptions of what is true, important, or relevant, and thus hold power over both lives and representations of people.

Drawing on the latter perspective, Norman Fairclough summarizes the constructive aspect of discourse:

We can distinguish three aspects of the constructive effects of discourse. Discourse contributes first of all to the construction of what are variously referred to as ‘social identities’ and ‘subject positions’ for social ‘subjects’ and types of ‘self’ (...) Secondly discourse helps construct social relationships between people. And thirdly, discourse contributes to the construction of systems of knowledge and belief. (Fairclough, 1992, p. 64)

This perspective of discourse is particularly developed from *Archaeology of Knowledge* (Foucault, 1972). In a comparative study of music teacher practices, Thorolf Krüger (2000) sums up Foucault's view on the functions of discourse:

(...) Foucault (1972) argues that discourses systematically construct the objects to which they refer, and that the discourse itself also provides the criteria through which its results are being assessed. Foucault is concerned with how human beings are being regulated by the discourses in which they are involved – for instance, how these discourses set up borders for their reality and for their possibilities through the categories, classifications, and distinctions of their everyday thinking and speech. (Krüger, 2000)

Foucault's view that discourses construct and regulate the objects they refer to has become an interesting concept to explore in this study. My analysis moves from observing how African immigrant performers construct their practices, to how the discourses that they take part in and disseminate through their practices – particularly in performance – also construct *them*, and further how this act of construction situates them in their context in Norwegian society.⁶⁴

Applying Foucault in analysis

Although I do not offer a broad introduction to Foucault's work and theories, I do apply certain aspects of Foucault's approach to discourse in my analysis:

First, I use the idea of *discourse* itself, identifying – when my empirical analysis indicates discursive formations – how the practices of the research participants 'point outwards' or reach beyond themselves, that is, how they are parts of larger bodies of discourse in society. Furthermore, the analyses reflect how performers construct themselves or are constructed through these discourses, such as discourses of 'tradition' (Chapter 5), 'origin' (Chapter 4) or 'urbanity' (Chapter 8) – or generally of 'African-ness'.

⁶⁴ In this respect, it is worth noting how close Geertz' semiotic approach to culture is to Foucault's idea of discourse. First, Geertz dismisses a structuralist approach to culture as a system behind actions, or statements, rather seeing actions and statements *as* culture. To Geertz, there is no underlying layer or system governing actions, they *are* the system, there is just 'one surface' of culture as system. Similarly, Foucault rejects 'meaning' in discourse, discourse is what is 'being said', yet it affects people's life world through constructing its realities.

Second, I apply Foucault's idea of the relationship between *truth*, *power* and *discourse*, as presented in "Two lectures" (Foucault, 1994 [1976]).⁶⁵ I particularly apply this in Chapter 4, analyzing the contrast between a performance and an interview, identifying powers that draw artists in particular directions. Which again raises further critical questions to explore for the rest of the dissertation. A part of Foucault's interest in power concerns *governance*, and there is an element of governance in my field of study, as Norway has cultural policies that are manifested through support of artists, and – more directly – through the cultural productions taken on by government agencies. One such government agency is *Rikskonsertene*, or Concerts Norway, which is the largest employer of immigrant musicians through various productions, especially its school concert series. A part of Chapter 6 is to explore how the performers embody this element of governance through a school performance.

Third, I utilize the idea of '*suspending judgement*': reading Foucault's works, the mode of description is striking in being critical without judging from a position of *a priori* axioms. The torture-filled public execution scene from Paris in 1757 that opens *Discipline and Punish* (1977) is horrific to present-day readers, unbelievably grotesque, yet Foucault does not state that torture is wrong, nor that this form of execution is worse than the present ones. Rather he points out how Western (or particularly French) society's view on punishment has changed from targeting the body and involving pain as an important feature in punishing criminals, to a 'modern' punishment of *control*: of time, movement, space and subjectivities subordinated to total surveillance. This reflects Foucault's interest in how ideas and 'truths' are constructed, historically and socially. Methodologically, though, the mode of description that enables this analysis is one that avoids holding up a particular truth as an axiom to judge by, but chooses what Kendall and Wickham (1999) call '*suspending judgement*'. In my application of Foucault, this becomes an analytical tool to enable a critical

⁶⁵ These lectures were held at a point in Foucault's career where he summed up his stance, abandoning some concepts and pointing to his future research. So they are a good source of Foucault actually analyzing his own methodology and stance.

reading that goes beyond the implicit axioms or ‘truths’ often held in postcolonial analyses, which at a certain point – at least in this work – become obstacles rather than useful instruments.

This results in descriptions in this work that may seem ‘plain’. The aim, however, is to use description and close readings as a way of being critical without jumping to conclusions.⁶⁶ Being critical through ‘suspending judgement’ means offering descriptions that provide enough insight to go beyond the given axioms, i.e. beyond ‘truths’ established in critical scholarship, by scrutinizing actions: *What* is happening? *How* are particular ideas – like ‘difference’ – produced or enabled in certain performing practices? And what do the agents achieve? Although Foucault is usually not associated with phenomenology, this mode of describing beyond judgement corresponds with theorising that is ‘grounded’ in data, yet remains critical. While grounded theory and phenomenology risk being too stuck in accepting the rationality of every action, and critical theory may tend to land on the same critical conclusions in every case, scrutinizing the construction of truths is being critical by trying to avoid both.

Conclusions: combining grounded and extant theories and methods

With the observations from Chapter 1 that immigrant musicians took part in different discourses when representing themselves in performance, Michel Foucault became a relevant theorist to apply to a grounded theory research design.

On the conceptual level of analysis, I have then expanded the grounded theory model by letting the ‘lead’ of the categories run further into a wider field of

⁶⁶ There is also, as mentioned, a careful selection process *behind* every description (of a concert, rehearsal, or interview), based on recurring codes and categories in the analytical process. So the selection of a narrative is already analytical.

discourse and theory, as the categories that arise from analysis of observations are not just local categories, but sometimes particular discourses circulating in society. This is a delicate balance in the grounded theory methodology of this work, as I do not intend to *apply* a certain theory or theorist to my data, or to imply a full discourse analysis methodology, yet realize that many of the data-based concepts derived through analysis are well known from other research or literature, and have been discussed in particular ways. Discovering such connections, I allow pursuit of the threads of categories beyond the observed, and into a larger web of discourse, once the ‘lead’ is strong enough. Which *is* a metaphor from grounded theory; ‘to follow the lead’ (Denscombe, 2007). This may link a grounded theory approach with general academic discourse, without abandoning its groundedness. What this implies for this research project is identifying certain discourses at work, and seeing how they are handled through various practices and in a larger context of public and scholarly debate. Put plainly: the grounded theory methodology and analysis develops categories from contextual observations. When sometimes these categories or concepts are parts of larger bodies of discourse, the discourses are traced *from* the confinement of this setting, to be discussed the way they appear in other contexts also. This last part diverges from regular GT methodology.

But the order here is imperative: first to develop categories from observations, then, on the conceptualizing level of analysis, to discuss them in the light of the larger bodies of discourse that they connect with. My consideration in this respect has been how far I can follow each new discourse, as every new observation opens new issues. This is where grounded theory methodology comes back in, to limit the scope: when focusing on building a grounded theory, the focus is not just to ‘stir up’ categories, or broadly lay out all discourses that seem relevant, but to select some of them and explore these through new data. Consequently, there is a limit to how far I will follow the discourses that tie my observations to extant theories or concepts, and their treatment in scholarly literature and methodologies. Chapter 2 serves a more in-depth discussion of some overarching concepts in the light of literature and theory, yet when data are analyzed in Chapters 4-8, there are new categories emerging, such as

tradition, diaspora, urbanity, and cosmopolitanism, which all tie in to larger discourses and literatures. How these categories are treated in literature is not discussed broadly, because they serve as emerging concept-building categories, which mainly need a certain degree of explanation in order to be applied. They are not, as in some research, the discursive and theoretical foundation that I start out with to analyze my findings. On the contrary, they are *part of my findings*.

Further methodological considerations

In addition to the overall methodological reflections presented in this chapter following from the need for a consistent ontology raised at the beginning, I will add some notes on translation and confidentiality.

Notes on translation

The transcriptions and translations from interviews and observations have presented various challenges. I have for the most part chosen not to present the original statements in Norwegian but only my English translations. Still, I have tried to keep some of the original flavour of the statements to offer an impression of how the various interviewees express themselves. In the interview with Stella from Chapter 8 this particularly concerns how she keeps putting English terms and phrases into her Norwegian expressions. This is marked by *italics*, while [brackets] – as elsewhere – mark implicit understanding not revealed in the text fragment:

Jeg har en veldig stor fan base [i Kenya]. Når de skulle annonsere 'The best new act', hvem som skulle vinne, sa hele crowden navnet mitt cirka fem ganger på rad...

I've got a very large *fan base* [in Kenya]. When they were to announce '*The best new act*', who the winner was, the whole *crowd* said my name about five times in a row....

My conversations and interviews with Nasibu, on the other hand, were originally held in English, so in this case *italics* mark Norwegian words he used.

Here I have tried to stay close to the original expression, but have, as elsewhere, omitted repeated words and sounds like ‘eh’.

Because, project for them, like *Kulturrådet*, they don’t really need all that *utdypning* [elaboration]. All they need is Ok, it’s finished, the budget went like this etcetera, but I feel, for the survival of this concept, it’s nice for me myself to do a good analysis. (...) For further developing it.

Dots ... mark a pause in the statement, while (...) mark that some text has been omitted. When this is presented in a sentence, there have just been some words removed, when put between sentences it means the connected text is still part of the same elaboration, and put between paragraphs it marks a jump to another issue or question.

A different challenge is where interviewees express themselves grammatically incorrectly. I do not intend to recreate this as a general ‘flavour’ by translating to an equal level of grammatical error in English, but try to mark where I have altered their terminology, such as by adding words that were left out. Therefore I mark explanatory changes of terminology by [brackets], ignore errors that cannot be translated (such as genders of nouns) or recreated (such as non-Norwegian syntax), yet keep some elements that may be seen as a way of expressing oneself. In Kossa’s statements the latter often concerns leaving out some words, transforming verbs into nouns (‘drum’ rather than ‘drumming’), or actively shifting between past and present tense, such as in the statement below, which deals with his childhood experiences in his village:

Han har sånn naturell komiker. Han begynner å fortelle ting og folk ler, og masse rare ting og bevegelser. Og han vet sjøl om hvordan, hvis han gjør sånn folk kommer til å bli veldig glad og le. Det er mange sånne. Særlig i min landsby vi hadde to stykker. (...) Det var de som gjorde alt i landsbyen, når det er dans, når vi skal le, da er de to, når der er seriøs også, er de to der.

He has [so much of the] natural comedian. He starts telling things, and people laugh, and lots of strange things and movements. And he knows himself how, if he does like this people will be very happy and laugh. There are lots of those. Particularly in my village, we had two. (...) They were the ones who did everything in the village, when there is dance, when we shall laugh (...) [and] when it’s serious, too, the two are there.

The Norwegian reader will observe that the English translation therefore appears somewhat more fluent than the original.

Words in parenthesis inside quotes explain actions that go with the statement:

Kossa: It is very tall, like walking on... (Miming stilt walking)

Lyrics are, when possible to translate, presented both in their original language and in English. Lyrics from CD covers and quotes from web pages appear as they do in the original publication, and have not been altered. Original misspellings are left uncommented.

Confidentiality

All research projects in Norway containing personal data are subject to notification to the Norwegian Social Science Data Services (NSD),⁶⁷ which regulates the protection of personal information on behalf of research participants. In this study I have kept up a dialogue with NSD from the start to find ways of securing confidentiality and consent from the research participants involved – not only the principal research participants that are the main artists in focus in this study but also the circle of performers surrounding them. These have indirectly been absorbed into the project through the consent of the principal participants. Based on the early dialogue with NSD I made a written statement of the purpose and methods of this study, which I handed to all performers and other people surrounding them who somehow became part of my observations (Appendix I). After formally notifying NSD about the project, I drew up a follow-up statement of consent to be signed by the participants. This statement was accepted by NSD as meeting their regulations of confidentiality and storage of personal data (Appendix II). All people presented under their full name in this work have given their permission. When they have not seemed necessary for the description, the names have – with the exception of regular

⁶⁷ <http://www.nsd.uib.no/nsd/english>

band members – been omitted by referring instead to functions, i.e. ‘the bass player’, ‘the storyteller’ etc.

The problem of confidentiality in this project, as noted in the above-mentioned statements, is that the principal participants can hardly be kept anonymous; first, because the milieu of African musical performers in Norway is small enough for insiders to guess who the performers in question might be (which would not fully meet the criteria for confidentiality), and, second, because an important part of this work is to discuss their published works. Since anonymity has hardly been an option,⁶⁸ I have opted for what Steven Feld, in the postscript to the second edition of *Sound and sentiment* refers to as ‘dialogic editing’ (1990). When returning to the Kaluli people of Papua New Guinea with his book about them, Feld discusses his interpretations with the Kaluli themselves. Going on this experience he argues that such dialogues should be an integral part of future ethnographic works.

On a smaller scale, I have given all the principal participants the option of reading the chapters in the final draft concerning them, and for them to give their comments and feedback to my writings. For those who so preferred I have presented an outline of these chapters face-to-face. Their feedback, I explained, would be taken into account in one of three ways: either through my corrections of factual errors, or I would reconsider my writings, or the participants could write or dictate a letter with their view that would be included in the appendix. I underlined that I asked for their feedback and not their approval, as I could not make them responsible for my analyses. The feedback that I have then received has been incorporated in the first two ways: either as small corrections or updates, such as meanings of expressions or additional information, yet also in one instance to reconsider how I presented and discussed a practice, as I considered that the objections (or questions, really) presented did help to clarify

⁶⁸ Although offered – which would have altered the whole presentation dramatically.

the issues raised.⁶⁹ None has chosen to offer a separate statement to be included as appendix.

I am aware that these measures are incomplete, as academic works are not necessarily easily responded to by those they address, but my general impression has been that this last round of our encounters was appreciated. Also, generally, the performers in question have from the beginning been prepared to discuss their views and their work under their full name.

⁶⁹ This concerns the discussions at the end of Chapter 5, and is pointed to in the footnotes.

CHAPTER 4:

'A MINORITY THING'

- A critical outset

Introduction: "Going with the mainstream"

When Nasibu first introduced *Mantra*, his new club concert concept, to me, he was very clear: "It must not be seen as a minority thing. If it's seen as a minority thing, it's dead. We're going with the *mainstream*". I had followed his many-faceted, yet usually not very extensive musical practice for more than half a year, and, having observed his many initiatives towards creating concepts that could either sell or become an application for public cultural funds support, this new initiative seemed to fit my picture of his practice so far. At this point, he had just succeeded with a major application to *Norsk Kulturråd – Arts Council Norway* – a government cultural fund, receiving 100,000 Norwegian kroner⁷⁰ to produce a concert series programme called *Mantra* in a club setting. Nasibu went on to describe how some big names from Africa, touring Europe, could come to Norway at little extra cost, and how his own musical projects *Ras Nas* or *Mandingo Trio* could be programmed as warm-ups on such occasions.

This conversation took place in a quite different setting: after a performance of *Bantaba* with an extended version of his trans-African ensemble *Mandingo Trio*. We were sipping coffee and eating biscuits with the 16-piece senior(-ish) audience, who had found their way on a bright May evening to the small church outside Oslo, and were now busy turning the place back to something resembling an after-service coffee hour. I sensed an undertone in his statement that what had just taken place was, indeed, a 'minority thing', with a supportive

⁷⁰ 100,000 NoK equalled about USD 20,000 at the time

Norwegian⁷¹ audience listening to a musical storytelling performance of the small *kora* and percussion ensemble, which ended up in a session where the musicians were encouraged to tell the names of their instruments and explain their origin. With both audience and artists moving so effortlessly into this exchange as the performance was wrapped up, I got the further impression that this was how these minority musicians had grown used to relating to Norwegian audiences: as the ones with unknown instruments that needed explanation. Or: the colourful, interesting ‘other’.

This chapter will explore how roles such as being ‘other’ are discursively established or enacted through performance, how these roles are utilized, and why these performers take them on.

Nasibu

Nasibu Mwanukuzi came to Norway in 1985, touring with a Tanzanian music and theatre group. He ended up settling in Oslo, starting a long diasporic artistic practice. Nasibu is also known as *Ras Nas*, which is his solo project persona. In his web biography, he presents himself as a soukous and reggae artist, and dub poet:

Born in Morogoro (Tanzania), Ras Nas aka Nasibu Mwanukuzi, is an African musician who blends african music and reggae with a dash of poetry. (...) Ras Nas is singer-songwriter, poet, guitarist, percussionist and producer.

⁷¹ My use of “Norwegian” here reveals the lack of terms to distinguish between Norwegian ethnicity, nationality and cultural identity, which has also caused some confusing debates in Norway on terminology. To put it simply: when I use the term like this, it encompasses all three. As this does not mean you cannot be both ‘Norwegian’ and of African heritage, in many cases I will have to point out to which realms the term is being applied.

(...) While at the University of Dar-es-Salaam, Nasibu co-founded a powerful poetry and drama group "SAYARI" in Dar-es-salaam in 1980. (...) The group combined African music, poetry, miming, dance and drama and toured extensively in Scandinavia. In 1985 Nasibu moved to Oslo, Norway to study Mass Communications at the University of Oslo, UIO.⁷²

Since moving to Norway in 1985 he has had a long artistic career on the fringes of Norwegian popular music scenes, mainly in Oslo and the adjacent regions. The way Nasibu presents himself, Ras Nas is his 'main' musical project. Ras Nas needs a band setup of at least five musicians with full backline and PA, so with Mandingo Trio he was more flexible. This was partly due to its small size and slight rig but also possibly, as this chapter shows, due to its ability to reach a different market. In my first period of observations, he performed most frequently with this group. Here he was less in the foreground musically, yet clearly pulled the strings to get gigs and funding, and also seemed to devise their performances to fit in various contexts.⁷³

Nasibu was the first artist I approached to ask if he would allow me to follow his practice close up, taking part in rehearsals and concert preparations, and observing performances or other practical work. He agreed instantly, and seemed eager to use my presence to develop his own work.⁷⁴ I was soon slotted in as the one to document his work through sound and video recordings, and sometimes taking pictures as well. This provided me with an identity at his performances, while also allowing me to produce large amounts of research data.

⁷² Originally available at: www.rasnas.kongoi.com, accessed 3 March 2009. Site now discontinued.

⁷³ Mandingo Trio stopped performing in 2009. In October 2010, sadly, Aliou Cissoko, the kora player and musical centre of the group, died.

⁷⁴ Steven Feld commented to me on how we as researchers are not just observing the agents in the 'field', they are also observing us, trying to make sense of who we are, what we do, and – possibly – how they may use us for their own purposes, not just the other way round. I have no problems with research participants trying to take advantage of my presence, as long as it is reasonably clear what is happening. As with the feedback interview mentioned below, it can actually benefit the research process through creating an opening for a deeper understanding of participants' agencies.

Context and view

Just minutes before this church performance of *Bantaba* with Mandingo Trio, Nasibu took me aside, asking if I could offer him critical feedback on the upcoming performance. I hesitated, saying that the ideas of participant observation implied not influencing the observation too much, so being in the role of the researcher would maybe not permit my critiquing his performance. “Not as a researcher,” he replied, “just as an external view, someone who sees the performance and gives feedback.”⁷⁵ As we went back into the church, the performers into the sacristy, the audience and I through the main entrance, I wondered what he was after. Did he want to give his own critique of band members through my voice? I would watch the performance critically, trying to see what he might have in mind, but was not sure whether it would be a good idea to actually offer critique.

The concert was staged in the congregation hall, a small, bright, fan-shaped space with the altar at the narrow end. There were no platforms – four chairs for the performers in front of the altar’s kneeling circle made up the stage, leaving just a small space between the performers and the opposite facing rows of chairs for the audience.

Apart from myself I counted sixteen members of the audience, middle-aged to elderly. The atmosphere was relaxed and informal, they all seemed to know each other and were still chatting unconstrainedly as we found our seats. I introduced myself to sections of the audience, such as the facilitators and the ticket salesperson, explaining that I was following the performers as part of a doctoral research project. I was offered a microphone stand, and rigged up my small hard drive recorder on the first row.

⁷⁵ Quote based on field (memory) notes after the observation. All quoted dialogues with Nasibu were held in English.

Concert description

The following sections are based on a mix of audio transcripts and the observation log from the event. I emphasize the opening song to give an impression of the music, move to the interaction between the songs, then jump to the storytelling and the final part of the performance. I will break off my descriptions at a few points to add some comments. These short comments demonstrate my initial coding – elements that I want to bring into the subsequent analysis.

Concert introduction

After a brief introduction and welcome in which he regretted the low number of people who had turned up, the host speaker turned our attention to the upcoming event: “There’s African music on the poster. And these are musicians from East and West Africa, who are living in Norway with their base in Oslo.”⁷⁶

He went on to describe his own experience of African music, how he had observed young people working with an African musician at one point. “Now, there aren’t too many young people among you.” (audience laughter) (...) “African rhythm and music is something that influences not just up here (pointing to his head), but the whole body.”

”Let’s see. Then I’ll try to call out your names”. The host called each of the four performers to the stage, pronouncing their names with difficulty. For the first two he also mentioned their countries of origin; “Ali Jabang from Ghana, and Aliou Cissoko from Senegal”. The musicians entered one by one in casual dress, getting to their places by the instruments.

⁷⁶ Language spoken by both parties throughout the performance is Norwegian. Translations are mine.

Music

At the concert the kora was amplified, there were two small speakers, and no other microphones, yet the sound was quite good, the instruments and vocals coming across clearly.

In the recording, applause is heard after the presentation as the first song begins. Some riffing on the tambourine is also heard on top of the kora, while Aliou plays his way elegantly down a major scale, starting on a sixth, emphasizing and playing around various tones for a while on the way down – like the second or seventh – then ending up ornamenting on the tonic G.

After the introductory cadenza,⁷⁷ a harmonic passage, or ‘vamp’, is established in the kora: a two-bar bass figure is repeated, while a higher pitched kora ostinato, probably played by the other hand, responds to the bass line, circling a melody with small ornaments and rhythmic figures. On top of this the kora player is singing as a third voice in Mandinka, sometimes including a French word, while the ensemble falls in with vocal responses. Together this forms a G-G-Am-D chord progression, which is repeated throughout the song:

The image shows a musical transcription of a Kora vamp in 4/4 time. The key signature is one sharp (F#), and the time signature is 4/4. The transcription consists of two staves: a treble clef staff for the higher pitched kora ostinato and a bass clef staff for the two-bar bass figure. The chord progression is G, G/E, Am, D/F#, D, G, G/E, Am, D/F#, D. The bass line consists of a repeating two-bar figure: a dotted quarter note G, an eighth note G, a quarter note F#, and a quarter note G. The treble staff shows a melodic line with various ornaments and rhythmic figures, including eighth and sixteenth notes, and rests.

Figure 1: Kora vamp, *Moussoungima* (A. Cissoko)

This simple musical transcription does, however, only provide the basic structure of the song, it does not show the subtle varieties in the melody, or the

⁷⁷ Starting with an instrumental improvisation is a known formula in West African kora music, a bit like the way Arabic music's introductory *taqsim* introduces the scale before moving into the rhythmic melody. Although the cadenza played here is not like the formal way a maquam would be presented, the emphasis of the various tones in the scale creates quite a modal feel, inviting seeing the various resting points as temporary tonics, or tonal centres.

difference in sound quality between the two melodies; how the higher melodic ostinato stands out as metallic, sharp and lively, whereas the bass is round and steady, and how the kora player is varying the ostinatos, making instrumental fills more detailed, including many small improvisations and cadenzas. Or how the singer's voice has a deep, coarse-grained and somewhat nasal sound, resembling a number of West African singers. Or how he attacks the offbeat inroads at different points of the vamp, creating new melodic structures out of a very basic form, and sounding spontaneous and expressive.

The song shifts back and forth between the laid back verse and a more energetic instrumental bridge, where the kora initiates a teasing calypso-like bass line, inviting more virtuosity. The djembe responds by developing the rhythmic motifs from an almost reggae offbeat feeling, a double accentuation of the two and four, to extending each offbeat motif to quick rhythmic phrases, in a high-tempo soloistic djembe style.

Nasibu, with the Tanzanian barrel-type standing 'twin' drums *dundun* and *kenkeny*, offers a steady beat, emphasizing the rhythmic pattern of the kora bass line. The storyteller, heard on the tambourine playing on the one and three, seems a little to have been added to the music. Sometimes he is off the beat.

The song comes to an end, and the audience applauds instantly and energetically.

Representing African music

This simple musical description presents a few basics about this ensemble and performance: most of all how kora-centred the music is, built around a quite virtuoso kora player, who is also the lead singer. It also indicates that the music is complex in texture and rhythm. By themselves the kora and lead singer add up to three to four interlocking melodies, with fine variations and improvisations.

The music may be perceived as 'traditional', though the I-II-V cyclic chord progression – a well-known formula of various kinds of African popular music –

reveals a popular orientation in their music and repertoire, which also includes audience references like the old Swahili hit “Malaika”. The ensemble comprises performers from four different African countries, illustrating a certain element of musical fusion between various African components in this performance. This is also emphasized in their self-presentation – in the information passed on by the speaker about the artists coming “from East and West Africa”. Even the term *Mandingo* has to some extent been synonymous with a global African identity,⁷⁸ in addition to being a denomination of the large Mandinka ethnic group, which is found in many countries throughout West Africa and has the kora as one of its emblematic instruments (Ebron, 2002). Despite this pan-African theme, the kora and language keep the music more local, somehow, by defining the setup, making the ensemble something close to an *mbalax* group, the best-known modernization of the otherwise traditional and griot-based kora music. Through their pan-African theme, by the way the introduction, instrumentation and music generalizes the ensemble as African, and by the label they give themselves, they are undertaking to represent African music *as such*.

The observation further shows that, musically, Nasibu is a little in the background in this ensemble, just offering a steady beat. Despite this, I experience him as the leader of this – officially – leader-less ensemble, through his role as organizer and promoter, and not least through observing the ensemble in studio, where Nasibu was taking the lead.

Finally, it is clear that the storyteller plays no major musical role here. The trio play their music the way they usually do, while he is given a tambourine. He has been added to an existing ensemble with a given musical arrangement and instrumentation. What his role is, then, will be further explored below.

⁷⁸ This probably stems from how *Mandingo*, as Ebron points out, was a term for ‘slave’ in the United States due to the large number of West Africans abducted through the transatlantic slave trade (2002, p. 74).

Audience interaction

After the applause for the first song, it sounds as if Aliou, the kora player, is starting the next song, 'Malaika'. The djembe plays a tremolo that corrects the error gently, and then the storyteller is heard speaking, above some audience applause:

Storyteller: Itayee - Yeeh.

Then, louder, and slower, insistently:

Storyteller: Itayee!

The other performers behind him are responding, in deeper, and falling voices: "Yeeh".

The storyteller (who has got up to stand in front of the other performers): Når jeg sier 'Itayeeh', må dere svare meg tilbake, og si: 'Yeeh'. (When I say Itayeeh, you must answer me back, saying 'Yeeh').

While he speaks, a female voice from the audience, close up, is heard in support, saying (almost whispering) after each part; "Åh, ja, OK." "Ja".⁷⁹

Storyteller: Itayee!

Everyone (responding, in a voice sinking slowly): Yeeh

Storyteller: En gang til, det var så bra. (One more time, that was so good) (Audience laughter).

Storyteller: Itayee

Audience and performers: Yeeh.

Storyteller: Ja. Velkommen til den Bantaba. Bantaba betyr på Mandingospråket et møtested for musikk, for dans, og for fortellinger. Og så: Velkommen til den Bantaba.

(Yes, Welcome to the Bantaba. Bantaba means, in the Mandingo language, a meeting place for music, dance, and for stories. And so: Welcome to the Bantaba.)

Between each song, the storyteller moves into the same audience interaction, sometimes running with a smile back and forth in front of the band while

⁷⁹ Audience and performers are quite close, the microphone is between the first row and the performers.

repeating the calls. The audience is still responding in full, with "Yeeh" and chuckles.

Storytelling

Twice during the performance he uses these calls to introduce storytelling, adding a sung line to greet each instrument, and then a story is announced. First, at the end of the third song:

Storyteller: Itayeeh.

He sighs, out of breath, having danced spontaneously to the previous song. He starts telling a story, not getting his breath back before well into the tale:

Storyteller: Once upon a time. Long, long ago. In Africa. Lived a family. In a village called Kolokolo. In that village the family had a very pretty girl.

The story is about Ada, who climbs up into a tree in protest at not being allowed to marry a boy from the neighbouring town. A tree that grows as she sings (which allows inserting some musical passages into the story). The story is told in quite a heavy accent or rudimentary Norwegian, sometimes difficult to understand, yet with a lot of energy, movement, shifts of voice, and empathy. He impersonates the various people trying to convince her to come down, but she refuses until she gets her way. The end of the story grows into a song of celebration as Ada comes down from the tree when her parents finally resign themselves to it.

All in all the story lasts seven minutes, while the audience keeps supporting the storyteller, offering empathetic exclamations, laughter and applause as the girl comes down from the tree and the story comes to an end.

'A family thing'

Before the performance I had been asked by Nasibu to offer critical feedback. I thought about it during the performance, realizing it would be interesting to hear

what he would want to know from me – this was actually an invitation to share in his ideas about his own work.

Yet I sat wondering what he had in mind. Could it be that he or the other members wanted to get rid of the storyteller, who took up a lot of space, and wanted me to draw the conclusion for them? During the performance, I watched his role in it critically. What did he contribute? Musically, he was added to already arranged pieces, so that could not be what he was there for. The storytelling was obviously an important part that he played. Apart from this he was actively interacting – almost flirting – with the audience, jumping up for the ‘itayee’s between each song, and sometimes dancing spontaneously to some of the songs. Somehow, this was a very childish appearance too, yet this event had been planned, according to Nasibu, as ‘a family thing’, or at least for an audience with children present. But, I wondered, why did they not alter their way of performing once the change of audience and setting was clear? After all, Mandingo Trio used to perform in a wide variety of contexts. My observations of the ensemble had already covered performance contexts ranging from a student party, a concert setting that brought the student audience to the dance floor, to a performance in what felt like a ‘home setting’, the monthly ‘Family reggae disco’ for children and parents at MS Innvik, the ‘culture boat’ hosting Nordic Black Theatre and other arts organizations promoting cultural diversity.⁸⁰ And once – most remarkably – at a sales fair for paint products and techniques, where the ensemble was used to mark the transitions when the groups of paint salesmen and -women were to rotate from one stand to the next in the expo hall. (“*Global* is one of the colour schemes this year”, a facilitator explained to me, when I asked how they came up with the idea of inviting this particular group to present paint. “Besides”, she continued, “one of us saw them at a party, and liked their music”). Now more or less the same repertoire used in all these

⁸⁰ MS Innvik seemed to be permanently moored in Oslo, next to the new opera house being built in Bjørvika, until it had to move in 2010. The organizations on board moved ashore, after having tried to see their way, together with other culturally diverse organizations, to build *Snelda*, an island outside the opera house. For more on this process, see Mari Kristin Jore’s master’s thesis “Drømmen om Snelda” (2010).

venues was put to work as ‘a family thing’, as Nasibu had put it, a concert with their kora-centred musical repertoire framed by storytelling. Except the audience was not made up of families – there was one child present, sound asleep.

So, I wondered, why did they stick to this particular representation, which seemed rather out of place, when they were actually quite a flexible ensemble in terms of contextualizing their performances?

Rounding up

The fifth and final song ends on a ‘high note’, and the audience joins in clapping to the beat at the last, intense part. At the end of the song, the storyteller gets up again, breaking off the final cadenza of the kora with three ‘Itayee’s with audience responses, while running from one side of the stage to the other:

Storyteller: (Out of breath) Yes, we thank you all. It was wonderful being here. Thank you so much! (Audience laughter followed by applause)

As the performers start packing up their instruments, the host speaker breaks in:

Host: I don’t know if you could wait a little. First thing I’d like to say is, it’s a pity that more people didn’t get to experience this. Because this was really huge. (Female voice in audience confirming). And it was difficult sitting still. You have taken us on a journey in African music, which we won’t forget soon. (...) (Flower session follows)

Host: Just one little thing. These instruments, what are they called?

Aliou: Yes, this is called kora.

Host: Kora.

Aliou: Yes. It is [an] African harp (briefly touching a few strings). With twenty-two strings.

Host: Mm? Yes, very nice. Quaint sound to it

Aliou: Yes, sound, yes. Antelope skin, that’s why.

Host: Alright, antelope skin.

Female voice: Oh? Yes.

Aliou: Yes, it is kind of pumpkin (displaying the calabash resonating body of the kora). Which is called calabash. (More voices heard in the audience: “Is that it?” “Yes?”)

Aliou: We have fruit, we eat [it] and split it in two. And wood, it is very strong, [it] is keno wood. And nylon string, we can call [it] fishing line (audience laughter).

Host: And then djembe.

Ali: Djembe, it is a djembe, yes. Very sharp. You can hear it [clearly in the] high tempo. It is made of goat, and then (hitting trunk of drum) keno wood. It is very special.

Host: Alright? And what do we call these two?

Nasibu: That is dundun. It is [a] bass drum called dundun. And the reason it is called dundun [is] because it is dundun (audience laughter. He then plays a double bass sound resembling the sound of his vocal expression ‘dundun’). And this one is called kenkeny. It is [a] small drum that always goes with that one.

Host: They go together, right.

Nasibu: It is called kenkeny because it... (playing rhythm resembling the word ‘kenkeny’).

Host: Then we understand that. Yes – let’s give them another hand. (Long applause, recording ends).

Recognizing difference

Above I have already offered some short analytical starters from the observation. There is one point, however, that I will take a little further before bringing in more data to the overall analysis for this chapter. This concerns the audience/artist interaction, particularly in the very last part of the performance: the presentation of the instruments.

During the performance I observed how supportive the audience seemed, everyone had little smiles on their faces – including myself – as if reassuring the performers that we supported them. People were falling in instantly to clap the beat when prompted to, they laughed at the stories (even though they were meant for children and a ‘family thing’, and were – which I took up in the feedback that Nasibu asked for – sometimes difficult to follow due to their

rudimentary language and long passages). Throughout the show the audience kept offering support and confirmation through small exclamations and feedback to the performers. This was even though the whole, somewhat childish framing of the performance was clearly meant for a different audience.

Looking at the way the performance of Bantaba was wrapped up, the questions and answers regarding the instruments seem ritualistic, like a rehearsed or repetitious play that the host speaker and performers enter into. By ‘ritualistic’ I refer to the ‘ordinariness’ of the exchange, how it seems ready made, and how they enter into it as something that goes without saying, as with the other, ordinary rituals of clapping and handing out flowers.

The exchange that takes place in this ritual is, first, that the speaker offers the performers recognition by a positive interest in their instruments. Or in their *difference*, in their needing explanation. Recognition is offered to the performers, including their culture and music, by emphasizing that they are something that the audience is not. This is just one of many instances where audience and speaker emphasize this *recognition of difference*.⁸¹ For both instruments and performers this is highlighted through identifying *origin* – what instruments are made of, and where people and music originate – and how this is all something different from the everyday of the audience, and of interest to them.⁸²

⁸¹ Other instances are, for example, the exclamations of wonder at the instruments, story and music, the friendly acceptance of a mis-targeted audience, or the initiating and response to the ‘iatyee’-dialogue

⁸² An alternative interpretation could be to read this as a result of the conceptual ‘family’ framing, to fulfil some kind of pedagogical approach to the performance. In this case, this framing would not just concern minority musicians, maybe such exchanges are experienced by all performers? At a conference in Rikskonsertene on school concerts, a horn player complained that he was tired of these ‘pedagogical’ concerts where a performer would tell how long the horn would be if he stretched out all the tube windings. “But I’m not stretching it out, I’m playing it. This is absolutely meaningless information”. So maybe this performance is also a parody of the ‘pedagogical’ concert form. A parody, or cliché, or an expectation to be fulfilled. But still, I think this deserves attention: that this ritual in *this* context takes on a particular meaning by its discursive construction.

Second, the performers accept the recognition of difference offered. They answer the question by providing the names of their instruments, then explaining how the instruments were made, and what they are made of. They underscore the recognition of difference offered and play up to it, having ready answers, and even ready jokes about the instruments that go beyond the question raised.

Third – and interwoven into this dialogue – the audience and speaker respond with interest and amusement, encouraging the performers by interjections of interest and surprise.

Multiculturalist discourse

According to Charles Taylor ‘Recognizing difference’ is a core property of multiculturalist discourse (C. Taylor, Appiah, & Gutmann, 1994). Although ‘multiculturalism’ is commonly used in debate to label and discredit opponents’ political points of view – imagined or real – the authors address a particular political discourse on cultural integration or co-existence, which identifies *recognition of difference* as a prerequisite for a well-functioning culturally diverse society.⁸³ I will explore how this performance may be read as an enactment of multiculturalist discourse, and use Taylor and Gutmann’s discussion of multiculturalism in C. Taylor et al. (1994) to point to the major dilemmas between the need and call for recognition of difference and the essentialized difference (or postcolonial ‘otherness’) that the actual exchanges and expressions of recognition risk producing. Exploring this dilemma in performance and interviews, I also turn to my main objective in this dissertation: to explore how artists navigate the dilemmas and tensions inherent in their practices as African immigrant performers in Norway.

⁸³ The use of the word ‘recognition’ in the multiculturalist stance – as in my analysis – implies a degree of *acceptance*, not just observing difference.

Interview and developing questions

After the performance, I agreed to meet Nasibu later and offer him the requested feedback, on condition that we could turn it into a dialogue; he could talk about his thoughts on the performance of Bantaba, and I would tell him what I saw in it, and give him some feedback based on my experience.⁸⁴ When we met four weeks later, I brought him recordings of three different performances with Mandingo Trio, framed by the storytelling concept of Bantaba, where the storyteller had joined them on all three. We listened through them and talked, and I kept my own feedback or critique until the very end. It was mainly that I found the stories too long, and that they did not seem to be studied very carefully, so that there would sometimes be a long story where the audience might drop out or miss the point. I also asked about the conceptual framing, the decision to do a family performance without children present. I let him offer his reflections before presenting mine.

The market versus public support

My initial talks with Nasibu had been rather random, yet with some major themes: I inquired about his musical activities and where he would perform next, since I used to travel from Kristiansand to Oslo to see him, and never knew what he would be doing – I rarely found any advertisements for his gigs. He, on the other hand, kept coming back to the problem of financing his work as a minority musician. Although my focus at the time was more on *performance*, my awareness of grounded ideals made me take note of his remarks, which seemed to come up again every time we met. One of these times was when I came to follow a studio session to observe the recording and mastering of a

⁸⁴ What I for the rest of this work refer to as a ‘feedback interview’ is (exclusively) the *research participant* offering feedback on his or her own work, or reflecting on an instance that we have shared. The meaning of ‘feedback’ towards the end of this interview takes a somewhat different turn when I offer *him* feedback, although keeping it as a conversation around his work. See previous reflection for the rationale behind this choice.

Mandingo Trio CD. He had managed to raise NoK 30,000 to produce the three-song maxi single by combining it with a CD project with other artists from the Mela festival, linked to the organization *Horisont*.⁸⁵ At Horisont he worked freelance with the magazine *Samora* and the Mela festival, where he had also performed on two occasions with Ras Nas and Mandingo Trio.⁸⁶ Still, NoK 30,000 was not much to produce a CD, and he stressed how you needed to be creative, do all the pre-production on your own, and then bring it to the studio. “That’s the only way you can do it with thirty thousand. That’s the only way”.

He went on to talk about what it was like to apply for various public funds, such as ‘Fond for utøvende kunstnere’⁸⁷ and others. “And then you maybe get twenty thousand”, he said, with a gesture of tossing money to someone. “What can you do with that? I say, in Norway we have state controlled culture. People say: ‘Skriv søknad!’ [‘Write an application!’], but there’s nobody who is willing to invest in a production.”

World music as political correctness

While discussing Bantaba in the feedback interview he returned to this issue of public funding applications, which he saw as a parallel to the organizations

⁸⁵ ‘Stiftelsen Horisont’, or ‘Horizon Foundation’ is one of the major organizations addressing cultural diversity in Norway. Its main activity is organizing the Mela festival each August in Oslo.

⁸⁶ The Mela festival has grown from a Pakistani diasporic cultural festival in 2002, to a major, free cultural festival in Oslo, with an outdoor assembling of a broad spectrum of nationalities in the audience, and with artists and groups on stage living both in Norway and internationally. It still has a major presence of South Asian artists and audiences. Their website states: “In a long-term perspective, the aim is to increase minorities’ participation on the Norwegian contemporary art and culture scene”. (Stiftelsen Horisont, 2006)

⁸⁷ ‘Fund for Performing Artists’ is a government fund under the Arts Council. The area of music and arts in Norway has a few major public funding sources – for musicians most importantly Fund for Performing Artists, Fund for Sound and Picture, and the Arts Council directly – and many smaller ones, making the art of application writing crucial to artists. There are also copyright- and performance rights societies – Tono, Gramo, NCB – that collect fees in their respective areas such as live performance, broadcast or CD-R sales. Some types of collected fees are distributed directly to the artists or copyright holders, while others are reallocated to the funding bodies that artists may apply to, which are also funded directly by the government.

promoting minority musicians, yet as counteracting the mechanisms of a commercial music market:

Nasibu:⁸⁸ If you go to Rikskonsertene, Rikskonsertene is OK, but they do their thing according to political... You know, their projects are based on some political decisions. Which does not necessarily lead to opening up for, say, minority artists like me.

Tormod: Why not?

Nasibu: You know, for the market. Because if you do your things for Rikskonsertene, man, you cannot sell. Maybe now, because Rikskonsertene starts to change.

Tormod: You cannot...?

Nasibu: You cannot *sell*, you know, to the people. Yeah if you follow that political correctness, that African music, world music, has to be like this. You get my point?

He explained that he found, as a reggae and soukous artist, he was rarely engaged by the organizations promoting minority musicians. He felt this was due to the artistic profiles of several organizations, and what he called their 'political correctness'. I asked him to expand on that. First point, he said, was that reggae was sometimes associated with marijuana smoking, and therefore was not politically correct, it didn't fit their ideas of 'world music'. Then he continued to explain how he saw these organizations promoting a different type of representation that would not make it commercially. What he saw as a better alternative was to turn to a commercial market:

Nasibu: But on the other hand, you see that, me as a musician, if I want to play reggae, and I know that through playing that type of music I'll get a market. Because I have to sell my product. You, know. So, as a musician, if you have to sell your product, (...) you have to follow the market, you have to follow the trend, you have to see what is going on. Not necessarily what Rikskonsertene say: 'This is world music', you know 'this is the type of world music that we think is correct', you know.

Here, as in many other instances, Nasibu was holding out the market as a corrective to the more political artistic framing he found in the various organizations promoting minority musicians.

⁸⁸ As usual when we met, the conversation was held in English. The following interview notes are based on recording transcripts.

Supportive organizations

He went on to describe the problems of such promotion:

Nasibu: 'Du Store Verden' is the same thing, it's another organization that is there, you know. Me personally, I'm not really... (pause) very much impressed ... by how they look at we, minority musicians. You know, it's kind of (...) 'If you don't work with us, you are going to suffer. It's we that, you know, who are making it nice for you'. You get my point? While, that should not be the case, because music is business, man. I can go to a record company and if we agree ourselves together and everything, they will sell my product and I'll survive. So I don't really need to listen to what *Du Store Verden* is telling me what I should play, for me to get accepted, to get a job maybe twice a year.

Tormod: Do they do that [tell you what to play]?

Nasibu: No, but I have a feeling that they have their own way of looking at world music. ... So if you don't come into that perception, you're an outsider, you get my point?

Tormod: What is DSV's conception of world music?

Nasibu: [Their] conception of world music, probably, the way I look at it, is like: 'We're helping them. We're helping these poor African artists who don't know nothing. We're helping them. We're helping them with showcasing, we're helping with putting them on stage, we're *helping* them. (...)

But in this industry, that's not how things are supposed to be. No, things are supposed to be based on the product. If you have a good product, the market will buy it. Not necessarily how, maybe, an organization here (...) [would say] 'You're not African enough. You know, if you play like soukous'. (Changing his voice, imitating) Like, 'For us, you're not African enough. We'd like to see you play a drum and put on an African dress and dance, and things like that. That for us, that is African', you know. Which is, might be OK, but I'm an African, man, I don't need to emphasize, you know, just by being here, I'm an African.⁸⁹

Themes for further analysis

These statements expose several themes that I will bring into drawing a model for further analysis. One theme is what is experienced as politicized representation by the organizations – public or independent – promoting minority musicians here exemplified by (but not limited to) *Rikskonsertene* and

⁸⁹ Nasibu Mwanukuzi in interview with me, 13 June 2008.

Du Store Verden. This theme includes the giver/receiver problematic well known from foreign aid; the de-subjectification of the receiver, with the risk of continuing a colonial relation by other means. Here, the colonial relation lies in the image that minority musicians first and foremost need help, which is then coupled with *representation*: the experience that by being ‘the other’ the minority musicians can best find their place on the Norwegian music scene, filling a particular – and somehow politically motivated – role. This critical issue of representation of African performers in musical productions in Norway is highlighted in his criticism of the reproduction of stereotypical images such as to “... *play a drum and put on an African dress and dance, and things like that*”. So, obviously this is an expectation and an image that he experiences as problematic.

In conclusion, Nasibu sees the commercial market as a solution to the dilemmas of representation and dependence, letting financial mechanisms cut off the ‘strings attached’ from supportive organizations.

Model of ideas

These statements contain a series of connected ideas that have kept coming up in the interviews and talks I have had with Nasibu, and seem to make up a clear pattern of reflection on his experiences that I have applied in drawing a model of ideas below.⁹⁰ These ideas contain two separate realms of experience that are contradictory and tensioned. In this model I also draw the processes, or powers at work; moving towards one realm or the other represents processes of marginalization versus empowerment:

⁹⁰ The ‘quotation marks’ suggest in-vivo codes, that is, expressions used by the research participant

Connected ideas of dependence and colonial relations / representations	Process	Connected ideas of empowerment, independence and reciprocity
<p>‘Needing help’ (colonial dependence)</p> <p>Public support and supportive organizations</p> <p>Applying for public funding</p> <p>‘State controlled culture’</p> <p>‘Political correctness’ (politically motivated type of ‘world music’)</p> <p>Resulting representation: Having to be ‘African enough’</p>	<p>← Marginalizing (Having to be ‘African enough’)</p> <p>vs.</p> <p>Empowering → (‘Going with the mainstream’)</p>	<p>‘The market’ (non-colonial relation)</p> <p>Agreed transactions (mutual interest)</p> <p>Representation: Specialized, own choice (reggae, soukous)</p> <p>Empowered subject / representation: ‘Just by being here, I’m an African’</p>

On the one hand there are the experiences associated with otherness: the colonial relations of dependence and, consequently, otherized representations that meet particular anticipations of the music these others should present. On the other hand are the ideals of independence, achieved through agreed transactions in a commercial market, based on mutual interest between artist, investor and, implicitly, the audience as customer. The feeling of not being ‘African enough’ to meet particular expectations or demands from supportive organizations and public funding, or the ‘state controlled culture’, also represents a forceful incentive to *become* African enough to meet these expectations, which implies a process of marginalization. On the other hand, the desire to free himself of this type of representation and these powers is expressed in the wish to ‘go with the mainstream’, or a process of reaching a point of mutual agreement and interest with the audience, or some kind of balance or equality. Which, he envisages, will also be more sustainable financially, or at least put him in a position of being in control of artistic expressions and representations, allowing him to perform the music that he experiences as ‘his’, namely reggae and soukous. I

associate this position with the postcolonial ideal of empowered subject-subject relations, which is also underscored in the statement that ‘Just by being here, I’m an African’. Representing African identity and music is then seen as the sum of his experiences and presence in society, his own subjective position, which – in terms of colonial relations – is also an empowered position from which to define oneself.

Paradoxes

This model represents how I perceive the stated experiences and reflections of a research participant, and is not presented as ‘evidence’, or as my own analysis of the reality for minority musicians and their context, which would be to say that Norway *does* have ‘state controlled culture’, or that application writing is counterproductive or leads to colonial dependence, or that there is, as some liberal economists would claim, a ‘good’ free market and a ‘bad’ public funding system. However, I will take the experiences of the artist as a starting point for a wider exploration of the tensions experienced between marginalizing and empowering – or ‘mainstreaming’ – processes in the practices of minority performers. The first step is to use this model to discuss two rather apparent paradoxes.

First, there is a paradoxical contrast between the experiences and ideas of this performer and the observed performance. The stereotyped image, to “...play a drum and put on an African dress and dance, and things like that” may surprisingly well describe the event that I observed, and be the kind of ‘minority thing’ that Nasibu wanted to distance himself from. So one paradox to be explored in this chapter is this striking discrepancy between the performers’ expressed ideas of going with the mainstream (at least from Nasibu, who here takes on the role of the producer), and the seemingly marginalized or exotic position taken in performance.

Access to funding

Second, there is also a paradox in how the statements connected to public funding contradict what Nasibu is actually doing by aiming for public funding quite actively. The reason he experiences public funding as problematic could not really be the lack of access to it – in what has already been described, it is clear that Nasibu is quite skilled in manoeuvring through the maze of public support forms and channels. Just this year he had succeeded in receiving public funds from his applications to Arts Council Norway (*Norsk Kulturråd*), through creating the concept of *Mantra* that somehow stood out from the other applicants.⁹¹ Another sign of these skills is how the Mandingo Trio maxi single was created as a spin-off of a *Mela* production of various artists from the festival. He had also created a production organization around his own online music magazine *Kongoi*, which would eventually become both the producer of his CDs and the official management for performances. So there were undoubtedly some quite informed skills in place for handling the bureaucracy, a large effort put into application writing, and knowledge of how to do it. So the problem seemed not so much to be lack of access to public funding.⁹² Rather, the major problem expressed was the experience of representational bias and dependence brought on by the funding. Adhering to the ethnographic principle of ‘following the conflict’ (Ambrosius Madsen, 2003), I will follow the inherent conflict between the artist’s critique of public funding and his extended use of – even orientation towards – it.

The following pinpoints this conflict or paradox: In addition to the NoK 100,000 received for the club concept *Mantra*, I learned that *Bantaba* had received NoK 50,000 in grants from the Arts Council in an extra grant session targeting culturally diverse performances for *Mangfoldsåret* 2008 – the ‘Year of cultural

⁹¹ My guess would be the overarching *concept* of the club setting, rather than the hiring of his own ensembles as warm-ups for the events supported. Yet it was a creative – and conscious – way to get both funding, gigs, and reaching new audiences.

⁹² That is, more than for other artists, and despite the obvious insufficient funds for the total costs of making a living.

diversity' 2008. The concept of *Bantaba* was, according to the list of grantees, for “Afrikansk musikk, fortelling og dans for barn og unge” (“African music, storytelling and dance for children and youth”). With this information in mind, I will go back to exploring the performance of *Bantaba*, and see how these paradoxes are highlighted in this performance concept.

The concept of Bantaba

At the beginning of the interview, I asked Nasibu to describe the ideas of Bantaba.

Nasibu: The idea of Bantaba, really, is to expand the concept of African arts and music in Norway. Whereby it's not only live music, but also the storytelling, you know. Because storytelling is very ... is part of African culture as such. And that is something that maybe has not been very much seen in Norway, you see. That part of African culture, storytelling. (...) And the good thing about that is that you can tell it to both grownups, you can tell it to children, and there's always some kind of relationship, because it is something that exists in Norwegian culture, too. So it's not something that is strange (...)

When it came to my presumption that Nasibu wanted to get rid of the storyteller, the opposite proved to be the case. It turned out he was very happy about his efforts, despite the need for some adjustments, praising him as an artist, stating how important he was for this concept of Bantaba:

Tormod: So, is this bringing in [the storyteller] an idea of all of them [the musicians in Mandingo Trio], or is it, most of...

Nasibu: No no, really it was my idea to bring [the storyteller] in, because I know [him] for many years. And I know him as a very good artist when it comes to storytelling. And also he is coming from (...) [specific] cultures, which are also rich in storytelling in Africa, you understand. So he has a lot of storytelling, you know. And I think he has really uplifted the whole concept of Bantaba. (...)

Tormod: In what way?

Nasibu: In what way? In the sense that he is, you know, a good actor. You know, not only a good actor, but someone that knows the art of storytelling. What it takes. You can see it on stage, what he's doing, how he handles children. You can see that this man knows what it takes.

Year of storytelling

Tormod: Last time I met you (...) you also talked about this year of storytelling or storytellers?

Nasibu: Yes, next year. Because I think, every year is being celebrated by a theme. Like this year is the year of diversity. Last year I'm not quite sure. But next year, the year of storytelling. So storytelling is going to be given a bigger share, or a bigger attention throughout next year. (...) So I feel like, if one prepares himself now, it will be easier to ... to accomplish certain projects, which involves storytelling, African storytelling, next year. See, the year of diversity this year, they say it should not end up as just a... as a one year project, it should continue next year. So that means that even in the year of storytelling, there should be also the element of diversity there. So that element of diversity is what I feel like, you know, can come from this kind of projects, like, you know, Bantaba.

He continued to talk about the idea of Bantaba as a concept that could be expanded into setting up a mobile performance unit, like a theatre group, not limiting itself to this particular ensemble:

Nasibu: These kind of things normally are like constellations. That's why (...) I'm thinking that, you know, maybe take this Kongoi Productions – which has been just like promoting Ras Nas all the time, and other artists all over the place – use that experience to have a small kind of management thing going on. So that if I get jobs that come from Kongoi Productions, and maybe people want dancers or something, I should be able to find these people within the African community.

Kongoi was his online magazine, mainly with news about African artists and performances, and *Kongoi Productions* was the name of the small management business he was already running – mostly as the management of his productions and performances as *Ras Nas*.

Improving the reports

As we listened and watched through the three performances, guided by a timeline in my chart, he revealed an interest in my documentation in itself:

Nasibu: On a USB, is it possible to get this?

Tormod: What, when [the storyteller] speaks?

Nasibu: No no, just this... Word document (referring to my chart of the performances). Because I have to write a report on Bantaba for Kulturrådet. And I really want to write it nice. (...) Because, that's why I say, it's hard for us African musicians. Because all these kind of things. I mean, let's say you get money from Kulturrådet. OK, you do your thing. But then you need this kind of analysis to see what you have done. You get my point. So many artists, we are not good in sitting down and doing this. (...) we play hundreds of concerts. But sometimes even you ask the artist: 'Do you have a picture?' Just a picture! We finish, we finish. We get our money, we pay, we pay, you go. But there is no way somebody can go back again and analyze, you know.

So what Nasibu wanted from me was, partly, this documentation. Which he would use to improve his reports. And also, he explained, to improve the practice that was reported: listening to the recorded stories, studying them more carefully, finding out what worked and what didn't.

Critique and need for adjustments

One of the performances that we watched was an outdoor performance at a rally with minority performers, where the storytelling took up more than half the time of the short presentation. I used this to move into the critique he had asked for:

Tormod: (Commenting on the length of the story): But here he goes 'Itayee'.

Nasibu (over the video): Yeah. Although there he took a *long*, long time. (...) These are the things, we have to criticize him. Say, 'Man, you have to cut down the story'. Because there, if you see, the public was moving. So even we ourselves took critique, that it was not a good idea to do in fact a long storytelling there. Because the public is not standing as such waiting for you to tell the story. (...)

Tormod: He starts introducing... He almost uses six minutes for storytelling.

Nasibu: Only six?

Tormod: He does a lot of talking before that.

Nasibu: Still, those six minutes probably look long there, because the audience was kind of waiting to go.

(...)

Nasibu: Ok, now, I [am going to] finish this project for *Kulturrådet*. So I really want to sit down and write a good analysis of the whole thing. Because, project for them, like *Kulturrådet*, they don't really need all that *utdypning* [elaboration]. All they need is Ok, it's finished, the budget went like this etcetera, but I feel, for the survival of this concept, it's nice for me myself to do a good analysis. (...) For further developing it.

This seems to explain why he wanted my feedback: To improve on his reporting, to improve and develop the performances – *for the survival of the concept*.

Concert setting

Then, getting back to the previously described performance, and the question of childish performance for adults:

Tormod: ['I asked myself'] It's... strange setting, why did they put the stories for this adult, eh... [audience].

Nasibu: Yeah, that's, those are the thing that we always... That is the thing that when I write the report, I want to go in that kind of analysis, that's why I wanted your view.

(...)

Tormod: But do you, I mean, telling stories for adults is OK, but did you choose that deliberately?

Nasibu: No, because we wanted to do it as Bantaba. So Bantaba, you know Bantaba, you must have storytelling. But I discovered in fact Bantaba you can just have poetry, because poetry is another way of storytelling. So through that [performance], I discovered, you know, I saw it. Because I saw that the poetry worked very well, the storytelling was like, OK, like you are telling it for children, but kind of just to remind them of their childhood, that we are all children and things like that. When it comes to Bantaba, it could just be like [for] grown-ups, it's nice with music, poetry, and music.⁹³

In the last statement he has already incorporated my critique into his conception of Bantaba – including my praise for his performance of one of his own poems, which suddenly brought a different atmosphere to the setting: an adult speaking to adults.

⁹³ All interview quotes: Nasibu Mwanukuzi in interview with me, 13 June 2008.

Some would say this is the researcher influencing the observations, but I will argue that this was the researcher offering some reciprocity, in return for being offered insight into the research participant's agency. Which here is very candid: he wanted my feedback to improve the performance concept, and to improve the reporting. Evidently, better reports and more conscious practices described in those reports increase the chances of having future applications accepted. This *agency* is not influenced by the researcher, he just uses me to improve his career, like I use him to improve mine. Although there is no symmetry in this equation.

The conceptual producer

The interview abstracts above demonstrate how storytelling transforms performances into the *concept* of Bantaba, into which he then brings both the storyteller and Mandingo Trio. But he envisages he could also use other artists, or build a production unit: Bantaba is the concept that is funded, while Nasibu sees himself as a manager or producer.

All in all these statements draw a picture of a producer looking for opportunities – here in the form of public or government funding, or anticipated funding for the year to come – utilizing his knowledge and interest in a field of performance. He actually seeks out the public funding, and the signals of what will happen next year, exploring how his competence and interest may target it. This year he had already received major funding from the ‘Year of diversity’, and was now planning for the ‘Year of storytelling’.⁹⁴

⁹⁴ I have not been able to identify any such official year in 2009. It might have been taking place on a different level, though, as storytelling has increasingly been accepted as a separate artistic category. In 2009, Nasibu further succeeded with three applications to the Arts Council for performance concepts, two of them linked to storytelling and poetry. So the point continues to be how the artist targets particular political or governmental incentives.

The role of the storyteller

After my assumption that the storyteller was not central to the performance – even that Nasibu wanted to get rid of him – I then learned that he was seen by Nasibu as essential. And also why: his ability to frame the performance conceptually. Nasibu even wanted to use him more. I interpret these statements as seeing the storyteller’s contribution as a way of meeting the particular ‘public market’ of applicable funding.

The storyteller is brought in to frame the music in performance through audience interaction and storytelling, he being the one who addresses the audience. Which is also addressing the market, or ideas about a particular ‘market’ for producing cultural understanding. The *concept* of Bantaba (“African music, storytelling and dance for children and youth”) is what Nasibu applied for, and, being the one that frames the whole performance to become this concept, the storyteller puts the musical trio into the application by adding storytelling. And, possibly, a touch of childishness. So, the framing that he does in the performance addresses a particular need: meeting application criteria, or the criteria that were endorsed when the application was accepted.⁹⁵

This is where the *concept* of the application ties the performance into what I have called a multiculturalist discourse. The music as such is versatile in performance and has proved independently of this concept to work in various performance contexts, but the application addresses a particular discourse to get funding. The performance is thus carried out with the application concept rather than the audience and context as the target. Getting back to the forces presented in the model of ideas above, this seems to represent the marginalizing effect that Nasibu has described, although he doesn’t tie this experience of marginalization explicitly to this performance or concept – that connection is made in my

⁹⁵ The performance I observed was probably not covered by the 2008 grant, as it must have been planned earlier. That is, however, not important for my argument, which is that the development of this concept is what is taking place, which leads to more applications, and targets other assignments in the same market.

analysis of the paradox. Still, given that this performance concept is tied to and enacts a kind of discourse, which Nasibu sees as marginalizing, the ‘moving force’ in this case seems to be the funding possibility in itself. I will follow this line of thought for a while, exploring how this might be seen as an effect of power through discourse.

Phenomenological view

Instead of victimizing⁹⁶ the performers (which seems to be happening too often in postcolonial discourse), I would like to explore the phenomenological position of seeing actions – like taking part in stereotyped representations or applying for funding that is experienced as problematic – as a choice, rationally made. Phenomenologists would ask: how are choices being made, and what do the agents achieve from these choices? (Frykman & Gilje, 2003) Here one could say that they get some income and more performance experience. Yet the major point seems to be that conceptualizing their own music into a particular framework sells, there is a market for it. Or, that is: Their frustration is precisely that it does not ‘sell’ in the capitalist notion of a ‘free’ market, but in a conceptualized ‘market’, which is perceived as politically motivated, and where the artists experience that they are marginalized. Nevertheless, they seem to take part in this marginalized and politicized market energetically. This tension between agent choices and structural drives invites exploring the leads in both directions, first of the agent: exploring how musical practices are created and negotiated from a minority position, then exploring the defining framework within which they move. For the latter, it seems relevant for the case described to look critically at the power brought into the discourse through the financial incentives, how a particular cultural policy creates a cultural market reality on its own. This is the Foucauldian exploration of the direct correspondence between governance, discourse and power, where *power* is not something that is

⁹⁶ By ‘victimizing’ I here refer to how *talking* about some people as victims may confer victim status on them so that they are seen and/or see themselves as victims.

exerted from the top down, but materializes through discourses that exists between people, at all levels. Like the way musicians take part in framings that they seem to object to, they do take part in this particular discourse of otherness, even initiating it.

In this case I will argue that the category of ‘recognizing difference’, which stands out in the analysis, is a property of multiculturalist discourse. Therefore I will explore this discourse in the following paragraphs in order to explore how it works in this context.

Multiculturalism

The term *multiculturalism* needs to be analyzed somewhat critically. In this chapter, I identify certain discourses that I label ‘multiculturalist’, referring not so much to a specific ideology as to a broader set of actions that are political and ideological responses of liberal democracies intended to overcome or avoid discrimination in *de facto* culturally diverse communities. The term, however, is disputed. While it is hard to find people who would use *multiculturalism* to identify their own policies or stance, the term is frequently applied in popular discourse to denote an opponent’s putative friendly view of dealing with a culturally divergent community, even inviting it, without questioning its possible challenges. In Norwegian popular discourse this especially produces an image of persons, politicians in particular, who promote free immigration while failing to demand the same from ‘immigrants’ as from other citizens, in terms of abiding by the laws and contributing to the workforce. Putting up cardboard opponents that are easy to knock down is, of course, the simplest way to win any debate.⁹⁷

⁹⁷ The ‘cardboard’ metaphor is borrowed from Pål Repstad’s discussion on ‘beliefs’ in research methodologies, where the presentation of the opposing view only serves to prove it’s wrong (Repstad, 2007).

Despite this simplistic use in popular discourse, the term does have a scholarly application in describing and discussing certain political approaches to culturally diverse communities, and it is in this sense that I apply it.⁹⁸ In Charles Taylor's terms, these approaches may be summed up in the idea that different sub-groups of society may best co-exist through allowing and acknowledging diversity, a politics of *recognition* – or the right to be different (C. Taylor et al., 1994).

Taylor draws the historical lines of this idea, first to Hegel's discussion of the slave/master relationship – which disables recognition for both parties – and then further back to Rousseau's ideas of individual authenticity as something gained rather than inherited. The result of these ideas in Western philosophy is a view that *recognition* is a human need and legitimate claim, while withholding recognition may violate a person's – or group's – self-image, hence is an oppressive act. This idea, in turn, produces new needs in a society of mixed identities, where claims for recognition are made by or on behalf of 'subaltern' groups of gender, culture, ethnicity, language and other minority positions:

The demand for recognition in these latter cases is given urgency by the supposed links between recognition and identity, where this latter term designates something like a person's understanding of who they are, of their fundamental defining characteristics as a human being. (1994, p. 25)

The oppressive act of withholding recognition would, in this view, potentially be carried out by a dominant majority's assimilation demands, or claims to define normativity, leaving the 'different' to subaltern, secondary citizen positions. Yet, examining the consequences of these lines of thought, Taylor demonstrates how a paradox arises between universality and difference: while the initial call for equal rights and needs prescribes universal rights *despite* differences, the multiculturalist-inspired politics are based on *recognition* of difference:

⁹⁸ Its use has also gone beyond 'simplistic' in aggravated debates, it has at times been downright aggressive, particularly in Internet discussion forums. Even the tragic terrorist acts on July 22nd 2011 were rationalized as an attack on 'multiculturalist' politicians and policies. The statements made within such perceptions of reality make using the term in further debate difficult. Still, referring to Charles Taylor (et al.), it is a term that is also used in serious discussions of particular political actions and dilemmas, which is why and how I intend to use it here.

Where the politics of universal dignity fought for forms of nondiscrimination that were quite “blind” to the ways in which citizens differ, the politics of difference often redefines nondiscrimination as requiring that we make these distinctions the basis of differential treatment. (p. 39)

This statement starts a long discussion of dilemmas and paradoxes contained in multiculturalism that arise between the universalism aimed at and the particularity and difference achieved. Grounded in Taylor’s writings and broad discussion of these topics, I will subsume these under three core dilemmas. These all arise between the desire to secure rights and the effect the resulting policies may have. And: when I call them dilemmas, it is to acknowledge that they do not have simple solutions; the dilemmas surrounding multiculturalism reveal contradictory concerns of society.

Multiculturalist dilemmas

The first dilemma is, as hinted at above, that the recognition of difference may produce and sustain the difference to be recognized. Second, the model of recognition seems to imply that there is a hegemonic culture or society that recognizes its minorities. Hence there will always be an inequality to this recognition, as there are only some groups – the subaltern, still – who represent difference. The third dilemma concerns the limits to group autonomy, as a nation or society will want some ‘common ground’, and try to avoid parallel societies. This ‘common ground’, however, risks the accusations that the hegemonic culture is assimilating its minorities.

All the three dilemma areas are interwoven, and concern the relation between the individual, the group and the society. Problems arise between them, such as when individuals are treated by society on the basis of their group affiliation, individual interests conflict with group rights, or groups even sanction individuals to maintain a common group identity.

Production of difference

Regarding the first dilemma we may – in Foucauldian terms – say that a multiculturalist discourse, or a discourse of recognizing difference, also *produces* the difference one seeks to recognize. The main dilemma I wish to illustrate directly addresses the experiences that Nasibu expresses, and also my research questions concerning discursive spaces, or the availability of performance roles for immigrant performers. This dilemma is found between the need to acknowledge difference and minority identities in a culturally diverse society, and the essentialized difference that this recognition risks producing by subsuming individuals under group categories.

Applied to performance, such reciprocal cultural recognitions of difference require some place for this exchange of recognition to take place, and in the performance of *Bantaba* presented in this chapter, the ‘meeting place’ serves as a metaphor for such an exchange: “Bantaba means, in the Mandingo language, a *meeting place* for music, dance, and for stories. And so: Welcome to the Bantaba”. By welcoming the audience to this meeting place, the storyteller also invites the audience to a staged cultural encounter, or exchange.

In joining in this ‘meeting place’ framework so eagerly, the audience seem to endorse a positive attitude towards difference, or seem interested in seeing themselves as caretakers of cultural understanding or recognition.⁹⁹ Still, this interest requires someone in particular to play out the difference to be embraced, which is the second multiculturalist dilemma listed; that there are only *some* who represent ‘difference’. In this way, recognizing or even celebrating difference is also producing it, and even making it an essential property. When Homi Bhabha states that “What does need to be questioned, however, is the *mode of representation of otherness*” (1994, p. 68), he argues, as is discussed in Chapter 2, that the shift in observing cultural difference from negative to positive does not overcome colonial discourse. On the contrary, he argues, it is

⁹⁹ It could also be that the church setting here further highlights this discourse, as churchgoers might have an increased desire to come across as friendly or welcoming. But multiculturalist discourse as such is not particularly linked to religious beliefs, but rather to political ideology.

just a continuation of colonial representation and discourse, ascribed a positive value through political norms. The essentializing and marginalizing effect is the same.

From this perspective, the performers' representation and position – as established through interaction in the observed performance of *Bantaba* – must, indeed, be regarded as a 'minority thing'; a particular representation of African performers as 'Other', resting on an essentializing of *origin* and emphasizing of difference.

This observation also corresponds with the second multiculturalist dilemma regarding the claim that 'difference' is always represented by the subaltern, or minorities, so that multiculturalism not only produces difference, but reproduces and maintains static majority-minority relations. This dilemma is actualized in the previously-mentioned paradox between Nasibu's desire to be independent of public funding, and his orientation towards it. This paradox will be further explored below.

Parallel societies

The third multiculturalist dilemma arises between the nation or society's need to have some kind of a 'common ground', and the risk of group identities producing parallel societies. This invites some 'zooming out' for a larger picture of Norwegian society and cultural policies. From a North American perspective, Amy Gutmann writes:

If members of groups are publicly identified with the dominant characteristics, practices, and values of their group, one might wonder whether our particular identities—as English or French Canadians, men or women, Asian-Americans, African-Americans, or Native Americans, Christians, Jews, or Muslims—will take public precedence over our more universal identity as persons, deserving of mutual respect, civil and political liberties, and decent life chances simply by virtue of our equal humanity. (C. Taylor et al., 1994, p. 8)

In one understanding of and approach to multiculturalism, it is understood as a set of *rights* for the different cultures co-existing. In its most extreme consequences we could imagine a society not only of parallel beliefs and expressions, but even of parallel law systems. In 'softer' understandings of the

term, there would be a core communality in every society (such as the legal system), while cultural traits, beliefs etc. are left to the various groups to nourish. So the challenge in multiculturalist-inspired policies is to find the balance between the common set of values and rules that somehow unites a given, diverse society, and how far one is willing to go to allow subgroups in society to define their own ways of making up a community within the larger framework of a common society, thus risking establishing parallel societies.

Charles Taylor points out that this reveals that it will still be the hegemonic culture that defines the framework and set of rules for diversity, setting the limits to how different one may actually be allowed to be. He produces an example that anticipates the Nordic debate on the so-called cartoons of the prophet Mohammad:¹⁰⁰ A multiculturalist-inspired policy, as found in liberal democracies, will accept the right to practise different religions, but will not accept threats of violence from those that think their religion has been disrespected, although the religious practice itself may allow or even anticipate such statements. So there is a hegemonic set of rules that take precedence – sometimes invisibly – over the perceived equality of reciprocal recognition.

Multiculturalism and Norwegian political context

Due to the perceived risk of parallel societies, it seems logical to say that in Norway – particularly from the post-war policies of the Labour Party – the focus on *unity* ('*enhet*') and equal rights across economic and class backgrounds seems to counter any describing of its policies as multiculturalist as such. This idea of equal rights of individuals – in the framework of one common society – has sought realization through systems that secure individual equal opportunities, such as a common school system, public health care, and a social security system for all citizens. These systems are considered to secure individual rights while also diminishing incentives for private schools, hospitals,

¹⁰⁰ For a debate on the 'cartoon' case, see (Eide, Kunelius, & Phillips, 2008)

care for the elderly etc., which – in the rhetoric of the political left – work to split society along class or economic lines. A similar split along lines of ‘culture’ seems to be a greater worry on the political right. In Norway, as elsewhere, ideas associated with multiculturalism seem to have their strongest defenders on the political left, through a more explicit determination to secure minority rights.

Rather than claiming that Norwegian cultural policies are multiculturalist *per se*, I think it is relevant to identify the element of ‘recognizing difference’, and its roots in a specific discourse. When this term is applied in this chapter, then, it is not to argue for a particular terminology, but rather to explore the effects of this discourse. In order to study this discourse in Foucault’s sense of ‘genealogy’ – that is, going from experience to policy level – I will go back to exploring the actual funding practice.

Governance through funding

In 2008 Nasibu had, as I have described, succeeded with two major applications to *Arts Council Norway*, Norsk Kulturråd: the NoK 100,000 received for the club concept *Mantra*, and NoK 50,000 for the storytelling and family concept of *Bantaba*. This made up his major source of support that year. I will explore the background for this funding, as I have found it ties in directly and actively to a discourse of recognizing difference, which may shed further light upon the dilemmas that the artists experience.

This is how Arts Council Norway’s music section presents its mission:

The Arts Council funds projects ranging from concerts, tours and artistic productions to compositions, recordings, festivals, church music and performance venues. The Council's efforts are designed to support new creative and performing measures from Norway's music community, from classical to electronic and popular music. Relevant projects involve encouraging new compositions, promoting cultural diversity, facilitating the interpretation and preservation of musical heritage, and disseminating music to the public at large, and to help ensure superior architectural quality. Current challenges in this field include adapting to the changing definitions of cultural venues and arenas.¹⁰¹

The categories that Arts Council Norway is operating with, and which performers may apply for, are first split up into areas, of which music is one. Music is again split into support for performers, for ensembles, for facilitators, for music festivals, for church music, for recordings and 'other areas'.

To take an example, the application form for ensembles in 2008 was very simple, not listing genre at all, just asking for brief information about the ensemble, links to their existing recordings, and a description of what they are applying for. The actual grant overviews, on the other hand, are listed by genre: 'Pop / Rock', 'The classical area', 'Jazz and improvised music', 'Traditional music/world music', and 'Contemporary music'.¹⁰² The absence of genre in the application form, and the broad spectrum of genres awarded, demonstrates a pluralistic approach by the Arts Council: embracing all genres and supporting many different groups and institutions, as long as their productions are somehow found worthy of support.

What seems more relevant to this analysis than genre is the overall mandate of the Arts Council to promote cultural diversity. This was made particularly visible in 2008, as the government channelled an extra ten million to the Council, to be distributed as part of *Mangfoldsåret*, the 'Year of Cultural Diversity'. Yet, the list of 'diverse' productions aided came to 31.5 mill, while in 2007 this area came to 20.6 million (Norsk kulturråd, 2009, p. 106). The latter demonstrates two things: that 2008 had an extra focus – and funding – for

¹⁰¹ <http://www.kulturrad.no/toppmeny/english/music/> accessed 29 January 2012. Illustrated by a picture of African drummers from Bergen World Music festival 2005.

¹⁰² Genres were, in 2008, not listed in the annual report of the Arts Council, but in the press releases after the meetings where funds were granted.

‘diverse’ productions, but also that the mandate of the Arts Council in any year to be “...promoting cultural diversity” is an obligation taking up a solid part of the budget.¹⁰³

In the annual report of the Arts Council for 2008, a broad list of artistic expressions and cultural actions supported account for the use of 31,5 million NoK with a ‘mangfoldsdimensjon’ – a dimension of diversity (Norsk kulturråd, 2009). Most of these projects and artists immediately stand out as identifying particular minority groups or dealing with immigrant issues.

The Year of Cultural Diversity

To understand how the Year of Cultural Diversity is part of general Norwegian cultural policies, and how it also reflects or highlights the multiculturalist dilemmas discussed above, I will refer to the critical evaluation research report on this project by Henningsen, Berkaak and Skålnes (2010).¹⁰⁴

In the evaluation research report, the authors provide the background to and intentions behind the Year of Cultural Diversity, which had aimed at initiating particular measures to demonstrate current processes of cultural diversity in Norway, as well as developing new arenas for cultural encounters, and challenging the national institutions to take cultural diversity better into account:

¹⁰³ The actual percentage of the budget allocated to ‘diversity’ depends on how it is counted, as the total budget of the Arts Council includes its mandate to channel funds from the Ministry of Culture earmarked for various cultural sectors, and to handle particular initiatives and projects, such as EU funds. The 5,4 million awarded for ‘diverse’ musical productions made up 5.8% of the music budget in 2008. Given the figures presented as extra funding in 2008, the normal allocation would be about 3.8%, yet exactly what is counted under ‘diversity’ is not listed in the same detail for the other years between 2007-2011.

¹⁰⁴ The evaluation research report was commissioned by the Norwegian Ministry of Culture and Church Affairs and carried out by researchers in the fields of social anthropology and political science.

November 7. 2006 the Norwegian parliament decided that 2008 was to be a Year of Cultural Diversity in Norway. The aim of the year was to increase citizens' opportunities to participate in and experience a diversity of cultural expressions, to develop arenas of cooperation between majority and minority actors within the arts and culture sector, and that publicly financed institutions and organisations to a higher degree should reflect cultural diversity. (Henningsen et al., 2010, p. 14, from English summary)

The 2008 Year of Cultural Diversity in Norway was modelled on the Swedish *Mångkulturåret* in 2006, and also coincided with 2008 as the EU's year of intercultural dialogue. To sum up, the authors find that the policies implemented in this year were part of the strategic measures of Norwegian cultural and integration policies, which represent a continuation of a history of how Norwegian cultural policies address broader societal goals. They also argue that the policies reflected in this year contain a "downloading" of concepts on cultural diversity from international cultural policies that are particularly discussed and regulated in UNESCO's reports and conventions on cultural diversity (UNESCO, 1996, 2000, 2002, 2005).

'The national project'

The report interprets the way project administration and responsibilities were allocated to the cultural affairs sectors – locally as well as nationally – as a sign that rather than being understood as a policy of integration and inclusion, the project was generally received as a cultural policy initiative (p. 19). However, referring to the government 'White Paper' that initiated the project (Kultur- og kirke departementet, 2006), the authors demonstrate how the Year of Cultural Diversity was part of larger national policies that are played out in the cultural policies sector. They quote some of the statements from the White Paper about how the cultural sector is seen as particularly fitted to create *participation* in a culturally diverse society:

In the Government's view, the cultural sector is one of the key areas that affect the conditions for full and qualified participation in a multicultural society. (...) The goal should be to develop a genuinely multicultural society where cultural expressions meet and evolve and new cultural expressions are created. Modern societies are multicultural to begin with and modern cultures are complex and changeable. The cultural policies must leave behind a justification that unilaterally promotes national unitary culture. This would work both to restrict and exclude. The aim shall be to facilitate the development of cultural life on the basis of the diversity that characterizes today's cultural situation. (St.meld. nr 17, p. 8, quoted from Henningsen et al., 2010, p. 39, my translation)

As I read it, the White Paper contains an apparent and possibly strategic mix of the two common definitions of 'culture' – i.e. culture both as 'cultural expressions', or arts, and culture as the totality of people's ways of life (Fuglerud & Eriksen, 2007; Hannerz, 1996).¹⁰⁵ The latter and broader definition is what makes 'culturally diverse' a much-used expression to describe the particular challenges when such ways of life meet and challenge each other. When the White Paper addresses such challenges by pointing out that the field of 'cultural expression' is particularly fitted to realize political goals of cross-cultural participation in a culturally diverse society, the mix of terminology seems strategic.¹⁰⁶

In this respect, Henningsen (et al.) point to a history and tradition in Norwegian politics of seeing the cultural sector as a place to demonstrate or implement social policies of national concern. The authors draw parallels between statements made by the then Minister of Culture and Church Affairs, Trond Giske, when launching the idea of the Year of Cultural Diversity in 2006,¹⁰⁷ and the post-war era and the 1970's cultural policies. Referring to Geir Vestheim's

¹⁰⁵ Hannerz also argues that the latter, often identified as the 'anthropological' cultural term, also has many contradictory meanings and applications. This discussion is, however, less relevant for this work, as 'culture' does not make up an analytical framework.

¹⁰⁶ See also Linn Daatland Sagen's master's thesis "Mangfold in the making" (2009) for a discussion on the Year of Cultural Diversity's ambiguous culture term, and how it was operationalized locally by a theatre and a museum.

¹⁰⁷ The authors particularly examine statements published by Giske in chronicles and debates in the newspaper *Aftenposten* in March 2006, just a few months before launching the idea of the Year of Cultural Diversity. The same ideas expressed in *Aftenposten* they find reappearing in the actual White Paper.

discussion on the modern history of Norwegian cultural politics (1995), they claim that:

The way Giske expresses himself in the debate in many ways corresponds with the wording in social democratic cultural policies of the first decades after World War II, where the emphasis on social integration and harmony was particularly prominent as a cultural-political ideology of the Labour Party (...) The obvious difference is that while the Labour Party's cultural-political integration theorists, Halfdan Koht and Helge Sivertsen, regarded culture as an arena for the abolition of the struggle between social classes and [national] regions, Giske ascribes to it a similar role in the relationship between the majority and cultural minorities, and while the new cultural policies in 1970 were directed towards the majority, which was thought to be situated in the social space between the privileged cultural elites and underprivileged minorities, Giske places minorities at the centre of attention of cultural policies. (Henningsen et al., 2010, p. 37, my translation)

Based on these discussions on the political investment in the cultural sector – such as the aims of tackling the challenges of cultural diversity – the authors argue that *Mangfoldsåret* must be read as part of a larger national project of using cultural expressions not just to display, but also to *realize* a harmonious or well-functioning culturally diverse society.

‘The national project’ and the responsibility of minority artists

When the field of cultural expressions – such as music – is pointed to by the national government as an arena of realizing a well-functioning culturally diverse society, it becomes clear that artists are also invited to take part in a particular national project of realizing, fashioning or demonstrating the models of cultural diversity that are sought. The list of grantees for the Year of Cultural Diversity from the Arts Council demonstrates that the artists targeted for – or actually taking on – this task of contributing to what I refer to as ‘the national project’ are, in particular, those artists who represent diversity – or ‘difference’. This ties the Year of Cultural Diversity to the multiculturalist dilemmas of Charles Taylor, regarding how ‘diversity’ becomes the area for and responsibility of ethnic minorities in particular. This tendency is also criticized in the report:

At the same time as the Ministry of Culture and Church flagged the slogan that “diversity is not a sector”, there were also clear signals given that the event year’s focus was confined to ethnic minorities. (Henningsen et al., 2010, p. 55, my translation)

An illustration of this dilemma is found in a case referred to in the report: the Arts Council published a list of over two hundred grants to ‘culturally diverse’ projects, one of which was the percussionist Nasra Ali Omar’s project “Computer love”. When Omar found out, she protested, claiming that her project was merely an artistic project, as she had applied under the heading “New technology / Free stage art”, and resented her art’s being classified on the basis of her colour and background (2010, p. 58). Although the Arts Council apologized and removed her from the list, the question remains how the objectives of addressing diversity may be reported as achieved, if there are not particular project funds that artists are encouraged to apply for, i.e. how the twenty million put down to cultural diversity the previous and other years are accounted for if not by counting the ‘diverse’. Henningsen (et al.) discuss this type of ‘diversity management’, which tends to rely on quantitative indicators, which, again, tend to list ethnic minorities to put down to the account of diversity (p. 57). This brings us back to the second dilemma I find in Taylor’s discussions, that diversity is implicitly the property of some: the minorities, and particularly ethnic minorities.

The Year of Cultural Diversity and production of difference

Despite the open-ended genres, I argue, ‘minority art’ and ‘minority music’ implicitly become categories in themselves, in the sense that minority musicians need to be identified or identify themselves as such – as minorities, or ‘different’ – to fit into this category of support. This is true both in the particular case of *Mangfoldsåret* and in the general mandate of the Arts Council to promote cultural diversity. With the possible exception of the point in the Arts Council’s mandate regarding “interpretation and preservation of cultural heritage”, the other categories or mandates are not related to group identities.

No matter how this is turned around – in terms of ‘How else can diversity be supported or efforts reported?’ – the multiculturalist dilemmas are all there in the practice of what is intended to be a pluralist recognition of different groups and of different expressions. Charles Taylor pinpoints this dilemma – that while encouraging participation of all groups is undoubtedly addressing equality, it is, within the larger society, always the subaltern who represent ‘difference’:

The claim is that the supposedly neutral set of difference-blind principles of the politics of equal dignity is in fact a reflection of one hegemonic culture. As it turns out, then, only the minority or suppressed cultures are being forced to take alien form. Consequently, the supposedly fair and difference-blind society is not only inhuman (because suppressing identities) but also, in a subtle and unconscious way, itself highly discriminatory. (C. Taylor et al., 1994, p. 43)

So the recognition of difference, as underlying this funding policy, may serve to re-establish a majority-minority consciousness and divide, as only the ‘subaltern’ are addressed with this recognition.

Downloading of concepts and absorption of multiculturalist axioms

Elaborating on these dilemmas, Henningsen, Berkaak and Skålnes claim that: “In Norway, as in the rest of the Western world, ‘diversity’ has been elevated to a political honorific in line with ‘democracy’, ‘participation’ or ‘freedom’” (2010, p. 58, my translation). They further claim that this represents a ‘downloading’ of international cultural-political terminology, particularly from UNESCO conventions, which also carries with it unresolved dilemmas and contradictions, which are then reproduced in national cultural policies:

When again and again the cultural-political discourse on cultural diversity in Norway confirms that diversity is an "enrichment" and a "necessary" and "positive" aspect of societal development, and that developing a national cultural policy that promotes "respect" and "tolerance" for cultural diversity is necessary, it is natural to consider the report of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) "Our Creative Diversity" as the source of origin for these claims. (...) The report has been followed up through UNESCO's Universal declaration on cultural diversity of 2001 and through the Convention on the protection and promotion of the diversity of cultural expressions of 2005. (...) [The White Paper] Stortingsmelding no. 17 musters two forms of reasoning from the previously-mentioned UNESCO documents that support the claim that cultural diversity is an "enrichment" and a "positive" aspects of societal development, and the demand for developing policies that promote respect and tolerance for diversity. (Henningsen et al., 2010, p. 52, my translation)

The quote demonstrates how the UNESCO documents already contain the multiculturalist dilemmas, when it wants to protect cultural diversity through both securing existing cultural expressions – thus sustaining the 'group' and identifying the minorities that represent the difference to be encouraged and protected – and setting up the values of diversity as a discursive axiom or 'truth'. The UNESCO Convention on the protection and promotion of the diversity of cultural expressions (2005) was ratified by Stortinget – the Norwegian parliament – in 2006, parallel to the launching of the Year of cultural diversity, and the authors see the year as part of the implementation of this convention. This demonstrates how a particular political effort – a year to celebrate cultural diversity and promote cultural understanding and participation – is also subject to the workings not only of national discourse, but also of international policies, and the discursive truths they apply or produce.

Summing up: Discourse, governance and power

By emphasizing the *genealogy* of discourse, Michel Foucault (1972, 1994 [1976]) proposes tracing discourses 'genealogically' from agent to policy. My claim, through this analysis, is that the production and maintenance of difference is made possible through a multiculturalist discourse; this can be traced from

agents' actions and experiences, following the leads to a larger body of discourse, including national and international cultural policies.

By applying Foucault's idea of the relation between power, discourse and governance to the overall analysis of agent actions and orientations, the categories emerging from the analysis of a performance and interview have led to a critical exploration of how 'recognizing difference' – which I identify as a multiculturalist discourse on cultural diversity – serves to produce 'difference' both in performance and in the orientation of artistic practice. Thus from performance and through the funding system, the threads of this discourse go all the way from individual actions to a level of national cultural policies and further into international cultural conventions.

In this analysis I do not see the element of governance and power through discourse as organizational *intentions*. Rather, I see it from the point of view of agent experience and action, since my analysis indicates that artists target particular funding schemes and define their performances within a concept that may meet application criteria, either these criteria are expressed by the funding body or simply anticipated by the applicant. However, looking at this funding practice in the light of Foucault's ideas on how power works through embodying and enacting discourse underlines the point: artist anticipations are built not only on expressed application criteria, but on a repeated experience of what it takes to 'sell', or to be accepted into the market of public funding. Not just this year, but any year.

This analysis further illustrates how power works through discourse in a Norwegian context. In this particular case through a discourse that operates on many levels: on the level of 'downloading' of political concepts from international policies, as Henningsen (et al.) explain. Further, as a political investment in a particular discourse on the culturally diverse society in Norway – both in the literal sense as financial incentives to enhance this discourse and its realities, and also as a national political investment in the sense that it is made politically important as symbolic acts to demonstrate what type of nation and society Norwegian authorities envision. Finally, this discourse is *enacted* by

individuals. It is literally enacted in performance by performers and audiences alike, and also ‘enacted’ through the act of application writing.

This analysis demonstrates how a multiculturalist discourse on recognizing difference with the aim of securing minority rights influences national and international policies, and also the actions and experiences of individual artists who relate to these policies when creating performance practices that they seek to finance.

Delimitations

I have not analyzed or presented all aspects of ‘Mangfoldsåret’ – Year of Cultural Diversity 2008 – since, as the research participant experiences it and the figures show, it represents just increased activity and funding in an already established political reality. That is, the celebration of and support for cultural diversity.

However, the efforts promoted in *Mangfoldsåret* as such should not be pictured too simplistically, as its organizers were conscious of presenting the variety of what was already happening in terms of new developments among minority/majority relations, and also consciously aiming at developing the ‘mainstream’ market for minority artists. Such as, for example, the way institutional theatres were challenged to incorporate minorities better in their ordinary plays, thus aiming at *not* creating a separate category of ‘minority art’ or ‘culturally diverse art’ (Kultur- og kirke departementet, 2008). In the explicit mandate to be a thematic year that was to initiate long-term activities, and with the critical report as part of the political debate within the Ministry of Culture, we may further observe how the alternatives suggested in the report – to focus on ‘diversity’ as a broader term to encompass more than ethnicity (i.e. including sexual minorities, disabled or elderly people), and to turn more to models of inclusion and cultural dialogue rather than cultural display – are subsequently incorporated in Norwegian cultural policies. These influences are most evident in the broad emphasis on the cultural sector as an arena for *participation* found

in a more recent White Paper, “Stortingsmelding nr. 10 (2011-12)”, named “Kultur, inkludering og deltaking” (“Culture, inclusion and participation”) (Kulturdepartementet, 2011).

Need for further research

I would also like to state another delimitation and clarification to this analysis, and that is that it is primarily based on empirical analysis of the experiences of the agent, or research participant, and less on an exploration of the funding system and practice. My analysis indicates a multiculturalist discourse being conducted through funding, which implies governance, or the production of certain ‘truths’ about Norwegian society regarding the rights of all groups to nourish their traditions and co-exist, which may be illustrated by the ‘meeting place’ metaphor. Based on the observed consequences – i.e. agent experiences and actions – I regard this as a plausible analysis to explain performer actions. This approach is also in line with the phenomenological orientation of this work. Still, in order to make generalizing claims regarding the whole funding practice, a deeper analysis of the funding bodies, the grants, and the application rules and criteria and practices over a broader spectrum of artists would need to be carried out. This is one area where I would like to point to a need for further research. However, the analysis is sufficient to explain the model that I wish to illustrate; to explore the inherent tensions between actions and ideas in the practice of this research participant. This is employed to draw up a model of contradictory powers and processes in this practice, which also informs the exploration of my research questions for the succeeding chapters.

Conclusions: Opposing models of empowerment and marginalization

What this chapter brings out is the tension inherent in the practice of this participant. The model I draw from the participant’s expressed ideas demonstrates how he experiences marginalization through the identification of

and relegation to ‘difference’, while he sees empowering as established in *overcoming* difference as a defining trait. This he will seek to realize by becoming part of the ‘mainstream’, entering a market of reciprocal interest. Applying as headers Charles Taylor’s concepts of recognizing difference versus difference ‘blindness’ – i.e. ignoring difference in order to comply with ideas of universality – illustrates how this model of thought contradicts multiculturalist ideas:

Recognizing difference	← Vs. →	Difference blindness
‘Needing help’ (colonial dependence) Public support and supportive organizations Applying for public funding ‘Political correctness’ (politically motivated type of ‘world music’)	← Marginalizing processes (Having to be ‘African enough’) vs. Empowering processes → (‘Going with the mainstream’)	‘The market’ (non-colonial relation) Agreed transactions (mutual interest) Representation: Specialized, own choice (reggae, soukous) Empowered subject / representation: ‘Just by being here, I’m an African’

Yet the model that he acts upon through the applications – or through the performance concept that aims at applications – has a reverse order of logic corresponding with multiculturalist discourse: that when a pluralism of expressions is encouraged and supported, the ‘subaltern’ – i.e. minorities, or immigrants – may be part of or take a position in the larger society. Accordingly, the ideas of empowering, or establishing of subjective, agent, or emancipated positions found in multiculturalist discourse possess the power to move actions in the opposite direction: towards highlighting, recognizing and encouraging difference:

Recognizing difference	← Vs. →	Difference blindness
<p>Allowing and encouraging diversity, thus avoiding discrimination</p> <p>Producing a sound self image through recognition</p>	<p>← Empowering processes (Recognition)</p> <p>vs.</p> <p>Marginalizing processes → (Assimilation)</p>	<p>Normativity defined by hegemonic culture, or dominant culture being masked as ‘common ground’ of normality</p> <p>Oppression by assimilation, or by relegating the ‘different’ to secondary citizen positions</p>

The model that the artist acts upon and the one emerging from his statements thus contain two opposing ideas of emancipation or empowerment. These are found in the contrasting ideas of what ‘recognizing difference’ entails: empowering versus marginalizing, and also in what some kind of ‘difference blindness’ represents: a marginalizing assimilation versus a possibility of ‘mainstreaming’, or of having some kind of identification with society at large. This opposition highlights the dilemmas of recognition inherent in multiculturalism that Charles Taylor describes, between the supposedly emancipating recognition of difference, and the marginalizing production of difference that may come as a result of multiculturalist policies. Which also illustrates the divergence of concepts between a postcolonial discourse of *otherness* versus a multiculturalist discourse of *difference*.

Mainstream?

Another question to explore is: *Why* is it dead “if it’s seen a minority thing”? This concerns Nasibu’s initial presentation of his other practice and application, the club concept where he wanted to be “going with the mainstream”. This practice will be explored further in Chapter 7, but for this chapter some explanations stand out: first, that the market for producing cultural encounters

and understanding is too small, in terms both of audiences, and funding.¹⁰⁸ Second, that this market is somehow politicized, thus lacking the commercial potential that you need as a popular artist; the ‘cred’ maybe, or just that the discursive orientation towards creating cultural understanding is a different orientation from what constitutes ‘what is going on’ in the popular music market. So, for this participant, getting beyond ‘difference’ or ‘otherness’ is both a matter of artistic freedom, an identity issue, a question of power relations, and also a financial matter.

Application to overall research and dissertation topics

Again, there are no simple solutions presented to the dilemma arising between the need to recognize difference and the risk of producing and maintaining it. This dilemma is at the heart of the conflicts explored in this chapter. There is no doubt that the policies discussed aim at strengthening mutual respect and creating sound individual and group identities through offering positive images of self. But the production, essentializing, maintenance and institutionalizing of identities are the other side of it. The effect this discourse has on agent actions – as demonstrated in musical performance and representation – reveals how enacting and disseminating discourse also powers it. Also, the production of difference is not limited to the public domain. As Tim Taylor has pointed out in the debate on world music referred to in Chapter 2: the *market* may have exactly the same effect as public funding has here, by creating sales categories that emphasize artists as essentially different, thus entering into colonial discourses of otherness.

Pointing to the inherent tensions in the practice of this research participant thus goes beyond this practice and the considerations one performer has to deal with. It also sheds light on how, when being recontextualized into a Norwegian

¹⁰⁸ The funding that Nasibu received through the Arts Council in 2008 makes him one of the most successful minority applicants for ensemble funds that year. So funds this size are not normally to be expected.

context through performance, immigrant artists deal with pre-existing discourses that construct them in particular ways and offer them pre-defined positions in their new context, with a particular obligation to take part in a national project of establishing and demonstrating successful models of cultural diversity. This brings me back to my research questions and overall dissertation topics. What I am exploring in this dissertation is how some minority musicians – in my case, a handful of immigrant musical performers who define themselves as ‘African’ in one way or another – create their musical practices in Norway. Observing how these processes are fundamentally discursive, the investigation of the case studies in the subsequent chapters continues to explore in what ways the participants encounter marginalizing discourses, and how they build their own strategies to meet, alter or even transcend them.

CHAPTER 5:

TRANSCENDING TRADITION

- The composer and the traditional performer

Introducing Kossa

One of the three key performers observed in the research for this dissertation is the drummer, dancer and singer Kossa Diomande, or Diom de Kossa. He was born in the Ivory Coast in 1958 to a family of musical performers and moved to Norway in 1985 at the age of 27, after already having worked for and performed with the Ivorian *National Ballet* for ten years.

A major event for Kossa during the period of my fieldwork was an invitation to be the festival composer and deliver a commissioned work at *Telemarkfestivalen* in 2008. *Telemarkfestivalen* is an annual summer festival in rural settings in Bø in Telemark county, and one of the major festivals in Norway rooted in folk- or traditional music.¹⁰⁹ In my analysis, this event demonstrates a long-term transition that has gradually taken place in Kossa's musical career, from village musical life in *Toufinga* in the Ivory Coast, via the Ivorian *National Ballet*, to becoming a festival composer in Norway. This chapter explores what it is that characterizes and enables this transition from one context to another. A transition, I will argue, which also represents a move from one type of musical professionalism to another.

¹⁰⁹ www.telemarkfestivalen.no

Relocating to Norway

What was intended to be a short visit to a friend in Oslo after an exhausting European tour with the National Ballet turned for Kossa into a permanent migration to Oslo, and a gradual establishing of new musical practices in a Norwegian context. In an interview, Kossa tells of an unplanned relocation:

We were on a long tour, eight months, and gradually I started getting sad, because the boss was so... he wasn't kind. He was so negative. I just took a leave from them, we were almost finished with the tour. So I said I'm just going on to Norway, on holiday. I had a friend here already, Raymond. (...) He came two years before me.

(...) So we were at the African Culture Centre, Barth [Niava, the leader] knew me a little. So I went there, applied a bit for a job, then. (...) I should be here maybe six months, one year, then go back. Those were my plans (laughter). And started to play there and – poof! (snapping fingers) – until – now I am here twenty-five years. Don't know how I ended up there like that.¹¹⁰

In an interview with Kossa's producer at Rikskonsertene, this story is told from a Norwegian perspective, as he explains that: "Before Kossa, there were a number of African drummers around. But then Kossa came, and showed us how high the bar should be raised."¹¹¹ Since he had led the drum section of the Ivorian National Ballet, Kossa's musical skills made him a popular leader of drum workshops and he was invited into various musical constellations and projects, also starting to build his first group, *Super Djembe Kan*, which resembled the mix of music and dance performances of the National Ballet. These assignments, again, secured residence, as Kossa explains:

I got a work permit very quickly. Got for six months, since I had a job. At that time, if you had a job, you got a visa and could live here. (...) People from the Ivory Coast did not have problems to come and live here. Unless you came in a different way, then. If you came officially, it was not a problem. I got it [residence] for a year at a time. Later, I applied for a passport, and got that too.¹¹²

¹¹⁰ Interview with me, 10 September 2009.

¹¹¹ In Norwegian: 'hvor lista skulle ligge' – a metaphor from high jump implying a demonstration of the level of (high) standards. Interview with me, 15 October 2010.

¹¹² Interview with me, 10 September 2009.

Kossa and Touba Orchestra

Although he had established himself early in Oslo and nationally as a recognized percussionist of West African musical styles, I will demonstrate in this and subsequent chapters how Kossa, over time, has developed several musical practices of quite different expressions and styles.

The performance practice treated in this chapter is found in the regular band that he established with guitarist Olav Torget in 1999, sometimes featured as *Touba Orchestra*, but mostly performing in Kossa's name. At the time of my observations this band comprised Kossa on vocals and percussion – mainly the Ivorian *yadoh* drums, a djembe with five smaller drums of varying pitch attached, Olav Torget on guitars and *konting* – a skin-covered West African lute, Khalid Salih on bass, and Kenneth Ekornes on drum set and a variety of percussion instruments. All of them also did backing vocals.



Figure 2: *Diom de Kossa & Touba Orchestra*. Left to right: Olav, Kossa, Khalid and Kenneth. Press photo by Marte Wenaas, image courtesy of artists.

At this point the band also had one semi-regular guest artist in addition to the four regular members, Kouadio Briscard, an experienced Ivorian guitar player

coming over from Paris to augment the band on some occasions, usually by doubling on guitar, but sometimes also substituting for Olav, who was the regular guitarist and the co-founder of the band.

Selecting data to present

The broader background to this chapter is made up of observations of rehearsals and performances with this group, and particularly with an extended ensemble leading up to the festival performance at Telemarkfestivalen in 2008. Having observed the band mostly in concerts where they performed already-finished musical arrangements, the invitation of Kossa as festival composer also allowed me to observe some of the musical creative processes of Kossa and this group. From the large amount of observations and interviews from before, during and after the festival, I have selected a small piece to present as the core of this chapter: a few minutes of a band rehearsal with the ensemble preparing for the festival, at the point where a new musical idea, formative for the whole performance concept, is introduced.

Introducing the horns

Olav told me about the cow horn idea – for a new tune and this new collaboration – as I arrived at his studio in the morning.¹¹³ The first musicians were rigging and we were waiting for Kossa and the new musicians to arrive – among them a Norwegian goat horn player who was to be integrated into the ensemble for this occasion, the commissioned work at Telemarkfestivalen. Olav explained: “The idea is to make something that is similar to local cow horn music from the Ivory Coast. Something that resembles tradition, but is not quite similar.”

¹¹³ The following paragraph is a reconstruction of dialogue and events, based on my field notes

“The idea is rhythmical”, he further explained. “So, not just floating above the waters?” I asked, hinting at the clichés of world music, and the simplest ways of creating some drone-based ambient fusion between different musical traditions that are supposed to merge. Olav responded: “It’s a bit like Pygmy music, if you’ve heard that.”

I took it he was referring to the musical style of many people playing or singing a single tone antiphonally, as a call-and-response in a larger group of people, creating complex rhythmical and tonal interlocking structures. ‘Pygmy music’¹¹⁴ had been made popular as part of the world music wave in the 1980s, and was further circulating in productions utilizing its sound and structure, such as in some of Zap Mama’s productions, the female quintet so popular in world music festivals in the 1990s.

He also explained that he had yet to hear Kossa’s actual recording of the cow horn music tradition, and only had his description of it, of large numbers of people playing single tones on cow horns antiphonally, at some kind of feast or gathering in the Ivory Coast. “It’s difficult,” he said, “maybe just one note. It needs to be very much in place, rhythmically.”

‘Cow horn’ rehearsal sequence

This dialogue, and the subsequent description, took place at the first full-ensemble rehearsal for the commissioned work for Telemarkfestivalen. This was on Monday, and the concert would be on Friday night. Two of the three new musicians had been arriving on this day, and there was a week of all-day rehearsals ahead. Seven musicians and I were sitting in a circle in a narrow basement studio in Oslo. The recorded dialogue and improvisation presented below is about two hours into the rehearsal, where they had been going through

¹¹⁴ ‘Pygmy’ was earlier commonly applied to ethnic groups of equatorial Africa of short stature, yet ‘Pygmy’ – like ‘Eskimo’ or ‘Bushman’ – is a name the denominated ethnic groups themselves would usually not identify with. So, according to Wikipedia, a more appropriate denomination would be based on ethnicity, such as Aka, Mbuti or Twa. (Wikipedia, 2013b).

some existing tunes where the structure was more set, and where the guest musicians would more or less add on to established musical arrangements by doubling or taking over parts from the band instruments. At this point in the rehearsal, however, they were about to create new material that picked up on the previously-mentioned cow horn idea. Hildegunn, one of the invited musicians, played the Norwegian traditional instrument ‘bukkehorn’, or goat horn. She had made it clear to me – and the musicians – that her background was “not in tradition”. She was a trumpeter who had picked up the goat horn as a new and interesting instrument in order to explore what she could do with it. I was told that another horn player, who would arrive later, had a ‘traditional’, meaning folk music, background. Then there was Irene, an Ivorian singer, dancer and drummer, living in Germany, and the five band members, including Briscard. The language spoken in the room shifted between French, Norwegian and English.¹¹⁵

Olav: (in Norwegian) Here, Hildegunn, it would be very cool if we could have Kossa teach us some of those cow horn figures

Kossa: What?

Olav: Yes, but, like you made... On the first part of Mangahi.

Kossa: Yes.

Olav: You could make those... It would be very cool. Do you remember what you did? I don't know anything besides what you did.

Kossa starts singing a melody, but Olav stops him:

Olav: No, not that one (...) Where I played the flute and you played the synth.

Kossa: Yeah, yeah, yeah, eh...

Olav: Wasn't it also...

¹¹⁵ And, in the breaks, I spoke German with Irene. The recorded dialogue presented below is in Norwegian, unless otherwise stated. All translations are mine.

Kossa starts speaking a rhythm, and then continues to sing a simple four-beat ostinato, in a high-pitched falsetto that breaks, like yodelling, on the upbeat, followed by three plain notes:¹¹⁶



Figure 3: ‘Cow horn’ motif

Kossa: Was it just that?

Olav: Something like that.

Kossa: It’s Awewe

Olav: Yes. Maybe we could come up with something similar here, that the goat horns could be doing?

Kossa: Yes

Olav: And the singers, possibly?

Kossa: (In English) *From the beginning [of the song]*?

Olav: (In Norwegian) Yes, and as part of the groove, kind of.

Kossa sings in a deeper voice, the bass starts playing a groove in the background. Olav claps a pulse, asking “Is it there?” Kossa keeps singing the ostinato, counterpoints with a rhythm on the yadoh, and the other musicians start filling in. Horn and singer copy the ostinato, while one guitar plays an offbeat riff creating a polyrhythmic impression, while Kenneth plays triplets on each beat on the hi-hat.

¹¹⁶ In the recording, the theme may – as the band members note – be perceived as alternately off- or onbeat, depending on the way the other band members improvise around it from the theme’s being introduced to the subsequent elaboration. I perceive Kossa’s initial introduction as offbeat, but for the purpose of notation, though, it is easier to comprehend visually when notated as onbeat, to see the structure of the ‘back and forth’ lead melody, and the responding notes.

After less than a minute they stop playing. Olav plays a note on his guitar while addressing Irene: “*Take this one*”. She briefly rehearses the last part of the ostinato doubling on a minor third, and the groove picks up again.

After another one and a half minutes the music stops again, and Kossa, now taking the initiative, tells Hildegunn that this is “...the way we play sometimes some tunes, and the soloist goes back and forth a little”. With his voice he demonstrates variants of the short two-tone melody that goes before the three plain responding notes, illustrating the solo and chorus, or call and response parts.

Kossa: There is one who (singing:) *iboo* and the rest (singing:) *hoo, hoo, hoo*. This is just an idea, you do as you prefer.

Olav: But Kossa, regardless how you do it, it is very cool if you are in on it, too.

Kossa: Oh yes? Like we did it [now]?

Olav: Yes, that the three of you do it, and then with Eilif on *bukkehorn*, so that there are four who are doing this. And then you can take a little in between, Hildegunn take a little in between.

Kossa: OK

Olav: It will be very nice, that one doesn't quite know

Hildegunn: It's nice with the voice

Kossa: If I miss it with the voices?

Olav: (Addressing all, in English): *To start off, I think it's better with only the horn and the...*

Khalid: *Yeah, we take it easy.*

Olav: *Because they are in the same... register*

Referring to Kossa's concern about 'missing it', i.e. not starting the song in the right pitch, they then discuss how Kossa should find the correct note from the start. They conclude that it should come from Briscard's guitar solo that ends the previous tune.

A very playful sequence follows, where they try out this groove,¹¹⁷ adding sound effects, solos, animal sounds, laughter. The rest of the band keeps a withheld groove in the background, Kenneth also adding marimba. After six and a half minutes of playing around with the groove the guitar takes over with a new figure, leading into the next song. They then play through two already-rehearsed songs, with transitions which are all very exact, on musical cues from either drums or guitar, and with the title of the upcoming song shouted over it.

Eighteen minutes after the music started, after the third song in a row, the playing comes to an end. Then Kossa asks Olav:

Kossa: Did you record?

Olav: Yes

Kossa: Very good

Olav then wants to clarify whether the initial cow horn motif is off- or onbeat. Kenneth, the drummer, suggests that instead of improvising again, they should listen to the recording of the first improvisation, which he found very cool. Also, in his opinion, people did not agree on which was the first beat, which made it more playful and complex.

Building analytical categories

In this part I will present how I work from this observation to the analysis. As discussed in Chapter 3, grounded analysis builds categories by coding qualitative data, which are often observations of everyday practices, such as in this case, a band rehearsal that probably is quite ordinary in many respects. By subsuming recurring or related codes extracted from the observation of this

¹¹⁷ I am using the term ‘groove’ to fit Olav’s expression “as part of the groove, kind of“, which I think reflects how it is commonly used within popular musical practices to reflect the overall periodical feel of melodic and rhythmic elements combined or interlocked, rather than the more narrow analytical definition by Moore (1993) to reflect the rhythmic foundation laid down by bass and drums.

rehearsal sequence and corresponding material,¹¹⁸ I see five main categories emerging. Some are based on in-vivo codes, meaning terms used by the people I observe, and some on ex-vivo codes, meaning I am the one adding labels, based on my interpretation. These categories I will further apply to building the main concept in this chapter, and also to relating to larger threads of discourse.¹¹⁹

Category 1: The sound of horns

There is a single element of *sound* at the core of this observation; the Ivorian cow horn sound and melodic figure that is never heard, but which makes up a sonic reference echoed in Kossa's voice when he imitates the musical motif through his 'yodelling'. This motif is, again, further imitated by goat horn and vocals.

Furthermore, as Kossa recaptures it in a later interview, the very idea of this cow horn music was the starting point for the whole commissioned work.

Tormod: You invited several musicians (...)

Kossa: Yes, because they [Telemarkfestivalen] asked me: 'Would you like to do something that you want to do, [but which] you cannot accomplish in Norway?' (...) I said yes, because there is my background music, too, which I don't manage to use here. Because I myself cannot blow [the horns]. Or, there has to be more people blowing, because it is the way they blow, it is very hard. But we can make [something] near to a copy of it.¹²⁰

I have funnelled my focus from a broad set of data down to this cow (and goat) horn observation, precisely because it is formative for the whole setting; the idea of fusing Norwegian and Ivorian traditional music elements, and the invitation of an Ivorian musician as festival composer to a Norwegian folk music festival.

¹¹⁸ Corresponding material is, first, the initial observations of the regular ensemble that led to selecting this piece of data, and, second, my interviews with Kossa and Olav at a later stage.

¹¹⁹ I here apply 'discourse' in the Foucauldian sense, both in terms of how discourse is understood and methodologically explored; following the threads of discourse 'genealogically' from the musical expression, to the context where it is taking place, and to the larger bodies of discourse within this society (Foucault, 1972, 1999 [1970]).

¹²⁰ Interview with me, 15 October 2010.

Category 2: Tradition

“*Something that resembles tradition, but is not quite similar*” was the starting point of this description, and the way Olav introduced the cow horn idea to me. I see this remark as a possible metaphor for all the music of this ensemble: *resembling* tradition, but being something else. The category ‘tradition’ comes from in-vivo codes, which are recurring throughout the rehearsal observation, for instance in how Hildegunn makes it clear she is not ‘traditional’, how Kossa and Olav introduce the festival to the new band members, and how both of them describe the cow horn idea in terms of tradition, and ways to make something that *resembles* it.

Furthermore, the cow horn idea was what led to the invitation of two Norwegian musicians to the ensemble, playing the traditional instruments *bukkehorn* – goat horn – and *lur* – a long bassoon made from wood or, traditionally, birch bark. At the actual time I was observing I was not sure which was the most significant – the idea of the cow horns corresponding with Norwegian folk instruments, or Telemarkfestivalen, with its folk music background, expecting or ‘welcoming’ such a fusion between Norwegian and Ivorian traditional music and instruments. Kossa’s recapturing of the initial idea above hints at this being an idea from within the band, while Olav, in another interview, held that the festival actively expected such a fusion when commissioning the work. In either case, it illustrates how ‘tradition’ becomes a *discursive* category, a discourse that also carries with it a certain power – in this case to produce certain musical realities and representations.

It is further relevant to point out that this type of corresponding instrumentation is a well-known formula of world music production, based on the very idea – or discourse – that one tradition corresponds with any other, regardless of context. This decontextualization of sounds, or what Steven Feld calls *schizophonia* – the splitting of sounds from their sources – is also a major cause of criticism of world music production (Feld, 1994a, 2004).

There is also reason to problematize the whole notion of ‘tradition’, and this term has been treated critically in the literature. I prefer, however, to look at this idea of ‘schizophonia’ more in terms of observing the dynamics of shifting contexts. Rather than focusing on what ‘tradition’ is (or is not), or to what degree it is acceptable to decontextualize local music beyond the control of its originators, my focus is to observe the processes; to find out what happens to the works of music, sounds, or musicians when they are de-contextualized, and then *re*-contextualized into a new place, stage or musical style.

Category 3: Composition, or building the score

There are different aspects of *composition* in this rehearsal. First, there is the development of new material, which is first improvised based on a musical idea, then set and brought together with the existing material.

While much of the rehearsed material was composed or put together prior to this observation, I read the way the whole rehearsal works as a way of building a ‘score’. In the observed rehearsal, the band runs one or two rounds of loose trials, and then records a more fixed version that goes onto a so-called ‘rehearsal tape’.¹²¹ This ‘score’ is mostly virtual (apart from possible memos and a set list), all oral and memory-based, yet fixing the structure of musical elements such as the number of repeats, solos, and transitions – which could still be altered during the run-through. But since it is also recorded, it creates a score both in memory and on audio – and screen. A comment by Olav to the ensemble confirms this idea, when he tells them: “We’ll just record it [the parts], and then cut it the way it is supposed to be”. Kossa’s question “Did you record?” also demonstrates this process from improvisation to – rather quickly – setting down the score.

¹²¹ There was a software-based recording system in the adjacent control room. “Have you listened to the tape?” Olav asked one of the musicians, referring to recordings distributed to prepare for rehearsals.

The selection of composition as a category also reflects the fact that Kossa is invited as the festival *composer*. So, the idea of composition is central both in the observation, and in the context of the performance. *Composition* also corresponds with a Norwegian, or Western, sense of musical professionalism (see next category), and also a Western approach – ontologically – to music as an ‘object’ that can be transformed. This is found in the compositional procedure of the ensemble of taking a song, or a beat, or some other musical element that Kossa provides, and turning it into their own music, built by sequences of melodies and grooves that are chained together through very precise transitions.

Still, in the rehearsal observed above Kossa does not really stand out as *composer*, apart from being invited as one. The interviews add to the understanding of this role by providing a clearer picture of how his actual mode of working in this ensemble has moved from providing to also *producing* musical material.

Tormod: How do you usually work in Touba – how do you get from an idea to a CD or a concert?

Kossa: Actually, I make a CD first, at my place. I make how I want to sing, how I will blablabla, percussion, or dodo, sound, boucarabou, everything. I [have] done everything *clean* at my place, and then I invite them [the band] to listen. And then we take some tunes that we will work on.

Tormod: What kind of tunes are these in the first place? Things you have composed, or learned, or...

Kossa: I have composed.

Tormod: But it's not things you [already] have, for instance, traditional material from your village, or...

Kossa: Yes, since there is no guitar in [what] I work on first. Because it... I like traditional best. And so my composition ideas are that they must [be] based from there.

Tormod: They should be based on something you know from there?

Kossa: Yes, since I make something new, a test, or the way I play is not how they do. (...) But when they [people from the village] listen to it, they find that: ‘Ah, that comes from our place!’ But that’s not exactly what they do [how they play] there. Therefore I will not take exactly what they do there and make a record. I don’t like that. It is similar, when you listen to it. (...) But it is not the way they play. I play in some other way. But the sound goes in the same direction.

(...)

Tormod: What about the lyrics?

Kossa: Lyrics, ahhh, mostly just me doing that. Because I make things up and so build lyrics.

Tormod: So, when you are invited as festival composer – do you think of yourself as a composer?

Kossa: Yes... I would say so. Nobody has written it before. Then I am composer.¹²²

The way both Kossa and Olav describe the regular compositional process in this ensemble is that Kossa will record ideas for musical compositions in a multitrack editor in his home studio, and then present these ideas for the rest of the ensemble to elaborate on. Also, contained in the interview above – arising from the misunderstanding between discussing musical material and *style* – is a demonstration of how Kossa distinguishes between tradition, which represents both a material starting point and a stylistic preference, and the processing of this musical material to become something else. This, I will argue, is a process representing *composition*.

Category 4: Types of professionalism

The term ‘professionalism’ reflects many facets of the observed material. A first impression of striking professionalism is the particular musician’s roles and abilities found, and possibly cultivated, in this ensemble. These illustrate what it takes to be a professional on *this* music scene, or on certain Norwegian popular music scenes. A question, then, is how this type of professionalism corresponds with Kossa’s musical background. I will argue that the professionalism observed

¹²² Interview with me, October 2010.

here is the same found among Norwegian studio or ‘session’ musicians and demanded in this market, while Kossa’s background implies a different type, or types, of professionalism. The ‘studio’ type of professionalism can be broken down to various features found in this rehearsal and practice. Features such as musical abilities and language, such as the way harmonics, tonality and rhythm are referred to in a formalized way in the rehearsal. This type of ‘studio’ professionalism as musical *versatility* is found extensively in their playing: polyrhythmics, complex figures, tightness, rehearsed transitions. Also, it is found in their ability to play various styles, the speed at which they acquire new material, their individual initiatives while playing together, and the development of new ideas.

A sense of this professionalism is also found in rehearsal techniques – such as the rehearsal strategy that went ‘backwards’ – from the known in the end, to the unknown and improvised part in the start, allowing a move from what they don’t know to what they do know, then adding the extra benefit of getting the structure in place. Other signs of this professionalism is found in a later observation of interaction with stage technicians at the festival – the smoothest soundcheck I have ever observed, where by continual little jokes the band managed to keep the attention of the technician at the back of the hall at all times. This type of professionalism is also found in negotiations of payment at other venues, and in the size of payments Kossa will accept (of regular fees, not the unofficial minimum wage of 1,500 NoK to play a gig at a random venue), or the fact that a major festival act starts rehearsing five days ahead of the premiere.¹²³ In this practice, I argue, all of this is very informed by the ways Norwegian formally-trained musicians work towards popular music businesses and scenes. Apparently, this ‘Norwegian’ or ‘studio’ type of professionalism differs from the types of professionalism found in ‘tradition’ – or village musical practices – and the undoubtedly professional work at the National Ballet. These professionalisms will be presented further below, yet the observation here implies that, in Kossa’s case, the professional abilities revealed in this

¹²³ Although the regular band had been playing large amounts of this material earlier.

observation have all been absorbed in his practice in a Norwegian context, such as through this ensemble.

Category 5: Band community

Although the band performs under Kossa's name and he is fronting it on stage, I experience it as a collective where all take part in shaping ideas. Still, Olav is referred to by another band member as 'the man in the band', reflecting his vital function as a provider of musical ideas and musical leadership, which is very clear in the presented rehearsal.¹²⁴ He is also the producer of their records. At a point in the rehearsal where a decision was not clear, Kenneth joked: "the board must have a meeting to resolve this", meaning that Olav and Kossa should talk and make a decision. The divisions of roles between the two that stands out from this observation is Kossa as the provider of musical source material – or musical starting points to be processed and added to – and Olav as the main provider of ideas and structure, yet careful to hand the initiative over to Kossa where he can. Kossa elaborates on this model in an interview, explaining that the normal procedure when creating new material is that he records a number of ideas – instrumental or vocal – and then invites the band to listen and start working on these fragments.

Olav has described Kossa's learning process in their collaboration as a long journey of 'listening in' and understanding his own music in new terms, such as tonality. One detail from the rehearsal sequence above is how Kossa should find the pitch for his sung 'cow horn' ostinato from a preceding guitar solo. Although sounding simple (though anyone who has started a song *a capella* in the middle of a performance knows it is not), it is a very studied way of approaching musical performance. For Kossa, this is also an acquired competence needed in this particular practice. Kossa affirms that particularly the vocal part is a field

¹²⁴ When I played this example back to Olav, he wanted to point out that he would normally try not to be as dominant as he felt he was being here, and that the division of tasks between him and Kossa were usually not as separate as they might seem here.

where he has drawn on the support of the members of this and also former ensembles in Norway:

Kossa: They have supported me a lot on that part. ‘Kossa, you have a nice voice, just try to sing, just try to sing.’ Because before, I don’t sing. (...) To stand in front or make long records with vocals, I hadn’t thought of that. I have received a lot of support, particularly from Olav. Towards the end there, he was with [me] a lot and (clapping sound) ‘Kossa, you can, you can, just...’ So I started trusting myself. (...) Nobody knows I sing here in Norway. Everyone knows I play drum and dance. That’s what it was like from the start. Then suddenly [it] changes.¹²⁵

The way I analyze these observations points towards seeing not just the vocal, but the overall development of this professionalism – including being staged as invited composer at a festival – as a role that Kossa has acquired, principally through this collective. It has also been added to in other ensembles preceding this collaboration,¹²⁶ but, according to Kossa’s own statements, has particularly been developed through his collaboration with Olav. So this band has been formative in his journey from a traditional start and to playing with a variety of musicians in Norway in a genre that contains more of a composed approach to music making than a traditional approach.

Concept: From tradition to composition

The categories that I have derived after repeated scrutiny of data are thus *tradition*, *composition*, *types of professionalism* and *band community*, and the *sound of horns*, which becomes the ‘sonic marker’ (Askerøi, 2013) which links different musical traditions, and which is also transformed from being ‘traditional’ to becoming ‘composed’ material. The concept I arrive at is this specific movement: from tradition to composition. These two seem to represent extremes, or positions far apart, yet the music is transformed from the one to the other. Even more, this also regards Kossa as an artist who moves from being a

¹²⁵ Interview with me, 15 October 2010.

¹²⁶ Most notably the group *Skua* ‘*Mbalax*’, later *Cissokho system*, with Harald Skullerud, Solo and Alliou Cissokho, Tonny Kluffen and, gradually, Olav Torget.

traditional performer to being invited as composer to a festival. This reflects a long journey, both in space, time and professional development. It also implies a double process, both of de-contextualization, and of re-contextualization into a different place and musical professionalism. I thus read the concept of moving from tradition to composition as being enabled by the other categories; that Kossa's re-contextualization into a new type of professionalism as composer and session musician is developed and maintained *through* this band community.

The village and the National Ballet

Before elaborating further on this concept, I will go back a few steps to present more of Kossa's narrative of the development of his musical profession, from village musical life to the band practice treated in this chapter.

Kossa: My background actually it comes from a small place, where we have exactly the same rhythm throughout the whole area.

T: What's its name?

Kossa: It's the Mauka people. I come from an ethnic group called Mauka. (...) Everyone who speaks Mau, they play same rhythm, same drum, same song. (...) But, my professional background is from the National Ballet. The Ivory Coast has several ethnic groups, different languages. More than sixty, at least. (...) And then, National Ballet, we had to learn from everywhere. (...) So I have learned to play almost... maybe not all, but at least half.

Tormod: Tell me about the National Ballet

Kossa: (...) First, you show what you can, after that you teach the others. And you also learn from the others. Culture from them, song from them, rhythm from them. That was like, the job, we start eight o'clock in the morning, until twelve. Pause. At two we start, until six. From Monday to Friday. Sometimes, if we are going on tour, it is like that every day, that means Monday to Monday without a break.

Responding to my inquiry about how the participants were recruited, he tells a story of the transition from village musical practice to the National Ballet in the capital:

Kossa: The boss [of the National Ballet], they went around the whole country, tour for a month. That means they come to a village, that village they showed the dance that they have, they record sound and video. (...) Then they come to the capital and then start to select. 'OK, we would like to have four from there, from that dance, or three here, two there'. (...)

But at that time I was not in the village, I was in the capital. They were there [in my village], they wanted something with the mask as well. Since my father had the mask.

Tormod: What does that mean? That he made it, or danced it?

Kossa: No (laughter). When you own, my father owns a mask in our village. The mask cannot travel alone, you need a drummer, and must have those who dance the mask, too. Then they took three, my older brothers, [they] took three from there. Delivered – two dance the mask, and then one is drummer.

So [my brother who] was the first child of our father, was drummer. I learned drums from him, he was my teacher. From the beginning, when I was little, I started like that. And then they came there [to the National Ballet]. When I was back [in the village], my father said that (...) my big brother, he cannot stay there, because he was married. He must be in the village. But since I was young, and I can play the drums, I can go instead of him. (...) He comes back, and then I took his place. (...) I had to learn everything. At the same time I was dancer, and drumming. I did both. Until I got knee problems, then I stopped dancing.

Tormod: So, you are from a family of musicians?

Kossa: Yes, you can say that, because my father was a very good dancer. (...). But it isn't kind of 'professional professional', because they only danced in the village there. When there is a party, then they show... he was good at dancing with that mask.

Tormod: It was a big mask?

Kossa: It is very tall, like walking on... (Miming stilt walking)

Tormod: Stilts?

Kossa: Yes. So that one, that was what we have. That mask. And some others, which walk normally on the floor. (...)

Tormod: Was this [being a musician] something you wanted to do, or a thing that the family had an obligation to?

Kossa: No, I liked dance very much myself. I had a little group from there, in the village, when I was young. We had a kind of kid's group. (...) When I was young, I was into everything, dance, drum, song, but completely traditional. Yes. So I liked it very much myself. (...) So these are things I think are *naturelle*, it's not like this because I went to school for it. But it is *naturelle*, very *naturelle*.¹²⁷

The narrative above demonstrates how Kossa did not go directly from traditional performance to the practices that he has established in Norway. The de- and recontextualizing of both him and traditional musical expressions were processes already beginning in the Ivory Coast. 'Traditional' here takes on the meaning of *contextual*, in the sense that particular expressions and practices have a specific function in a local community. This function is altered when collected by and moved to the National Ballet, which Kossa, in the same interview, describes as having the responsibility to "...represent your country, display culture, and attract tourists." This practice decontextualized local cultural expressions to form a national ensemble that transformed and recontextualized the national diversity of cultures into what could be displayed as *national* culture. So, already at this point 'tradition' did become a supplier of material to be reframed and recontextualized, and musical practice something that was built or constructed, rather than just being something lived or taken for granted. Or 'naturelle', as Kossa expresses it.

Kossa's reflections above demonstrate how he regards his background in tradition as 'natural', and the National Ballet as a site of learning. In the interview, he first describes this national ensemble as his 'professional background', yet later goes on to say that he regards it as his 'university', before becoming 'professional' in Norway. While Kossa distinguishes between his current professionalism, the formal training in the National Ballet, and his traditional start – which was not being 'professional professional' – I will maintain this distinction by referring to certain *types* of professionalism.

¹²⁷ All from interview with me, 10 September 2009.

Kossa's acquired role

To get back to the concept derived through this chapter: developing my analysis based on the presented observations and categories, I have examined the process that Kossa Diomande has been going through in his regular ensemble, where he now acts in a role that he has achieved in Norway. That is the role of the (so-called) 'artist'; the stage and studio musician, the composer. The 'composer' is a *material* artist in the sense that musical material from his country of origin – such as traditional songs or musical fragments like the cow horn motif – becomes raw material for musical treatment, a cut-and-paste compositional technique. This is a well-known Western (modernist or even postmodern) approach to music as an object of artistic processing or collage. This approach is coupled with the 'studio' or 'session' musician's professionalism, with an emphasis on versatility, production and ability to pick up and transform musical impulses, and to rehearse and discuss these in formal ways.

When talking about tradition, or 'traditional' types of professionalism, we should not underestimate the element of composition and individual achievements *within* tradition. There has been a tendency even in ethnomusicology and other 'cultural' research to overlook this; overstating the 'collective' creation within tradition, not even looking for individual composers or performers who feed into this tradition through their individual contributions. Not even asking: "Do you know who made this song, or used to sing it, or added this text?"

So, there has to be an element of composition within tradition, 'tradition' is too often perceived as impersonal and essential. By 'impersonal' I refer to the assumption that tradition is without identifiable individuals creating, shaping and developing it. Hence Steven Feld's critique of the use of 'traditional' elements in world music production, where originators actually could be found, but were not looked for (Feld, 2004). By 'essential' I mean the idea that 'tradition' – like the more general term 'culture' – is seen as something unchanging and given. My use of the term 'tradition' to discuss Kossa's

development when moving from tradition to something else is, first, to describe the process of decontextualizing musical elements. This decontextualization had already started in his work in the Ivorian National Ballet, where traditions from all over the Ivory Coast were staged as part of creating a national identity, and showcasing this nationally and abroad. But with his band in Norway he takes one step further by using the musical material in a different way, that is, as building bricks in a musical collage, a material treatment of sound that corresponds with a more Western ontology of music as created object, and thus with the idea of composition. Second, it is worth noting that the type of professionalism found within ‘tradition’, or in the context of village life, does contain both training, particular skills, and institutions – although family-based. This type of professionalism is utilized, yet transformed, in Kossa’s development of new types of professionalism. First in the National Ballet, then in this and other ensembles in Norway.

Seeing the analytical categories in connection, what emerges through the concept ‘from tradition to composition’, is how Kossa has learned (and is learning) to work with traditional material in a non-traditional way, which implies a redefinition of the music and of his role as an artist. The inculturation and reciprocal learning taking place in the band community is particularly enabling this process.¹²⁸ Where Kossa as a migrant is decontextualized, he is, through this collective, *recontextualized* into a practice in Norway, which allows him to develop new performance roles and stage representations.

¹²⁸ In an interview, Olav expresses that “Africa was my master’s degree.” He thus indicates that *he* has also gone through a long learning process, from journeys in West Africa where he learned to play the *koting*, to his long-lasting collaboration with Kossa. Although this has not been a major focus of this chapter, it is worth noting the reciprocity or exchange of competence-building taking place in the ensemble. Interview with me, 14 October 2010.

Critical perspectives

There are some critical perspectives that I would like to address in this chapter concerning the representation and production of African music, or the production of images representing ‘Africa’ in musical production. These perspectives emerge from observing the discrepancy between how Kossa understands his position as an invited festival composer, and how it is presented in a TV documentary from the festival by NRK, the Norwegian Broadcasting Corporation, where the performance of the commissioned work was one part. From the long concert recording, the TV production had selected an uncharacteristic section in the middle of the performance; here the whole ensemble is seen playing drums and percussion instruments, while Irene, who sings and plays on all other songs, fronts the stage as a vivid dancer.



Figure 4: Kossa at Telemarkfestivalen. Screenshot from NRK1’s broadcast “Telemarkfestivalen i Bø”, 30 August 2008

In the interview I did with Kossa a year later, he still revealed deep disappointment with the way he was depicted in this documentary, where he came across very strongly as a ‘traditional performer’, or as one operating

within a strict sense of tradition, both through interview excerpts and performance clips:

Kossa: I had interview myself with NRK before the concert. But that interview, what I talked about (...) traditional music from Africa, to also traditional music from Norway, how they combination together. That's not what they showed, I didn't see anything. They only showed dance. Because Africans, they only dance, and drums, finished. But there were several musicians from Norway, who play world music, or traditional music, who were part of that project. That combination with my music, that combination together, nobody has seen that on TV. They only show that dance, where that lady just dances, finished. It wasn't dance course we have ordered for Telemarkfestivalen, it was to show the music. That *bukkehorn* from my home country and *bukkehorn* from Norway, that was the point. I saw nothing. (...)

I am very dissatisfied with this. It hurts me, really, that's for sure. (...) If I were to decide, it should not come on TV. Because it was not what we did. (...) There drum, and she dances, and finished. But we had (emphasizing) *one and a half hours* with guitar and drumkit and song and everything there, goat horn, everything was there. But [they] don't show this. (...) Quick dance, showing hands on the drum and the foot of her dancing, done with that. Ahhh... I was very upset.¹²⁹

This TV production illustrates the strong, almost dominant discourse of 'tradition' in representations – and even studies – of African music. This tendency has been pointed out by a number of writers, such as Agawu (2003) and Baaz and Palmberg (2001). Kossa is very aware of this discourse when referring the stereotypical image that “Africans, they only dance, and drums, finished”, which also corresponds with the statements of Nasibu Mwanukuzi in Chapter 4, where he experienced this imagery as an obstacle to the musical productions that he would prefer to undertake. Interesting to note is that Kossa has nothing against the image of tradition, or even against being staged as a traditional performer. This is demonstrated in the practice described in the next chapter, where he dresses up in colourful garments and plays hand drums for school children to convey 'African culture'. But while Kossa is 'traditional' within Rikskonsertene's school programme, he explicitly defines himself beyond that category as a composer at the festival. A distinction, which the TV production either did not see, or did not look for.

¹²⁹ Interview with me, 10 September 2009.

In terms of TV production it could be argued that a dance session is more visual than people just playing their instruments. But this image confirming ‘tradition’, where one performer dances and the remaining seven play percussion, is a clear exception within this performance. By selecting an excerpt from the concert that places Kossa’s Norwegian band practice as ‘traditional’ (or within ‘African drumming and dance’), the production also disregards – or at least overlooks – the whole process Kossa has been through in this ensemble to become ‘professional’ in the Norwegian popular music sense, thus making the complexity of his music and of his developed artistic professionalism invisible.

Distance as valuing factor

This is not to say that Kossa’s acquired professionalism – in the way I use the term to describe the Norwegian ‘session’ musician’s competence – should be read as more valuable than the professionalism of traditional performance. My reading of the TV production is more in the light of a postcolonial discourse that claims that the colonial, or orientalist gaze requires distance to value the observed part, to retain interest in ‘the Other’ (Said, 1978). When the ‘Other’ gets too close or becomes too much like ‘Us’, this particular view loses interest. Consequently, in order to keep up the positive and romanticized interest of an orientalist gaze, the spectator needs to keep the Other at a distance. The greater the distance, the more interesting it gets. This may result in a pushing away, which is what I read out of this TV production: increasing the distance, pushing Kossa deeper into ‘tradition’, or into his *origin*, in order to make the performance more interesting. Not recognizing – in both senses of the word ‘recognize’ – the aspects of the performance that are closer to a Norwegian concept of professionalism and quality. This want of recognizing *sameness* also corresponds with the multiculturalist dilemmas raised in Chapter 4, where the will to ‘recognize difference’ risks entering colonial discourse of essential difference, or otherness.

‘Tradition’ as provider of authenticity

If we apply Steven Feld’s (2012) critical approach of how the ‘traditional’ lends authenticity to the cultural encounters of world music, the TV production may further be seen as a continuation of a long history of seeing ‘cultural encounters’ in terms of the modern locals (i.e. Norwegians) reaching out to the traditional others – the local artists providing modernity, and the others providing ‘tradition’ as a sign of authenticity and immediacy, presumably to the benefit of both parties. Still, here there is also the discourse of tradition meeting tradition, as something universal and context-less. This discourse unites the ‘folk’ and the ‘world’ in their pre-modernity, yet with something remaining ‘Us’ and something else being ‘Other’. ‘Tradition’ thus constructs Norwegian-ness and African-ness in different ways.

It is rather obvious why these discourses get muddled up at a folk music festival, where ‘tradition’ is framing the whole idea of the event, and where even this particular performance does something that “resembles tradition, but is not quite similar”. Through the application of recognizably ‘traditional’ musical elements as sonic and visual markers, and also by performing in this context where ‘tradition’ is a defining concept, Kossa’s ensemble somehow places itself in a larger world music practice and discourse, where the treatment of *tradition* and *origin* are major characteristics. By doing so they are ‘out there’ where these discourses may critically return to produce unforeseen representations and conceptualizations of the artists. Observing this process also links this research project to a critical discourse on the cultural global spaces for producing difference, which we find treated in the world music literature presented in Chapter 2.¹³⁰

There are several sonic markers in this production tying in to discourses of tradition. One is the previously-mentioned cow horn motif. In Steven Feld’s

¹³⁰ A methodological footnote: In reference to Chapter 3, this is where linking grounded theory to Foucault’s discourse term is useful, as observed categories do branch out far beyond their observational contexts.

article ‘Pygmy pop’ (1996), he points out how the sound of pentatonic yodelling and that of interlocking single tones have been proliferating in the music market since the 1960s through the firm or loose references to so-called ‘Pygmy music’. Feld also states that the sound of animal horns is one of the most common markers of ‘difference’ in musical productions. Although this may at first sight seem to apply to the music and the statement of “...a bit like pygmy music”, it is quite clear that Kossa’s source material – the cow horn motif – is his own, or, more precisely, a practice that he recorded on one of his many trips to the Ivory Coast, where he travels regularly to see his family while also reconnecting with traditions and picking up ideas for further musical compositions. So the source for this material is not ‘Pygmy music’ as such, although it resembles the markers that Feld refers to.¹³¹ What this resemblance may do for this analysis, is to provide an entry point for a discussion of Feld’s argument that production of difference in the world music market is enabled by using ‘tradition’ as a provider of authenticity (Feld, 1996, 2012). Turned around, I will argue that this is not only a matter of production, but also of reading. Hence another way to understand the TV production is that it is meant to strengthen the ‘authentic’ *reading* of the performance for the audience. When it comes to Feld’s concerns for the circulation of sonic markers through the production process, the way the members of this ensemble see this is that they are – just like in any other popular music practice or like any singer-songwriter artist – composing music based on the material that they have a connection with.¹³² Although this is typical of the discrepancy between the position of the researcher observing the larger structures of discourse and insiders’ positions of understanding their own practice from within, it is, for the overall questions in this dissertation, worth exploring whether and how such practices may not only produce otherness, but

¹³¹ And, as Olav commented to me as a critical feedback to my manuscript draft: “I only used this term [‘Pygmy music’] to explain to *you* what the music might sound like.” So I will not build too much of my argument on the use of the expression itself, which was directed towards the researcher’s understanding.

¹³² Source: Dialogue over my analysis with Olav, June 2013.

also some kind of *sameness*. This is a question that gradually emerges from the observations throughout this dissertation.

Moving between representations

What offers a point for further analysis is how Kossa himself seeks recognition both as the traditional performer in the school productions and – as at this festival – as a composer and ‘professional’ musician, in the Norwegian popular music sense. His reactions to the documentary reveal that he distinguishes clearly between the two roles. He is, in postcolonial lingo, both ‘Same’ and ‘Other’, moving in and out of different representations and musical approaches.



Figure 5: Kossa on stage with Touba orchestra. Video still, my recording, Ski kulturhus April 2008



Figure 6: Kossa playing djembe for school children in *Afrisah*. Photo courtesy of Eid ungdomsskule, 2009



Figure 7: Video still of *Sofialako* from CD ‘Café crème’, aimed at an Ivory Coast audience. Image courtesy of Tony Blesson and artist.

Kossa’s active movement between different representations will be further treated in subsequent chapters. Through my observations, I have found three different representations that Kossa takes on as a performer.¹³³ First, there is the practice that has been treated in this chapter, situated in his long-time regular band in Norway. Another is found in his many performances for school children, where he embodies a traditional image of an African musician, through djembe

¹³³ These are limited to my observations. I have, for instance, not observed him in the dance group that he has instructed and led for many years in Oslo, nor when he backs other artists, such as the festival acts with Mory Kanté in Norway and some other countries.

drumming, dance and storytelling. This practice will be treated in Chapter 6. A third representation, hardly known to Norwegian audiences, is found in his productions aimed at the music market in the Ivory Coast, where he creates a synth-based sound environment and includes hip hop imagery in a synth-brass and drum machine soukous style. This representation I will touch upon in Chapter 8, when discussing images of Africans in the West directed towards Africa. The object of exploration that these practices offer the subsequent chapters is thus to observe what Kossa seeks to – or does – achieve through these different representations.

CHAPTER 6:

RECONSTRUCTING AFRICA

- The performance of *Afrisah*

Introduction

In this chapter I will analyze school performances of *Afrisah* with Kossa Diomande and Raymond Sereba. They were born in different parts of the Ivory Coast, where they both worked some years for the *National Ballet*, and have both lived in Norway since the mid 1980s, pursuing artistic careers in music and dance. This production of *Afrisah* has been offered to schools throughout Norway as part of Rikskonsertene's school concert programme, and has been one of the school performances most constantly in demand, having toured regularly since 2001, and was still being performed at the end of my data-gathering period in 2010.

Rikskonsertene's multicultural programmes

Rikskonsertene – or *Concerts Norway*¹³⁴ – state that they have presented music 'from many cultures' since they were established in 1968 (Rikskonsertene, 2006). Particularly relevant to this chapter are their multicultural music productions since the late 1980s and early 1990s, when they launched various projects addressing cultural diversity, such as *Norsk Flerkulturelt Musikkenter* (Norwegian multicultural music centre) and *Etnisk musikkafe* (Ethnic music café) in 1992, with an Oslo-based diversity concert series at Cosmopolite. The festival *Verden i Norden* (The World in the Nordic Countries), too, starting off

¹³⁴ Formerly known in English as The Norwegian National Concert Institute

in 1994, later becoming *Oslo World Music Festival*, and Rikskonsertene's agreements with Norad – the Norwegian organization for development collaboration – and the Norwegian Foreign ministry, are all initiatives demonstrating an organization broadly engaged in musical projects nationally and abroad, both promoting its models of work abroad and inviting selected artists for touring and for festivals in Norway. In a 2006 publication summing up their multicultural work, Rikskonsertene state that 20% of their productions are now in world music.¹³⁵

One project of particular relevance to this chapter was *Klangrikt Fellesskap*¹³⁶ from 1989-1992, musicalizing the anti-racist slogan of the time: “Ja til et fargerikt fellesskap” – “[say] *Yes to a colourful community*”. The idea of the project, or at least the way it was presented and argued at the time, was to work against racism from an early age through promoting music from immigrant cultures in schools and letting children engage in “musical encounters” with musicians from Asia, Africa and Latin America.¹³⁷ This project has gradually developed into today's school performance practice, where performances by non-Western performers are not being singled out as a particular multicultural project, but are integrated in Rikskonsertene's overall national school concert programme.

¹³⁵ The main source for this overview is the above-mentioned Rikskonsertene publication (2006), supplemented by Ellingsen (2008), who further discusses ‘Etnisk musikkafe’ and other public initiatives as part of Norwegian ‘multicultural’ state policies.

¹³⁶ Literally ‘sound-rich community’, but plays on the term ‘colourful’.

¹³⁷ Researchers also followed the project, and reported a lower development of racist attitudes over time for pupils who experienced these encounters, compared with those who didn't. Evaluation research report (Skylstad 1990).

Context, expectation

The following performance description is based on my field notes, supported by video recordings.¹³⁸

I arrived at the school and entered a glass-walled foyer where a large group of children were waiting in a line, leading to what I assumed was the concert venue.¹³⁹ A few pupils were straying through the hall, or sitting down in the couches that lined the walls. Typical for rural-area schools, the student body was almost exclusively made up of children of Norwegian ethnicity.

Suddenly pupils poured out noisily from the doors at the end of the hallway, greeting the newcomers as the two groups passed. They seemed excited, “Fun!” they told the new pupils; the word was swirling in the air. “Now you’ll dance”, others said. I estimated the pupils were in about 4th and 5th class.

I joined the back of the queue as the group started entering the gym ahead. The room was a traditional school gymnastics hall, with wall bars and an elevated stage at the narrow end. Rows of chairs, benches and gym mats ran in arcs across the room, higher chairs at the back and lower mats at the front, creating a certain sense of a tiered amphitheatre. The rows were not facing the stage but the long side wall, where a group of six large African drums were evenly distributed in a line, framed, further back, by two piles of tin cans.

Teachers hushed pupils who were starting to get loud, and singled out individuals, seating themselves next to pupils who they seemed to think were potential sources of noise or disorder. After all were seated, a senior teacher called out from behind the rows that she was holding a pin, and wanted to know

¹³⁸ The overall analysis is based on a number of observed performances in 2008, particularly my field notes from the first, and supported by three different video versions, the oldest from 2004. Since these differ a bit, the ‘core’ performance being analyzed here is the one observed in February 2008, and some of its adjustments in the autumn of 2008 for a secondary school audience.

¹³⁹ According to the school tour papers there should be 440 pupils divided into 3 concerts this day, meaning this group could be close to 150.

if they could hear it when she dropped it on the floor. She pretended to do so. “Could you hear it?” “No!” “But that’s how silent it has to be!” She left through the back door, presumably telling the performers things were ready, and then stole demonstratively back to her seat. It was quite silent for what seemed like a long time, about a minute or so, without any musicians showing up. “Can I speak very low?” a pupil asked the teacher next to me. “No”. When the senior teacher got up again to fetch the musicians, they arrived through the other back door, on the right.

The two performers approached the front slowly, eyes partly closed, singing softly while accompanying themselves rhythmically with a small shaker and sticks. They were wearing colourful shirts and trousers, each set made from patterned African cotton fabric.

Establishing the space for performance

To start coding elements for analysis, what stands out in the single observation above is the *context*. First, there is the transformation of the everyday school situation into something else, the gym that now becomes a concert venue, and the visiting performers who, through simple means, create an out-of-the-ordinary space within the ordinary space of a gymnastics hall. The way the pupils, teachers and performers all bring their expectations of something extraordinary into this space, works very clearly to frame the whole experience. The elevated stage is abandoned, signalling an approach to performance different from the established conventions. Second, the element of the “visiting Other”, the African, is hinted at by the display of the drums, and confirmed by the entrance of the performers, through their costumes and appearance.

Summing up, the context is an *extraquotidian*, or out-of-the-ordinary, space full of expectations, with a performance that is set to introduce African performers to Norwegian school children. These elements will be further discussed through the analysis of the performance.

Setting the rules of performance

As the performers approach the stage area, singing softly, the audience seems attuned to the very soft and quiet song, their gaze following the performers in silence until they end up directly in front of the first row. Still singing, the performers walk back and forth in front of the audience, passing each other, before they line up in the middle, dancing sideways to the beat. During this walkabout Kossa sometimes breaks out of the introvert song, making little feints at the children in the first row, who then break into giggling and laughter. This small breakout occurs two or three times, to different small groups of children, with sudden voice breaks followed by him bending towards single pupils in an ‘attack’, then drawing himself back into the introvert song. From this point on, the children respond every time he inserts voice breaks and ‘strange’ sounds into the song, which he does a number of times.

They end the song standing next to each other facing the audience, then make a classical bow to the applause, and go directly to sit behind the row of drums. They go into an energetic drumming sequence, each musician playing the three hand drums closest to himself – a djembe and two side drums, thus playing all six drums – in a vivid duet, trying to ‘outdo’ each other with rhythmic variations and snappy moves to the two secondary drums.

Greetings and dialogue: Call and response

As the introductory drumming duet comes to an end, the performers enter a theatrical transition; Raymond gets up, goes to shake the hand of Kossa, who in return claps his chest as they greet each other in an Ivorian language.¹⁴⁰ They continue exchanging verbal greetings coupled with gestures, pointing to the sky,

¹⁴⁰ Coming from different ethnic groups, the language they usually speak to one another is French. What they speak here is *Joulá*, or a Manding language referred to by Kossa as a ‘street language’, as it is often used as the *lingua franca* of the marketplace. The main effect, in my reading, is of speaking a language unknown to the audience.

clapping their chests, pointing to their mouths, confirming each other's statements through repeated sound and gesture, as if saying something like: "It's a good day", "indeed", or "I hope to get something to eat", "oh, so do I", "I hope it will rain soon", or, generally, just portraying an enthusiastic dialogue that is open to any association with what people may say when meeting in the street.



Figure 8: Video still from performance of *Afrisah*, October 2008. Rikskonsertene's footage by Øyvind Lyslo. Courtesy of Rikskonsertene.

Then Raymond turns to the audience, asking them similar questions. He keeps talking, as if they understand every word he is saying, asking them for confirmation, hands on his hips, with a big smile; "A-ha?" Still speaking in an Ivorian language, he goes on to demonstrate and explain what he now wants them to do. Through his body language and insistent addressing of the audience, what is conveyed is something like: "[When I say] *nyófe*, [you respond with a

clap. But when I say] *assám* [that guy will respond on the drum]. *A-ha?*¹⁴¹ He smiles and nods his head eagerly, turning to every part of the audience for confirmation. Yet every time that he asks, it is Kossa, from behind the drums, who responds confirmingly on behalf of the audience, as if this is something everybody is bound to understand. Raymond shouts: “*Nyófe!*” and claps, but the audience hardly responds. He sighs loudly in disappointment, shoulders drooping, shaking his head, then complaining to Kossa, who shakes his head and utters a sound, confirming this is no good. Raymond, still in an Ivorian language, to the audience: [“Let’s try again, keep your hands up like this...”] “*Nyófe!*” This time the audience is somewhat more responsive, and he turns to Kossa giving a “not too bad” hand sign and sound. Again, “*Nyófe!*” the third time the audience all clap their hands somewhat on the same beat, and Raymond shows he is very pleased, thumbs up; “E-hee!” And then, in *Norwegian*, for the first time, at the top of his voice: “*Det var bra!*” (“That was good!”).

He then turns, as if to walk back to Kossa, then stops, looking back surprised at the audience, as if to say: “What did I just say?” Some start laughing, and he looks right at them, then imitating thin childish giggling, his whole body shaking; “Tee-hee-hee”. More audience laughter. Raymond imitates again, in a deeper voice: “Ha ha ha”. The third time he uses a belly laugh, and the children are all cracking up laughing.

He returns to the *nyófe* / *assám* calls and responses, this time allowing the audience to enter into a regular beat while Kossa is playing, and Raymond does a series of rhythmic dance routines to the rhythm, each ending in a sideways posture as the drum sequence comes to an end. From this posture another routine and new rhythm evolves, still with the audience clapping the pulse. He ends the whole number by jumping out towards the audience, ending in a pose with his hand up in front of a child, saying: “Give me five!” The child claps his hand, and Raymond walks back to Kossa, hi-fiving him as well.

¹⁴¹ *Assám* is derived from the French *ensemble* (together), and *Nyófe* simply means the same in Gagou (Gban), Raymond’s mother tongue. I have transcribed both terms phonetically.

Performance introduction: Laughter and imitation

From the opening and up until this point, the performers are setting the conditions for the whole performance. The drum duet would be what the audience expects in this performance, based both on the visual setting of the concert – drums displayed – and the general expectation of African music as percussive and energetic. So in this respect the expectations are given an early fulfilment. Also, through both the drumming and the dance, the performers have introduced their impressive capabilities right away: “This is how I can play, this is how I can dance.” Artistic authority is established.

In the second sequence, the interaction and instructions in an Ivorian language, the performers are establishing two very clear conditions for the whole performance: one is *interaction*, through call-and-response dialogue and audience imitation. From this point on, the audience repeats almost everything the performers say, the interaction or interplay is very tight, creating an impression on me as an observer that the audience and performers are moving as one, the performers having assumed full control of the situation. (No need for the teachers, then, to single out troublemakers.)

A second condition is the marking of the performance as *comedy*. Both Raymond and Kossa assume the role of *clown*. Raymond, in his Ivorian instructions, in almost a circus clown manner through his overdone, mimic body language, and both of them by playing into the laughter responses they know they are going to get, even creating spaces for it to happen. Such as when Raymond imitates the laughter of the audience, or how Kossa makes feints at the children, repeating outbursts that create laughter.¹⁴² These two elements – *laughter* and *imitation* – carry the performer-audience relationship through the whole performance.

¹⁴² The instruction sequence is the same in every performance, yet other points – like Kossa’s funny sounds and voice breaks – seem more improvised. The laughter-imitating sequence is exactly the same in the videos from 2004 and 2008, yet seems spontaneous in the context of the performance. In the performances in autumn 2008 for secondary schools, it is, however, omitted.

Introducing discourses: Origin, Africa, otherness

A third (and different) point is how they have introduced themselves as strangers, entering the role of ‘the Other’, even seeming to make themselves as foreign as possible – not only through costumes and instruments, but even talking to the audience in a language that they don’t understand, and in doing so, using their otherness as a comic treat.

From here I will explore two alternative ways of reading the performance. First, I will follow up this more discursive reading of the performance by offering glimpses of how discourses on otherness enter the performance at various points. These are examples that I will further bring into the analysis. Subsequently, I will turn to observing how *agency* and *experience* offer a reading different from the critical positions of postcolonial theory. These approaches then represent two contrasting, possibly even contradictory readings of this performance. First from the viewpoint of Foucault’s term *discourse*, with a particular postcolonial view of the discursive elements that are brought into analysis from the observational categories. And second from a more agent-orientated approach, in line with the phenomenological orientation of grounded theory. To illustrate points for analysis, I will from here on follow the performance not by chronology, but by my analytical categories.

Origin – of performers

Kossa comes up front, and talks to the audience. “God dag, alle sammen” (Norwegian: “Good day, all of you”). Audience replies: “God dag”. Kossa: “Hallo” (Audience: “Hallo”). He keeps going with a long series of greetings in different languages, all repeated by the audience: “Bon Jour. Ça va? Très bien. Merci. Dodo. Ni hao. Salem Aleykum. Waleykum Salaam. Ahhm” (palms together, bending forward, as in an ‘Indian’ greeting). He repeats some of these phrases a couple of times, like the ‘ahhm’. Then: “Allikialié”. (Repeated several

times, like singing a melody or signal, each with a new voice break). Children imitate. Kossa: “Can you say ‘Ahmba’? When I say Allikiallié... You respond Ahmba”. “Jambo”. Singing: “Oh, Jambo Jambo!” After some repeats: “Yammo yammo. Can you say: Yah!” (With ‘hip hop’ hand movement: “Yah!”). Kossa: “Yammo yammo!” Audience: “Yah!”

After this long series of seemingly random greetings in various languages, which the audience imitates, Kossa ends with a thumbs up, and in a hoarse, deep voice: “*Hakuna matata!*” Children laugh and clap.

Kossa: (in Norwegian, from this point on) May I introduce us?

Raymond: Yes, you may.

Kossa: Thank you! The two of us here today come from the same country in Africa, the Ivory Coast. The Ivory Coast is located in West Africa.

Then, abruptly pointing to the back of the hall: “Over there!” Most of the audience turn their heads instantly. (In one recording Raymond responds: “Oh! Behind that mountain?” Kossa: “Yes!”)

Then more imitation:

Kossa: My name is Kossa

Children (repeating): *Kossa*

Kossa: Kossa Diomande. Diomande Kossa. (With small shoulder move) Kossa Kossa.

The children imitate everything, the move, the name.

Kossa (moving the other shoulder, a micro-movement, looking as if he is trying to outdo them): Kossa Kossa! (Shaking the sound out of his chest) *Kossa Kossa!*

Then he moves on to play with Raymond’s name, and Raymond bows deeply every time the audience repeats it.

Raymond: And we are a group called Afrisah. Can you say that? *Afrisah!* Afrisah means African dance, rhythm and song.

Origin – of instruments

At a later stage of the performance, Kossa brings his djembe forward. Kossa: “This is called a djembe” (children repeat: “Djembe”). “It only has three different sounds – listen here.” He plays slowly, mid (bass), edge (sharper) and slap (sharp), while Raymond responds vocally to each sound.

Kossa: “The skin comes from... what do you think?” Children guess various animals, while Raymond, behind Kossa’s back, tries to mime an animal with horns and a bearded chin. Children: “Goat!” Kossa: “That’s right, it’s from goat.” Raymond: “Beeeh”

Kossa then starts carrying the other drums from the lineup to different parts of the stage, preparing for the next session, a drum workshop. While doing so, he explains where the instruments come from, and enters a similar dialogue on what they are made of.

“This is called *boucarabou*. It’s also from Africa. And the skin is... Muh”. Children: “Cow” “That’s right”. Raymond: “From the Norwegian Meat- and Pork Central in Stavanger”. Kossa: “These are called ‘dundun’. Because of the sound (he demonstrates), one small and one large. They’re brother and sister. They’re made of mango wood and... Muh! Cow”. “This one is called Tupano. It’s made in America, with plastic skin, American skin. It’s a colourful drum.”

They then go on to joke about the various kinds of canned food that are supposedly contained in the tin cans, which have no labels. Raymond: “So that we can make a huge barbeque party outside afterwards, with sausages.”¹⁴³

¹⁴³ The instruments in use vary slightly between concerts, sometimes including more rattle instruments (“made of dried fruit”). But the overall structure is the same.

Discursive categories

There are some elements here that I want to draw into a discursive analysis. One is *origin*, which I have already referred to as a very strong discourse in Norwegian society, and which resonates through my whole dissertation: defining things or people on the basis of where they come *from*. As opposed to, for example, where or what they are *now*.¹⁴⁴ Here this is applied down to the skin's coming from a goat. Or the musicians, as they did earlier, introducing themselves based on their origin in the Ivory Coast – “over there”. Which added irony to this discourse. We know this discourse on *origin* from the analysis of *Bantaba* in Chapter 4, and there is also a resemblance in how the instruments are being introduced.

Second, a question is: Why do they use the Swahili terms ‘Jambo’ and ‘Hakuna matata’, which are only used in East Africa? One answer is, of course, that they use all kinds of greetings – even the Chinese ‘Ni hao’, so there is the element of putting everything in the pot. But still, these Swahili expressions are used more repeatedly. ‘Jambo’ and ‘Hakuna matata’ are, as popularized images of Africa, familiar to the audience through the Walt Disney Studios film *The Lion King* (Allers & Minkoff, 1994), and its subsequent spin-off productions. But why use Disney’s African references when the performers have plenty of African references in themselves?

And also: Why do they use this Ivorian dialogue, when in fact they speak Norwegian rather fluently? This might be understood as part of the clowning, the comic roles that they assume. Which raises further critical questions, as, historically, the combination of comic roles and representations as the African ‘Other’ – for the children: the one that looks and talks differently – does evoke a critical discourse on representation. Why is African *difference* so highlighted, even made into a comic treat in this performance? These questions will be brought into the critical analysis below.

¹⁴⁴ This has particularly been discussed in Chapter 2, yet has also been derived through analysis in Chapter 4 and 5.

Storytelling and theatricality

An abrupt transition is made into storytelling: Kossa is entertaining the audience with a funny dance while rhythmically repeating: “Hakuna matata, hakuna matata”; thumbs up, elbows and shoulders moving, his feet sliding him sideways. While Kossa is doing his dance, Raymond suddenly makes a tremolo on a drum behind him. Kossa freezes, turns his head to the drum, surprised. They look at each other in silence, as if something significant is happening, while Raymond lets his fingers move on to the next drum, tapping it carefully with his nails. While keeping eye contact, Kossa steals back to his seat behind the drums, and Raymond, still playing very quietly on one drum after the other, moves across the row of drums, back first, finally turning slowly to face the audience, which is now dead silent.

Raymond: (Almost whispering) Once upon a time, there was a small ant. Living by the river. *Way* down in Africa.

The story of the ant and the pigeon evolves: The ant lives with his many children.

Raymond: (Knowingly, in a deep voice) And I can tell you, he had *many!*

The ant goes out to fetch food, but he trips and rolls into the...

Raymond: Into what?

Children: The river!

Raymond: The river! He was helplessly crawling with his back feet (feet moving), his middle feet (hips wriggling) and his forefeet (hands crawling - each set of feet illustrated in a different voice, with a different movement).

Raymond (in a thin voice): ‘Help! Help!’ A pigeon was watching in a tree close by. The pigeon thought to himself: ‘Poor little ant. I must help him.’

The pigeon rescues the ant, and the story goes on – next day a hunter comes through the woods. Raymond uses the *dodo*, a bow-like string instrument, to illustrate his weapon. He dances full of vigour and shouts as the hunter enters the scene. He spots the sleeping pigeon (Raymond dances the sleeping pigeon, snoring, while Kossa is playing). Then, in the role of the hunter, Raymond tells

the audience – through the frame of his bow – how much he looks forward to pigeon steak tonight. He takes aim, but...

Raymond: Ouch! Something bit him! What was that?

Children: The ant!

Raymond: Yes, it was the ant.

He then becomes the hunter again, who runs home screaming.

Raymond: But next day, someone else came through the forest, and found the bow.
'Hm! I will use this... not as a weapon, but as an instrument!'

On his knee, Raymond starts playing the *dodo* bow, as a mouth 'harp' with a very subtle and overtone-based sound, moving from storytelling to musical presentation, while the audience listens in silence.

Signs of production

In the storytelling sequence above, Raymond assumes the full role of the 'African storyteller', using his wide range of skills; dance, voice, mimicry and impersonation of the characters. The piece is very carefully studied – the story looks almost exactly the same in the recordings from 2008 and 2004: such as the way his voice is pitched for every part of the story, from his falsetto ("help, help"), to the deep, adult commentary on the many children of the ant, or the movement and voice that goes with each of the three pairs of legs. Equally consistent are the points at which the audience interaction is invited, the shift between characters, and so on. Furthermore: even though he normally speaks Norwegian with a certain accent (though very fluently), in this piece the pronunciation is close to perfect, it seems meticulously rehearsed. Such as the word 'maur' ('ant'), which contains 'au', a common Norwegian diphthong (two vowels in a single syllable), yet difficult for foreigners to pronounce correctly, they usually say 'ao' or contract it to a single vowel. Narrow vowels, too, are difficult, often pronounced too broad (Norwegian narrow *u* pronounced as *o*, and narrow *o* as *å*), yet are perfectly in place in this story.

All of this I read as signs of careful *production*, in the sense of a performance being moulded in collaboration with a producer or bystander, or as part of a critical teamwork. Other signs of production can be found in the transitions. In this scene we have two framing transitions (in addition to all the transitions and shifts between characters within the story itself): the introduction, starting with the tapping on the drums, where they create a totally new mode of focus and attention through sound, gesture, eyes and movement, which all come together in a transition rarely seen in a ‘purely’ musical concert – it is clearly theatrical. The second transition comes from, or rather, is applied *to* the dodo, which is simultaneously transformed back from theatrical prop to musical instrument. The transitions of audience behaviour – from the attention created in the start, and to the silence in listening to the soft *dodo* piece at the end –also reveal how carefully audience behaviour is led to fit the different parts of this performance, from loud excitement to silent listening.

Without underestimating the storytelling tradition Raymond draws on, which has a rich theatrical repertoire, I read these transitions in performance mode, role shifts, prop use, and audience behaviour as very clear signs of *production*. They demonstrate how the performers have access to artistic support, theatrical production, relevant professional sources, and some kind of training in creating and staging children’s performances.¹⁴⁵ This reading is further supported by an interview with their producer in Rikskonsertene, who emphasizes how these performers have developed through a long process of working with Rikskonsertene over the years. He also uses the expressions that the artists have been ‘trained’ and ‘built up’ through this work.¹⁴⁶

¹⁴⁵ These resources were not, in comparison, available to the artists producing *Bantaba*, which lacked precisely these features, trying to create more or less the same performance concept as *Afrisah*. It may even be relevant to read the production of *Bantaba* presented in Chapter 4 as a mimicking of the mode of school performance established in Rikskonsertene, or through the successes of performances like *Afrisah*.

¹⁴⁶ Interview with me, September 2008.

Critical analysis

I have argued that the practices I observe can be read as *discursive practices*, relating to Foucault's use of the term discourse: that discourse constructs the objects it refers to. The question at this point, regarding these performance glimpses, is: *what* may be constructed through discourse here? Drawing on the above analytical categories, I will argue it is 'African artists' and even 'Africa' as such, through discourses of 'origin' and 'difference'. Relating back to my overall research questions at the end of Chapter 2, the question here would be how the discourses that these performers take part in and disseminate construct themselves, and how this act of construction places them in their context in Norwegian society – and in this case, in the context of a school performance, and in Rikskonsertene as an organization.

On comedy and the clown – minstrelsy or 'traditional' performance?

Some of the analytical categories presented above relate to a critical or postcolonial reading: staging of *difference*, *clowning*, essentializing of *origin*, all in the framework of a comic stage appearance. If we, in Foucault's terminology, investigate the lines of discourse historically (or 'genealogically'), there is a long line of critical discourse to take into consideration: using *difference* or otherness or African-ness as a comic treat gives connotations to how Africans and African-ness have been presented on Western stages, all the way back to minstrelsy.

The clowning in this performance actually does bear some resemblance to minstrel representations of African-ness, for example in some of Raymond's dance mimics, or in Kossa's ways of producing outbursts, sounds and funny faces to get laughter in return.

In *Sounds of the Metropolis* (Scott, 2008), Derek Scott refers to how even Louis Armstrong used minstrel expression in his stage appearance, as this was the predominant and known role for black performance. It was, at least, for black

musicians performing for a white audience. According to Veit Erlmann there is a discursive and representational continuum of African performances in a Western setting of representing the ‘Other’ – or what is unknown and exciting to the local audience – from early black minstrel performances in American and European cities in the nineteenth and early twentieth century, via ethnological exhibitions, ‘jubilee’ and folkloristic shows, to today’s representations of ‘traditional’ African music in the West, such as on some world music scenes (Erlmann, 1999b).¹⁴⁷ Consequently, what links a performance to minstrelsy is not just its contents – such as making funny faces – but the framework it is set in, such as the staging of the African Other. Questions arise then: Does this imply that, from a postcolonial point of view, any African performance for a Western audience must be read as minstrelsy? And do we need to go to Europe and the USA to see Africans as clowns – is there no African clowning or clown roles that may be seen as part of tradition, or part of the culture they are trying to convey, not necessarily imposed through the outsider’s gaze? When asking Kossa about this, he first told how they drew upon the comedy style they knew from the Ivorian National ballet in the production of *Afrisah*. But he maintained that they also found these types of figures in village practices:

Tormod: But I’m thinking: Is there a clowning tradition in the Ivory Coast, outside the National Ballet?

Kossa: Sure, it exists, yes, yes.

Tormod: How, then?

¹⁴⁷ This performance has been playing for many groups of pupils, both – as in my observations – predominantly Norwegian pupils, and for more mixed ethnic groups. But, as I will point out, the performers are representing themselves as ‘Other’ to almost every group, even those of mixed ethnicities, as they are referring to an imagined, constructed Africa.

Kossa: (...) What can I say? To start in the village, they are also comedians. There are lots of comedians in the small village[s] who are not ballet or anything. He has [so much of the] natural comedian. He starts telling things, and people laugh, and lots of strange things and movements. And he knows himself how, if he does like this people will be very happy and laugh. There are lots of those. Particularly in my village, we had two. (...) They were the ones who did everything in the village, when there is dance, when we shall laugh (...) and when it's serious, too, the two are there. Dance also, they were good at everything.¹⁴⁸

This does add a new perspective to the discussion on whether these comic roles – ‘genealogically’ speaking – stem from a tradition that the performers wish to convey, or from a history of the outsider gaze projected upon African performers. Still, seen from a critical, postcolonial perspective, this performance does enter into a particular Western *reading* of Africa and African-ness. There is, in other words, a particular discourse that the performers enter into, consciously or not, as they stage themselves as representations of ‘the African Other’, where they highlight their origin and difference as part of a comic, stereotyped image.

A rebuttal to this approach may be to question its congruence, i.e. whether minstrelsy in any way contained a *positive* image of the ‘African’. Derek Scott holds that the enthusiasm behind minstrelsy – both black minstrelsy and white performers masking up through ‘blackface’ – did not derive from hating black people or performance roles, but from the love of the alternative roles offered performers and audiences (Scott, 2008). The very problematic feature, however, is how this represented an imagery of people of African heritage as funny, childish and stupid, yet lively and entertaining. From a postcolonial perspective, this projection of the features or virtues of the African Other mainly contributes to an image of the opposite of what the European, or Western audience is, thus confirming ‘us’ through the distance from ‘them’. Furthermore, as Erlmann and Lindfors point out: these models have become prolific stage typecasts available to black, or African, artists for over a century (Erlmann, 1999b; Lindfors, 1999).

¹⁴⁸ Interview with me, 15 October 2010.

Referring to Homi Bhabha's postcolonial stance that shifting the focus from a negative to a positive image of otherness is not sufficient to overcome colonial discourse, a critical, Bhabha-inspired question would be whether Rikskonsertene's tradition of 'culturally diverse' concert series – and this performance in particular – just promotes shifting the focus on immigrants or the 'Other' from negative to positive, or whether it engages in a representation of otherness that goes beyond the stereotypical, beyond even the positive images of the colourful and interesting immigrant. This evokes critical questions as to which performance roles are *available* to African performers, particularly through an organization like Rikskonsertene, which is probably the largest employer of immigrant artists in Norway.

Embodying discourse

When seeking to understand agent behaviour within an organization, the theoretical assumptions behind the analysis become particularly visible. In her dissertation on 'Music and ethnic integration in Norwegian state policies' (2008), Anne Ellingsen concludes that immigrant performers are subjected to state power exerted through Rikskonsertene as a government body.¹⁴⁹ She understands this organization as carrying out symbolic government policies of integration, through what she sees as multiculturally 'hybrid' or 'fusion' types of representation.

Although I do find Ellingsen's observations of the preference for collaborative or 'crossover' musical forms in the public sphere interesting, I do not subscribe to her analysis, because I think it is too unidirectional when it comes to the issue of power and governance, most visibly when holding the 'organically' developed cultural encounter up as a binary counterpart to the 'state controlled fusion'. In doing so she implies that some practices are discursive or subjected

¹⁴⁹ Ellingsen does not, however, examine any examples from the large body of school concert productions.

to forces of (state) power, while others are ‘organic’ and power- and discourse *free*. I would rather, in line with Foucault’s idea of power and governance, see the production of representations in a governmental institutional body like Rikskonsertene as something which is acted out in an interplay between the agents in this system. Foucault’s point is that systems do not have power in themselves, they are powered by the actions – such as disseminations of discourse – taking place within the system. In my view it is thus more rewarding to observe the *embodiment* of attitudes and of discourses circulating in this system.

The observed performance is a happening, taking place in a particular school. I read this as a manifestation or realization of the relationship between the school system and Rikskonsertene. Both are public or government organizations,¹⁵⁰ yet what is taking place is a realization of joint obligations and tasks: Rikskonsertene’s obligation to provide cultural experiences to school children nationally – and culturally diverse performances as part of this obligation – and the schools’ obligation through their mandate and study plans to provide for or facilitate artistic and cultural encounters. In the process of coming from a larger mandate to a concrete local experience or happening like this many processes take place, and my point is that it is not a one-way process from government decision to performance. On the contrary, I read the performers’ actions as an embodiment of Rikskonsertene’s aims, or the whole organizational culture (or important parts of it) embodied in performers. This does not imply seeing them as marionettes for an organization or state power, but as agents, subjects, who process and internalize discourses from the larger organizational body. Although they are not employed by Rikskonsertene directly¹⁵¹ it is relevant to assume that,

¹⁵⁰ Although on different levels – schools being the responsibility of the local municipality, Rikskonsertene a government agency – yet performances are now formally ‘produced’ (and invited) by regional cultural producers at the middle level of governmental structure, the *fylke*, or regional county.

¹⁵¹ *Afrisah* is part of a general pool of school performances produced in collaboration between the performers and Rikskonsertene, from which regional cultural producers, on behalf of the schools in each county, every semester select and assign performances for touring.

after a long time of being trained or ‘built up’ in this system, the artists may embody the values, attitudes and political goals circulating and being discussed and maintained in its practices, from running productions to annual reports.

Some such discourses, on a more political level, are visible in this performance: with its historical roots in a cultural project against racism, which emphasized the cultural *encounter*, we may observe the traces of this logic in the whole staging of African *origin* for a multiculturalist recognition of difference. This issue has been dealt with at length in Chapter 4, including how the intercultural ‘meeting place’ is a multiculturalist metaphor, with the staging of otherness that it risks implying. There is, however, a different way in which these concepts are dealt with in this performance, in that the performers add a certain irony, humour and lightness to the whole production, or representation, of the African Other.

Representing *Africa and origin*

To sum up the critical approach to analysis: I have, from a Foucauldian perspective on discourse, argued that what is being constructed in this performance seems to be an image of ‘Africa’ as such. And the Africa that is being constructed and represented is set in the framework of ‘tradition’ and ‘village’: The drums, the clothing, the whole stage confirms a ‘traditional’ African image, also through the choice of music, instruments and dances. It is, to a large extent, a confirmation of the storybook Africa. And the storybook Africa is the colonial, European image of Africa as exotic, different, colourful and playful, pretty much the same phenomenon as the orientalist gaze that Edward Said criticizes in *Orientalism* (Said, 1978). This may be read as a result of an embodied multiculturalist discourse, which, as discussed earlier, tends to essentialize the difference it seeks to recognize.

This ‘storybook’ image seems complete when the performers start using the expressions ‘Jambo’ and ‘Hakuna matata’, which are Swahili expressions¹⁵² popularized in the Disney film *The Lion King* (Allers & Minkoff, 1994), which derived a general ‘African’ imagery from elements of an East African, probably Kenyan, savannah. This whole landscape and set of references is very unlike their own background in the Ivory Coast in West Africa.

This, in particular, awakens my curiosity: Why do these artists apply the *audience’s* image of Africa? And why do they depict themselves as general images of Africa, even *East* Africa, through clichés from popular culture?

Participation and experience

These questions have *not* been answered by the critical analysis above, and they invite a more agent-orientated perspective, which is where I want to go with the last part of this chapter. The postcolonial position – or even ‘gaze’ – on this performance is clear: critical and discursive. However, the problem, even frustration I as a researcher encounter with this analysis, at this very point, is twofold. First of all, the analysis does not really match the experience. A critical approach may seem evident, even ‘necessary’ from some point of view, but somehow there is a mismatch here between experience and the critical perspectives brought into analysis. The experience of the performance is – both for the ordinary audience of children and for me – one of enjoyment, and a sense of *taking part*, sharing an experience with the performers. Secondly there is the feeling that by doing a critical analysis, the researcher is somehow taking the subjectivity of the agents away from them by pulling apart what they put together, or, implicitly, telling them that what they are doing is somehow counterproductive. This points out a paradox, since postcolonial theory makes

¹⁵² ‘Jambo’ is not proper Swahili, it is a tourist simplification of greetings, which in proper form have at least four different prefixes depending on question/response, and singular/plural; “Hujambo?” “Sijambo!” (s.) Hatujambo? Hamjambo! (pl.)

precisely the opposite claim: that it seeks to emancipate the colonial subjects, or the ‘subaltern’, whoever they might be (Gandhi, 1998). With this dilemma in mind I turn to the second part of my analysis, which is more oriented towards *agency* – what the agents create and achieve – and more phenomenological, focusing on *experience*.

Drum Workshop

When the drums have been dispersed throughout the stage area, Kossa invites children to come up and play. Half of the audience raise their hands. He then selects, from across the room, a large group of children, about twenty-five.¹⁵³ He says, sternly, that no-one is allowed to play before Raymond says so. When someone touches the drums Kossa confronts them: “Hey! Did I say you could play? I said nobody can play before Raymond says so!” His tone is strict, schoolmasterlike, it is not easy to tell whether he is in earnest or joking. The kids wait while everyone is organized – a group of four kneeling around each drum, while Raymond gives tin can shakers to the rest.

Kossa then teaches them to speak a rhythm, articulating: “Da da da da takatakata”. Each ‘da’ is a fourth note, each ‘taka’ is two eighths, so it is a very plain 4/4 rhythm, with a rest at the end. Then, staying in the vocal groove: “Now you can play! Da da da da takatakata!” The sound of the drums is a rumble, but with Kossa playing his drum with far sharper sounds, and the shouted rhythm above, there is a sense of shared rhythm.

While the group of children play in front, the rest are activated in the audience. “Can you do like this: (*clap, clap*) *Ambiasol*?” The two parts are brought together – instruments on stage, and clapping and shouting in the audience. Yet there is no question who the lucky ones are. After finishing on a crescendo,

¹⁵³ This varies with the size of the audience. The maximum is close to thirty; four pupils around each of the five drums, and up to ten on shakers. In smaller audiences, there is always about half of them left in the rows.

when everyone is encouraged to play as fast and loud as they can, the pupils walk smiling back to their rows, the drummers displaying the red and aching palms of their hands to their fellow pupils. Some let the others touch their hands to feel the heat.

Deconstructing dance

The performance *finale* is a dance, where everyone is dancing in the rows, instructed by Raymond. While the music is playing, he starts introducing new series of movements, and lets the pupils join him in the dance before moving on to the next sequence. He introduces each new routine by adding one abstracted part of a movement at a time, with each new movement starting on the first beat of a four-beat rhythm pattern, marked by shouting “Da!” One example of such a routine is illustrated in these images:



Figure 9: Video stills of dance instruction in *Afrisah*. From rehearsal at Rikskonsertene in Oslo, May 2008. Recorded by author.

- Starting position, on the spot: demonstrating ‘standing upright’: “Da!”
- Second, one arm stretched up sideways: “Da!” (Audience copies move and sound on the third beat).
- Third, other arm stretched down sideways: “Da!”
- Fourth, right leg stepping down: “Da!” (Audience repeats).
- Fifth, with this pose, the leg again stepping down on each beat: “Da, da, da, da!”
- And, finally, all movements together, hands stretching diagonally, and the step becoming a skipping dance movement circling on the spot; “One, two, three, four!” and dance.

Voilà! Suddenly everyone is dancing ‘African dance’.

What I see here is the very experienced dance instructor who ‘deconstructs’ the movements he knows from his dance background down to simple poses, and then brings the pieces together, with the rhythm, to an experience of dancing ‘African dance’. This demonstrates a methodology of instruction that allows for participation of the non-dancer, or just people who do not know how to dance like this. Furthermore, the selection of movements allows the audience to dance on the spot, or sideways between the rows of chairs, without colliding, yet still with a sense of a collective dance. In other words: Raymond is re-constructing the experience of African dance to an uninitiated audience, to work in this particular context, in terms of audience and space. This – the deconstruction and re-assembling of elements – is also happening throughout the whole performance: in the drum workshop, with the call-and response greetings, as with the other cultural or performative elements that they bring into the performance.

De- and reconstructing Africa

This process may then serve as a metaphor, or rather, an essence of the whole performance: elements of ‘Africa’ are deconstructed, and then re-constructed to form a shared experience of Africa. Or, in this case *Afrisah* – their own personal and audience-targeted reconstruction of experiencing Africa. *Afrisah* does not mean “African dance, rhythm and song”. According to Raymond, the word is a

construct, of ‘Africa’ and ‘sah’. ‘Sah’ is the word in Gagou representing – as in many terms covering music in African languages – a broad range of musical activities: song, dance and music, or, in Raymond’s words: “the whole concept”.¹⁵⁴ Taking an even more conceptual approach, their producer in Rikskonsertene emphasizes how the combined terms contained in *Afrisah* are chosen to reflect an experience of the children’s storytelling place or hour in an Ivorian village.¹⁵⁵ So, here the performers transform their experience of ‘sah’ to a (re-) presentation of Africa to Norwegian school children, recreating their sense of experience. The transformative reconstruction (or recreation) of an African experience is evident in the performance, where the performers wish to convey a sense of “African dance, rhythm and song” – including the African storytelling, and the experience of ‘Africa’ as such – creating a particular experiential, emotional and tactile meeting point between artist and child.

In this process of reconstruction – or creating a shared experience – the performers utilize any elements that are accessible or known to the audience, even the Disney ‘Lion King’ references, or elements of the ‘storybook’ Africa. It seems that they are playing with a common set of references that both performers and the audience share. Even stereotypes of the minstrel type are not left out: the ‘funny African’ making a grinning face and strange sounds, which makes the children laugh. Furthermore, the discourse of ‘origin’ is treated as a joke: “...from the Ivory Coast – over there!”

So, maybe this is a play, or a game, in the childish sense of the word: something that you can step in and out of, which enables trying things out without making them too serious (Bjørkvold, 1992). The performers seem to approach this

¹⁵⁴ Dialogic editing with Raymond, June 2013.

¹⁵⁵ Whether this is the producer’s conceptual construct or perspective of the performance, or that of the performers, or a collaborative effort, is less important in a discursive approach, since discourse is seen as moving between them in this practice, not just moving in one direction, or top-down. This also illustrates the term *embodiment* or ‘body within a body’, in how closely they are working with – or *within* – Rikskonsertene, and all parts seem to identify with and feel ownership of the production.

reconstruction as a game of common references between performers and audience, not to be taken too seriously, but to be enjoyed together.

A keyword in this performance is *participation*, or rather the *physical experience* of participation. Drumming that makes your hands warm and aching. This very intimate participation through bodily experience, and also through dance, is an extension of the interaction established through audience imitation, call-and-response, and informal dialogue throughout the performance.

Entrepreneurship and community

Raymond has been a dance instructor for years – I experienced him in a dance course in 1991, when he was already a popular instructor of ‘African dance’ in Oslo. And I encountered his brother, Kouame, who was doing drum workshops, on several occasions in different drum workshops for a variety of groups – a choir, a group of fellow students at the University of Oslo, and later while I was working at the University of Agder. The brothers have been working together in many settings, not least Rikskonsertene’s school productions, and also have their own band – Zikalo. I did not encounter Kossa before embarking on this research, but through observing him now I have crossed the path of the Sereba brothers again. What strikes me is the way many of the elements already present in their practice years back are being reused. Such as the attention marker ‘Yammo yammo’ – responded to with a unisonal ‘yah’. This is a greeting from the Ivory Coast, they say, but the Serebas have been using it for many years in drum workshops to keep the attention of the participants, and to get a uniform sense of rhythm. And the same with the *Nyófe - Assám* calls and responses. These methods have been refined and developed, as have the imitations and the deconstruction principles of teaching dance and rhythm in this performance.

Although this is not intended to be a dissertation on music pedagogy, this observation of teaching methods does deserve a couple of comments on how this practice is being developed. It is evident that both the Serebas and Kossa have

been developing a particular performative and pedagogical practice over many years, where elements from their country of origin are being redefined in the framework of music teaching and musical performance. These come together in the performances for children in Rikskonsertene. *Not* because – as has been common in earlier ‘music for children’ approaches – the performances are taking on a didactical focus of teaching *about* a topic (such as Africa, or the Ivory Coast). Rather, I ascribe this to being a way of responding to a development of performance models in Rikskonsertene, which increasingly seem to be influenced by a *relational* approach to music performance.

Tony Valberg describes this turn to relationality in musical performance, and also explores its application in concerts for children. ‘Relationality’ here describes how the former division between artist, audience and ‘work’ or ‘piece of art’ is replaced by a model where the whole setting *is* the ‘work’ (Valberg, 2011). Reading this observation in light of relationality implies that the small-talk between artists and audience – such as the endless greetings in this performance – is not a ‘warm up’ before the real concert starts. Rather, it is an integral part of the work of art where the performers and spectators create a shared artistic experience *together*.

The large amount of relational elements in *Afrisah* thus may reflect a broader development of relationality in performance and concert strategies in recent years, accelerating with Nicolas Bourriaud’s influential *Relational aesthetics* (Bourriaud, 2002), but also influenced by writers like Christopher Small (1998), whose idea of *musicking* is clearly a relational approach to music making. What we see in the wake of a more relational approach to performance and music as such are concerts or performances where the audience takes a larger part in the performance, and where the ‘work’ or ‘piece’ approach to performance goes more into the background (Valberg, 2011). The shared experience, according to Bourriaud, *is* the art.

Kossa seems conscious of the way the production of *Afrisah* emphasizes such relational elements:

Tormod: Why do you think Afrisah is so popular?

Kossa: Because it is not just regular concerts. That [is] what we have worked for. The two of us, we come from the same school in the National ballet. And the ballet is a little dramatic: theatre, dance, rhythm and song. We mix, we have worked hard to make it, we have mixed a little comedy inside. Because the children shall feel not like they come there and just sit there and listen to the concert. That sometimes gets boring. But when they join in, that is what we have worked hard for, to make them find themselves inside the concert, too, right? They join in activities, and they join in a lot of things. What they are not allowed to [do] with the other groups, they are allowed to [do] with us. But at the same time it is a very serious job, we collaborate with them.

This relational emphasis also highlights a different aspect of the performance experience, which is the close encounter between performers and audience, how they break down the division between stage and auditorium and between performer and spectator when inviting the children to dance, or onto the ‘stage’ to play and perform. The audience and performers thus move towards establishing a *community* in the space created through performance, by doing things together. The idea of community implies some kind of ‘sameness’, which seems to counter the postcolonial narrow focus on types of otherizing representation. I will argue that even the whole act of reconstructing Africa together with the audience, which creates ‘Africa’ as a shared experience, is a way of establishing a community in this shared space, between performers and audience. In this respect it may also be relevant to observe the community established in terms known from rhetoric; through the rules of the space and through the game of references, the performers have established a shared *topos*; the landscape or common ground required in order for communication to take place (Kjeldsen, 2004). This aspect of *community* – or even *sameness* – is an aspect that I will develop further in the subsequent chapters.

Summing up

In my analysis of the performance *Afrisah*, I have shown how the audience-performer relation is a main feature, a defining element, which both defines the performance form and also works to establish a community between the performers and the audience. Relating this observation to the historical

development of relational performance forms, I also infer that these performers have caught something, or ‘hit a wave’ in the development of musical performance for children in Norway: the need for relational models. The performers have thus succeeded in becoming long-time *entrepreneurs* in the musical and pedagogical market, utilizing their African background and experience to develop a sought-for aesthetics and performativity. This market, of which Rikonsertene holds a large share, has been seeking new models of relationality in the arts, explicitly or more in terms of following a development. This is where an African model of village performance fits in, or, rather, is *fitted* in. So this entrepreneurship is not just about representation – i.e. finding a scene where they can represent their African-ness – it is just as much about translating an African musical *relationality* and didactics into a Norwegian context, with a particular undertaking to produce performances of this approach.¹⁵⁶

The outset of Rikskonsertene’s multicultural school programmes in the late 1980s was explicitly political; to fight racism and promote a multicultural vision for Norwegian society (Skylstad, 1990). This dimension lives on as a discourse on welcoming otherness in the staging of performances like *Afrisah*, where *origin* is highlighted, in line with the requirements of a multiculturalist discourse of recognizing difference, as discussed in Chapter 4 in the light of the writings of Charles Taylor (et al.) (1994). In *Afrisah* we see how this discourse on origin is picked up – sometimes as an ironic joke that indicates that the performers maintain some kind of distance to this mission, yet most of the time comply with it with a humorous lightness, where they seem perfectly comfortable with mixing representations of themselves as clowns, as childish, and as Africans in one go.

¹⁵⁶ Writers like Small (1987) and Chernoff (1979) have argued that sub-Saharan African musical practices can be generalized as more relational – or they would say ‘social’ – from the outset. My point, however, is to observe what these entrepreneurs make of it, how they recontextualize what may be perceived as ‘African relationality’ into a Norwegian or Nordic market for a relational music pedagogy and performance aesthetics.

In seeing the performers as entrepreneurs, this analysis does not stay one-dimensionally with the critical or postcolonial issue of representation – and the problematic aspects it contains – it also explores the phenomenological perspective of performer agency. This opens for a focus on what they have achieved: developing sought-for performance modes and models, which has opened up a fairly large and stable market for these artists. This performance still plays into a discourse about representing the positive Other, but primarily seems to focus on the audience-performer relation, which contributes to developing the field of relational performance models. That is probably one reason why this performance is one of the most prolific school performances, being invited to the same schools and counties again and again. These artists simply do this better than the rest.

What remains to be seen is whether Rikskonsertene will allow African artists to represent anything other than their African-ness, since they have already successfully proved their ability to develop the concert *form*.

Critiques of postcolonialism

What this chapter also illustrates is the power that the researcher holds over the agents through analysis. This aspect invites a critical look at the modes of analysis, and, particularly in this work, a critical approach to the work of postcolonial discourse. In this and preceding chapters I have been drawing on postcolonial theory and perspectives to pose critical questions to my observations, particularly the discourses on ‘otherness’ that I extract from my observations. A necessary take is then to look critically in the other direction, at postcolonial theory and thought in itself.

The main critical point being: postcolonial discourse tends to rest on the ‘Same / Other’ dichotomy, which may serve to perpetuate this whole problematic relationship. This problem is highlighted in the analytical turning point of this chapter, where taking a more phenomenological approach appears crucial, in

order not to deviate too much from the way the performance is experienced, and in order to take performer agencies into account.

Postcolonial discourse and theory, which at the outset sought to emancipate the colonial subject, may suddenly do the contrary: locking the subjects in a particular position. That is, the position of the 'Other' as a victim of representation. This is where postcolonial analysis may become counter-productive. Not only for my analysis, but also for its very intentions, the way it is supposed to work. Foucault's perspective is that discourse creates the subject it refers to. Consequently, postcolonial discourse may create the 'Other'. This is my critique of postcolonial theory and where I find it incomplete: that it may serve to limit the subjects that it sought to emancipate, by locking them in the 'Same' versus 'Other' binary relationship, where certain subjects constantly have to represent otherness.

So there is a danger of researcher outlook locking agents in a problematic and less empowered position, where they lose their individual agency. This is where I feel the need to turn to a phenomenological 'grounding' of analysis, through taking seriously into account the *experience* of an observation, and the experiences and agencies of the artists.

For the next two chapters I will present and analyze practices that arrive at approaches to being Africans on stage in Norway alternative to the representation of otherness, and to the references to 'tradition' that have been foregrounded in the preceding chapters. What these performers have in common is applying the concept of *diaspora* in creating pronounced popular music practices, yet applied in different ways.

CHAPTER 7:

BUILDING IN-BETWEEN SPACES

- Diaspora and cosmopolitanism in Ras Nas' performances

Introduction

Ras Nas is Nasibu Mwanukuzi's main stage persona, or artistic alias. In this chapter I will present two performances of Ras Nas, which took place in Oslo in June 2008 and in Trondheim in December the same year. The concert in Oslo was the first evening of the *Mantra* club concept, which was presented in Chapter 4 as the major success in funding applications that Nasibu had in 2008. In that chapter, the focus was on the artist's ideas of the market versus government support, which led to my analysis of power through discourse and governance through the funding schemes. The present chapter will explore some of the encounters with Ras Nas' performances from a different angle, particularly highlighting the concept of *diaspora* that I find in these performances, and that is immanent in soukous and reggae music as such.

A diasporic audience

The first *Mantra* club evening was to take place on 21 June 2008 in a basement of a restaurant and bar in lower Grünerløkka, a district in the eastern part of Oslo usually associated with a sizable immigrant population, but in recent years gentrified and made so popular that not many immigrants can afford to live there anymore. This basement, I learned from talking to the host, was becoming a club venue for a mixed, but mainly East African audience. Tonight the big name was *Ali Kiba*, a young Tanzanian *Bongo flava* artist, brought here by Nasibu's club

concept *Mantra*. I checked him out on YouTube, and found a good-looking young man in his early twenties, singing a soft, melodic hip hop-slash-pop over a somewhat synthetic synthesizer accompaniment, and depicted dancing and singing in the unpaved streets outside typical Tanzanian one-story concrete houses with worn-off paint. A localized image of *street credibility*, I considered, although these are actually very common Tanzanian living standards, so there was not that much of a ‘ghetto’ undertone here. This, I understood from Nasibu was a big name, which was confirmed by a packed venue later that night.

When I arrived at 5.20 pm – the performance was announced for 10 – two musicians were there with Nasibu: a Norwegian keyboard player and an African-American guitarist. “Man, I wish you played the bass!” he had told me when I called in advance, so I knew Nasibu had had problems bringing a band together for this occasion.¹⁵⁷ He seemed frustrated, not talking much, leaving the musicians to themselves for much of the time, going in and out, making phone calls. An hour later a Norwegian drummer came in, apologizing for his delay and starting to rig his gear. The musicians went through some songs with the guitarist, who took on the role of band leader. The bass player couldn’t make it until 9.30, half an hour before the announced starting time.¹⁵⁸ I had never seen any of these musicians performing with Nasibu before, and this group of musicians had never been on stage together as an ensemble, nor rehearsed as such. Those who hadn’t performed with Ras Nas had received CD copies with tonight’s songs. Not even his regular drummer Uriel was here, the only permanent band member, and a vital force in Ras Nas’ performances, tying everything together.

I was surprised by this situation. Nasibu had talked about how Ali Kiba would draw a huge crowd, and then he could introduce himself to a new audience: younger people of East African descent, who, in his words “do not know Ras Nas”. In an interview he had also been quite explicit about his market approach

¹⁵⁷ I wish I had played the bass, too, because that would have opened for a new dimension to my participant-observation at this point.

¹⁵⁸ Although club concerts usually don’t start until there is an audience.

to music, how “selling his product” was much preferable to either approaching organizations supporting minority artists, or taking part in the processes of creating cultural understanding, known from governmental culture programmes and artistic support categories.¹⁵⁹ What links these and other statements – presented in Chapter 4 – to this night’s events, is the explicit need and desire both to “follow the trend” or “know what’s going on”, and to build new audiences, as part of a business plan enabling artistic practice:

So always as a minority musician, it’s, you know, you struggle on many fronts. You know, you... struggle first to keep your music going on. Despite all the economic conditions which are very... poor (...) You can get a job, of course, (...) but you have to keep your art. And that art that you want to keep, somehow there is not a big market for it. And ... that means we have to struggle even to *build* a market.¹⁶⁰

Based on these recent statements I was puzzled by the seeming lack of ability or effort to really present his very best, such as ‘topping the team’ with experienced band members in front of a new, potentially core audience; an East African diasporic community. I anticipated this could mean establishing a new audience that did not expect the staged ‘otherness’ so ambivalently addressed in the interview earlier.

The Mantra club event

At night the concert venue is packed, mainly by young Africans, all very well dressed. Women dominate the dance floor in the front half of the room. The DJ plays dance music that doesn’t resemble soukous, it is more contemporary, but I don’t recognize any of the tracks. At an early stage, before too many people are there, I have a talk with the DJ. He is from Burundi and, he tells me, selects music from East and Central Africa “and a little upwards”. I ask him about Nasibu’s music, he hesitates, but then says he can use “some of it”, takes me to his desk and plays an upbeat example on the headphones from the recent Ras Nas CD *Dar-es-Salaam* (Mwanukuzi, 2008). I interpret his gestures and

¹⁵⁹ Chapter 4 presents a broader discussion of these issues.

¹⁶⁰ Nasibu Mwanukuzi in interview with me, 13 June 2008.

statement as saying that ‘can’ doesn’t mean he actually *will* play it. “But if I play this” – he plays “Second Poem” from the Mandingo Trio maxi single, which Nasibu has also given to him – “people will go ‘Oo-oo!’ (imitating audience members waving him away). It’s too slow”.

At about a quarter to midnight the band members come through the crowd one by one, finding their way to the stage without too much attention, the DJ’s music breaking off as the first, probing chord of the guitar changes the sound environment from a compact, studio produced wall of sound to the sharpness of an amplified band in a basement. From the outset, Nasibu addresses the audience in Swahili. He keeps mentioning “Ali Kiba” – “Leo di leo” (“Today, today”). The impression is a bit chaotic, the stage is low and barely lit, the ceiling just above their heads, leaving the musicians almost invisible. The technician sits behind the band, receiving cues from associates in the audience on how to adjust the sound. Every time that Nasibu mentions Ali Kiba, the crowd cheers in response. It’s as if, I note, he is not presenting *himself*, knowing everyone is here for someone else. Three songs are played, with some response from the audience, some keep on dancing, the mood seems full of anticipation. The sound is not good, but the band makes it through. Nasibu’s regular drummer made it after all, arriving at the last minute, dismissing the substitute at short notice. He is now communicating from behind the drums, intensely signalling bridges and cues while creating an insistent percussive groove that keeps the loose ends together. In the middle of the third song ‘Dar-es-Salaam’, just as the slow intro moves into the danceable and upbeat *seben* part, the crowd turns to the back of the room; as they pull out cameras, their flashes light up Ali Kiba while he dances slowly through the crowd towards the stage to the screams of the audience. Finally, he finds his way into a vocal improvisation on the ‘Dar-es-Salaam’ chorus, antiphonal to Nasibu, Ali Kiba’s voice melismating on high notes, as if imitating the sounds of an auto-tuner – a well used synthetic cliché in pop production, now analogized and embodied in his melodic voice. For a minute, Ali Kiba and Ras Nas are unified in their common city of Dar es Salaam, the bustling Tanzanian ‘Harbour of Peace’, for one a distant, former home, for the other a scene that he seems to be outgrowing, the hip ‘Bongo’

where all of East Africa looks for what's new and cool in music. After letting the band accompany him through a rehearsed song, his top hit *Cinderella* – with the audience singing loudly in unison on every word – Ali Kiba returns to his regular playback CD to back the rest of his songs, in a performance literally in touch with the audience.



Figure 10: Ras Nas (right) and Ali Kiba (left) on stage in Oslo, June 2008. Video still from recording by author.

A reconnective diaspora

This observation presents a young East African diasporic audience, suddenly brought together by the presence of a visiting performer, to form a group not usually so visible. The diaspora observed here is very directed towards a concrete point of orientation, whether it be regarded as ‘home’ or as a defining place of reference : Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, East Africa.

I believe this performance – though briefly sketched here – illustrates a dilemma that Nasibu faces, which seems to arise between not wanting to be the exotic African, which he finds is desired by much of ‘alternative’ audiences in Norway, and, on the other hand, not being recognized by a diasporic audience. This audience, the observation indicates, seems to have moved on from soukous as its popular music, to more localized, or ‘glocalized’ diasporic musics not recognized by an international audience. Such as the local ‘Bongo flava’, a style drawing on hip hop and R&B, yet staying more in pop, and remaining solidly local through its predominantly Swahili lyrics. Performers of this style are celebrated in East Africa and inside connected diasporic networks, while virtually unknown outside. Ali Kiba, as an example, is totally unknown to Norwegians without these diasporic connections to East Africa, which is evident in the crowd gathered on this occasion. The particular diasporic orientation of this audience is shown in the attention directed towards the musical scene of Dar es Salaam, or the ‘Bongo’ of ‘Bongo flava’.¹⁶¹ They thus display a type of *reconnective* diaspora, connecting concretely to the current scene in their shared point of reference. While ‘diaspora’ used to mean having left home for good, yet connecting to others of the same histories and memories to form exile groups, ‘diaspora’ today can mean reconnecting and staying in touch and being kept up-to-date with the shared point of reference through web pages and virtual communities, blogs, satellite TV, travel and close contacts across long distances to an extent that was unheard of in earlier, less fluctuating global diasporas.¹⁶²

Whether the source of the observed frustration was the mundane problems of bringing a band together, or a realization of the orientation of this audience, is not possible to say on the basis of these data. What the observations do tell, is how establishing a space for performance can be frustrating on many fronts, not least to find the ‘space’ a performer wants to and is able to inhabit. While Ras

¹⁶¹ *Bongo* is local slang for Dar es Salaam.

¹⁶² When Appadurai (1996) discusses the works of modern globalization, he refers to the ‘scapes’ that create and enable the ‘flows’ of people, ideas, money etc. One such type of ‘scapes’ is the *mediascapes*, and I believe the above description illustrates how a modern globalized *and* reconnected diaspora is enabled through such mediascapes.

Nas was not so strongly recognized by the diasporic orientation of this audience, an analysis of the next performance will illustrate a different type of diasporic orientation, or even a different diaspora, in Ras Nas' performances.

Soukous as a globalized, Pan African music style

Before analyzing a soukous song in this *Ras Nas* performance, I will sketch out the musical form and its practice.¹⁶³ Soukous, often referred to as Congolese rumba, is an overall term used to denote the Afro-Cuban inspired popular dance music that developed in Congo¹⁶⁴ since the 1920s, seeming to stem from the availability of recordings of Cuban *son* and other Latin American popular music forms. What was generally named *rumba*, and later *soukous*, spread as *the* popular music genre in large parts of Sub-Saharan Africa during the 1960s and onwards. From the 1980s it hit the world music wave, becoming the core popular 'sound of Africa', often reintroducing Latin American elements into African music, and creating a more globally commodifiable party music, to the extent that any African musicians trying to make a living in Europe had to have soukous, with a touch of salsa, in their repertoire (White, 2002).

According to White (2002) there are three main formal musical aspects making up soukous that point back to Afro-Cuban music in different ways. First there is the prominence of the guitar in the overall sound picture, to the extent that the music is often referred to as 'Congolese guitar music'. Today we usually don't associate guitar, at least not electric guitar, with Cuban popular music, but the Cuban *son* that influenced early Congolese rumba often used the *tres*, a guitar

¹⁶³ This whole paragraph is based on my readings of Bob White's research on soukous, mainly (2002), but also (1999, 2008).

¹⁶⁴ Belgian Congo, later Zaire, presently Democratic Republic of Congo, DRC.

‘cousin’, according to White.¹⁶⁵ The second musical feature is the importance of the *clave* rhythm, which has been transported from the claves (wooden sticks) in Cuba to the snare drum in Congolese rumba, at least since the 1970s:



Figure 11: Son clave

Third is the two-part song structure, somewhat resembling *son-montuno* style, where the music develops from a slow introduction with song, to a more lively part with instrumental solos. In soukous, the second part, called *seben*, has further developed as an indispensable dance part, where the songs are expected to lead to a new, energetic level, triggering and energizing the dancers. This is also where, in contemporary soukous, the toaster, or *atalaku*, comes in with his shouts and moves, which is the focus of another article by the same author (White, 1999). I will come back to the role of the toaster¹⁶⁶ in the performance analysis below.

¹⁶⁵ I do not find White’s hypothesis very convincing on this matter, as it seems too simple to ascribe *the* major instrument in soukous to ‘early influences’, dating back to the 1920s, as soukous has had a long history of borrowing elements and keeping an eye – or ear – on Cuban music all along the way. A different feature to elaborate on could be the long history of string instruments in sub-Saharan Africa, making the guitar an apparent choice for lead melody.

¹⁶⁶ The term ‘toaster’ is from Nasibu’s description of this figure, which he relates to a history of African praise singers. Interview with me, September 2009.

A Ras Nas performance in Mid-Norway

I will here offer a more detailed account of a performance that took place in Trondheim, a city in Mid-Norway, 12 December 2008.

Before the concert, I talked to its organizer. She had founded a local cultural organization to facilitate events like this, she told me, because she missed having a certain kind of concert to go to. She would not use the term ‘ethno music’ she said, because “it is more than that. It’s about conveying something positive”. I read the remark as “something positive about other cultures”. Other people confirmed that this organization was made up of an extended network of friends and associates with a shared interest in foreign cultures. Also, the organizer told me, this night’s audience had a component of another grouping, “reggae people”, whom she didn’t know.

The audience was made up of young to middle-aged adults, and 121 people – including myself – had paid for a ticket. Nasibu told me in advance he expected East Africans or Tanzanians living in Trondheim to come, as he had announced this performance on a blog, and people had responded, “Yes, we will support you”. But looking around, I only saw three African members of the audience, staying almost invisible in the background. One of them was also backstage and seemed to be a friend of a band member.

There was ample space on stage, and at least three technicians dealing with sound and light. The venue was an old dock-house by the river, in an area of old industrial brick buildings now housing cultural venues, offices and restaurants.

Some months before this concert Nasibu had told me he had two new musicians, young guys, from Congo or Burundi, he wasn’t sure which, his drummer, Uriel, was the one with contacts who had located them. “I think they’re still asylum seekers or something. They’re like soukous robots, they can just play and play.” The dialogue between the musicians during the preparations before the concert was in French, except for Nasibu and the guitarist, who spoke English. Apparently, the two new band members did not understand much English, nor

did Nasibu speak French, so there was a constant translation process going on through the Ivorian drummer.¹⁶⁷

There were six musicians on stage: the ‘soukous robots’¹⁶⁸ on bass and synthesizer, Uriel on the drums, a Swedish guitar player who had played with Nasibu on several occasions, and Nasibu on vocals and guitar. The sixth band member was going on and off the stage, depending on the songs he was taking part in. This was the *toaster*, or ‘shouter’, introducing himself to me as Ivorian, like Uriel.

Performing soukous

The following presentation is based on my video recording of the first set, which has seven songs plus a short instrumental intro, and lasts 59 minutes 45 seconds from the first to the last note. The songs are from 5.38 to 10.48 minutes long, the longest being the last song, *Asha*, the soukous song focused on by this analysis. Three of the songs in the first set were from Ras Nas’ then recently released CD, *Dar-es-Salaam*.

¹⁶⁷ I did not hear them speaking Swahili with Nasibu, so I assume they might not be from Burundi, after all.

¹⁶⁸ Since I cannot trace these performers, I am not using their names. This is not intended to increase the namelessness of African artists, but to protect the artists who haven’t responded to my request to present them under their full name.



Figure 12: Ras Nas on stage in Trondheim, December 2008. Photo by author.

Asha follows right after a downplayed and almost acoustic cover version of Bob Marley’s ‘Redemption song’, where Nasibu’s performance comes across as a very personal homage of *embodying* Marley on stage. The words “tribute” and “remember” are offered as cues to the audience after the last note. The contrast to the following dance music is effective, creating an energetic shift to leave the audience on a high note for the break. It goes as follows:

Nasibu turns to Uriel behind the drum set, who gives the name of the next song, twice, confirming with a nod. A short rehearsal of the intro is heard on the synth as Uriel gives the count with drumsticks. The guitar and synth join together in the fast two-bar melodic introduction to the song, which is repeated three times: guitar and synth on a falling melody, while the drummer is keeping the rhythm with only hi-hat 16ths on the melody, the tam accentuating the first beat of the next rounds. At the end of the third round, a drum fill cues the transition to the next, defining part: establishing the vamp and the rumba beat.

The vamp starts out with bass in the foreground. A chord progression A-D-E-D, stretching over two bars, starts off with the bass playing from the low A and up and down again, partly in a ‘walking bass’ fashion; forming the I-IV-V-IV progression as a 2-bar repeated pattern, with small variations in the last part of the figure, which is how he gets back to the Tonic A;



Figure 13: Core bass line of *Asha*

Common soukous cadenzas or vamps are I-IV-V, this vamp I-IV-V-IV, and I-II-V, usually without much added sevenths or other ‘spices’ from added notes, unlike the harmonic development of Cuban *son*. A feature known from many styles of African chord-based music is how the functional harmony received from Western music, the urge to lead towards a fulfilment on the Tonic, or I, is Africanized by cyclic repetition, which, although it does end on the I, is more of an ostinato, more directed at keeping it moving on. Here through going from the Dominant, V, and back to the Subdominant, IV, before returning to the Tonic, thus just walking up and then down the same steps again – a very cyclic and repeatable vamp that can keep rolling. And it *is* repeated: while the other instruments join in, the vamp runs eight times.

Establishing the *rumba* feel, the synth plays syncopated chords, leaving the first and third beat of each measure, accentuating the offbeat of the third beat, and leaving out the fourth completely:



Figure 14: Synth rhythm pattern

This is a basic rhythmic pattern with many variations, sometimes including an unaccentuated note on the one or four. The lead guitar joins in with high-pitched chords on the same rhythm, adding small melodies in the empty space at the end of each measure. After the first couple of rounds Nasibu grabs the microphone and announces, in the tones of a ringmaster: “Rumba Mumba!” Then he picks up the guitar, playing an arpeggio ostinato figure on the same rhythmic pattern, moving upwards on each chord. All in all the band is creating a ‘rolling’, repetitive feeling, the whole accompaniment moving up and down the same steps, to a catchy rumba beat. The feel is upbeat, the tempo is 136 bpm, the drums are constantly varying the basic driving rhythm – shared by the synth – between tam and snare, in a vivid rumba feel, which leaves an anticipating space on the one and three. The bass drum is playing all 4 beats straight, and the first half of the claves figure is constantly repeated on the hi-hat.

After eight rounds of establishing this rumba vamp, Nasibu starts singing, in Swahili. Like the typical themes of soukous, it is a love song, yet with a certain persuasive, even moralizing character.¹⁶⁹

Asha (Music and lyrics by Tabora Jazz Band and Shem Ibrahim Karenga)¹⁷⁰

(Sung intro)

Matubea, Matubea-oh (x 4)

Weki weki weki (x 2)

(Verse)

Asha usifuate mambo ya dunia

(Asha do not follow these earthly things)

Walimwengu watakupoteza ewe Asha

(People will only mislead you Asha)

Ukitaka ndege mimi n’tanunua Asha

(Even if you want a plane I will buy it for you Asha)

Matubea, Matubea-oh

(4x, then repeated from top)

¹⁶⁹ Translations by Nasibu Mwanukuzi.

¹⁷⁰ Cover of the Tabora Jazz Band hit *Asha*, ca 1970, yet in Ras Nas’ arrangement. In his adaptation, some verses are omitted, and the modern *seben* part is added.

(Vamp, instrumental / x 4)

Ashawe wee-a (x 3)

Asha mama,

Asha cherie (leading to bridge)

A large part of the audience are on their feet dancing during the first section, which is already quite danceable and vivid. Then comes a transition to the second part, following the logic of the *seben*, the lifting of the dancing floor to a new energetic level with the help of musical cues and the of the toaster's, or *atalaku*'s, art of enchantment.

A synth solo breaks off the music right after “*Asha cherie*”, with a sharper, louder sound, marking the transition, or a synth bridge, repeated eight times.

The sound itself is worth commenting on, as it stands out crisply, yet rounded, much like the sound of the classic soukous guitars, which normally operate in a very high-pitched layer, sometimes described as a ‘steel wire’ feel. That sound is not so much there in the guitars tonight, the sharpness comes rather from the synth, most recognizably when it is playing sections otherwise undertaken by sax or brass in Ras Nas’ recordings. I have observed Nasibu in studio and rehearsal wanting sharper, more synthesized sounds than the Norwegian keyboard players would normally choose, even if they know this genre well. Some writers ascribe such sound preferences in African popular music productions to how the accessible – i.e. cheap, instruments, old synthesizers dumped on the African markets after going out of fashion elsewhere – get pragmatically adopted as the sound preferences or ‘taste’ of producers and audiences alike. Yet even today this remains a preferred feature of much of African popular music – sounds far sharper and more synthetic than what is appreciated by a Western audience, which often finds it ‘cheesy’ or ‘cheap’, including what to many Westerners seems like over-use of reverb.¹⁷¹ Since such sounds persist after softer synth sounds and more ‘sophisticated’ reverb and EQs

¹⁷¹ Askerøi (2013) also discusses how this has become a sound idiom of its own, which is exploited as a sonic marker to relate musical productions to refer to ‘cheapness’ or ironizing over it.

have become easily and reasonably available in computer recording software, I am inclined to see this as a matter of aesthetic preference. In a studio session that I observed, Nasibu complained about a Norwegian keyboard player: “I keep telling him to use sharper sounds, but he always makes it rounder, adding Rhodes or something like that.”¹⁷²

Back to music: The *seben* part is highlighted by the snare drum accentuating the claves rhythm, which foregrounds a generally more upbeat and driving drumming. The bass doubles to playing eights and 16ths, which creates a faster feel. Nasibu lets go of the guitar, starts dancing, raising his arms, smiles.

The *seben* is described by White, and by Tanzanian musicians I have talked to, as a ‘faster’ part, but here the tempo is actually the same, only the subdivision of beats is smaller, and with the claves rhythm foregrounded by the snare, it creates a *feeling* that everything is faster.

A comment from my field log fits in here: “I think to myself that the two new musicians really *are* soukous-robots, as Nasibu said. For large parts of the concert they seem almost invisible on stage, not making any visual comments on their own virtuosity, still they play like a storm.” Or, more precisely: They play continuously, repetitively on patterns, yet making constant, slight variations that make the music dynamic and varied. But at one point the bass player puts on a small show; in the climax to follow he is centre stage, playing the bass on his neck, like a Jimi Hendrix.

During the instrumental lifting of the music to the second part, created by the synth breaking off with the sharp solo, the toaster – who up until this point in the song has danced discreetly at his microphone stand while backing on vocals – takes the mike from the stand, then starts dancing actively, using more space and drawing attention to himself. After the two-bar synth bridge has run eight times, he starts shouting rhythmically, in a high-pitched, full voice. Energetic shouts are repeated for a long period, seemingly improvised with the music;

¹⁷² Studio observation, February 2008.

Toaster: Chuma-ne, chuma ne, chuma ne, chumanela- ah (x2)	(Lingala expression?)
Chuma, chuma ne, chuma ne, chumanele	
[Sung section, inaudible]	
Tout le monde prekehe, prekehe, (x2) tout le monde,	(French: all together / Lingala?)
Rinketing, rinketing, rinketing, achumanechu (x2)	(Lingala?)
Allez, allez, allez, allez, allez (...) (x2)	(Fr: Come on, come on...)
Tout le fait, tout le fait, tout le fait, tout la [manné] ¹⁷³ (x2)	(Fr: all do it [the same])

The band keeps following the same, energetic *seben* groove. The toaster, in Norwegian:

Er dere klare? Er dere helt sikre?	(Are you ready? Are you quite sure?)
Vil dere danse?	(Do you want to dance?) [audience cheers]
Alle sammen, en, to, en	(All together, one, two, one)
Vi går ned, alle ned (X3),	(We go down, all down)
og så opp, opp, opp	(and then up, up, up)

The audience follows his moves, at least the most eager dancers in the front. He follows up with shouts, broken off by another synth solo. Then a new instruction follows:

Tout le monde	(Fr: All together)
Krinkata krinkata krinkata krinkata – bom-bom	

¹⁷³ What is pronounced ‘manné’ could be a mixing of *man* – man – with a corruption of *le monde* – the world, or ‘all’. The intention seems to be ‘everybody do it’, though grammatically correct it would have been; *tout le monde le fait* / *tout le monde faites-le*. ‘Manné’ could also be ‘monnaie’ – money, or change/coins, hinting at tips to be gathered.

While shouting he demonstrates a particular dance move, points to the drummer to follow his vocal rhythm, then turns to the audience, urging them to join him, all are supposed to jump forward with him on ‘krinkata’, hitting themselves on ‘bom-bom’.

Alle – en gang til

(All of you – once more)

The drum doubles the rhythm of his shouts, enhancing the dance moves demonstrated;

Krinkata krinkata krinkata krinkata – bom-bom

The role of the toaster

The toaster’s behaviour fits very well with Bob White’s description of the *atalaku*, who became popular in the later development of the soukous in Kinshasa during the 1980’s (White, 1999). The different popular, yet mostly anonymous *atalakus* hired to lift the performances of other artists were creating popular shouts that became the standard, shared repertoire of varying fashions, rather than improvised or personal shouts. I assume that some of the shouts in this performance are part of a standardized repertoire in *Lingala*, such as the ‘krinkata’ and ‘rinketing’, which may resemble the shouts intended to sound like money being counted, or thrown out, which also have a dance move to go with it.¹⁷⁴ Lingala is a language spoken in parts of Congo (DRC), not understood outside the country – and, according to White, most likely not understood by most toasters picking up its expressions. But the fashionable shouts persist in the practice of toasters elsewhere, especially in West Africa. A central feature in Kinshasa is also for the *atalaku* to encourage and collect tips, so this particular shout might be a hint of an otherwise unheard of asking for money.

¹⁷⁴ Thanks to fellow student researcher Kaitlyn Banchemo, who was researching Ivorian popular music, for providing this information during a research presentation at UCLA.

Precisely the role of the *atalaku* to push the limits of accepted behaviour – punning aspersions and comments on fellow musicians, women dancers and the audience – is the reason why White refers to this role as a *trickster*. At the same time the *atalaku* links himself to traditions of praise singers and lineage keepers, like the *griot* or *jali* of West Africa, by throwing in the names of donors and benefactors, or introducing and praising musicians. (In this performance, the toaster plays on the names ‘Nasibu’ and ‘Ras Nas’ in the first song.) Furthermore, the shouts of the *atalaku* are not necessarily to be understood; even in Kinshasa nobody understands all of what he is saying, which creates a certain mystery about this figure.

For this performance, Bob White’s perspectives on the *atalaku* offer another dimension to the next part of the experience:

The toaster pulls up a young woman from the first dancing row. While the drum and bass create a suspended ‘waiting space’ just spinning on one chord – band improvising, snare playing only the claves rhythm – he asks for her name. As the music runs back into the groove, and as the toaster starts shouting her name repeatedly, she turns to the audience and dances with rolling hips and arms behind her neck, while she moves down towards the floor. He shouts her name rhythmically, egging her on while she keeps dancing in the same manner.

To turn to my own experience here, as part of the ethnographic data: I was somewhat embarrassed when the performance took this turn, sensing the readily available stereotypical image of the sexualized ‘Other’, going in both directions: the blonde, amenable girl and the persistent male African. A stereotyped image of what used to be a forbidden, yet tempting sexuality, exploited in popular exotic depictions and literature for centuries (Strother, 1999). The image was softened by other people being invited to the stage; a man in his fifties dancing oddly, and another woman, increasing the numbers to become more of a group experience.

Shortly afterwards, the musicians find their way back together in an improvised end to the song, with a final shout “Chu!” from the toaster.

Performance roles and soukous as African cosmopolitanism

Bob White sees the *atalaku* as taking on a universal trickster role, as the one who gets away with sexualized comments and rude behaviour because he serves a vital social role (White, 1999). In soukous, this is the important role of creating the desired energy level for the dance, including educating the audience in new steps. This comment puts the above glimpse of performance in a specific light. On the one hand there is the image that came to my mind – and possibly mine alone – of the reciprocal otherization. On the other hand, based on White's comments, what the toaster is doing is helping the band create an intense peak at the end of the first set, even pulling the audience out of ordinary behaviour, into an *extraquotidian* space, the *transcendence* of the ordinary that music is sometimes described as offering – either music is approached as 'art' or 'popular culture' (Bjørkvold, 1992). Representing, or *re-enacting* so closely as it does the patterns established in soukous practice spreading from Kinshasa, rather than being an example of African artists playing into the stereotypical and exoticized images of themselves, this performance may be read as a musical practice that insists on its own understanding of an African urban identity, carried in a continuum of popular music practices through urban club scenes from Kinshasa to the rest of contemporary Africa, and then to the rest of the world.

In *Congolese rumba and other cosmopolitanisms* (2002), White argues that soukous is not so much Congolese, as urban Kinshasa¹⁷⁵ music that became popular as a way of expressing cosmopolitanism and urban style without having to borrow from the Belgian colonizers' Western modernity:

My central argument is that Afro-Cuban music became popular in the Congo not only because it retained formal elements of "traditional" African musical performance, but also because it stood for a form of urban cosmopolitanism that was more accessible - and ultimately more pleasurable - than the various models of European cosmopolitanism which circulated in the Belgian colonies in Africa. (White, 2002, p. 664)

¹⁷⁵ Formerly, under Belgian colonial rule and when soukous developed, known as *Leopoldville*.

When *outside* of Africa soukous is often, in the world music search for ‘roots’ and authenticity, conceptualized as ‘traditional’. So, the same music has come to mean ‘traditional’ and ‘modern’ to different groups, highlighting the cultural discourse that Palmberg and Baaz point out (2001): that it is difficult to convey Africa as anything but ‘traditional’, since tradition is persistently held to be a qualifier for authenticity in communicating African cultures. In this performance there are obviously elements quite different from ‘tradition’ being played out. It is thus White’s concept of the cosmopolitan, urban African that I wish to explore further. Based on his description of the way soukous expresses an urban, cosmopolitan African modernity, I understand *cosmopolitanism* as a discourse on the individual as ‘belonging in the world’, rather than the set of international *rights* that the term cosmopolitanism has also come to express (Gilroy, 2004). One way that this ‘belonging in the world’ is expressed and understood is through connecting to discourses, identity narratives and cultural expressions that contain such a global dimension.

Soukous and reggae as ‘Black Atlantic’ reconnections

In itself, soukous represents a cultural reconnection or backflow across the Atlantic, from musical styles that developed in African diasporas – particularly in Cuba – and back into the ‘heart of Africa’, geographically and metaphorically speaking. It is also apparent that in the popularization of this music in Congo, and elsewhere in Africa, there was a consciousness of the popularization of ‘rumba’ as a re-connection – of something African returning from the diaspora to Africa – although White does not want to interpret the music too far along these lines, afraid of essentializing African-ness in the music *per se*. Rather, he emphasizes the *constructional* aspect, seeing how a cosmopolitan African identity is enabled and established through this practice.

The aspect of transcontinental, diasporic ‘reconnection’ in soukous is a very clear example of the ‘Black Atlantic’ that Paul Gilroy conceptualizes (1993). Gilroy points out how there is a sense among descendants of Africans living

outside of Africa of a *diaspora*, and in the rise of postcolonial consciousness this diasporic identity has often offered *Africentric*¹⁷⁶ narratives as an alternative to the well-established Eurocentric perspectives of history and geography. A well known narrative in this respect is the Rastafarianism of Jamaica, which blends religion and history – and music – to form a story of an African homeland and grand purpose (an imagined homeland, many would say, a mythical ‘Zion’), exported globally through reggae music and culture (Daynes, 2004; Gilroy, 1993).

Gilroy criticizes the types of essentialism applied to and also the ones found inside African diasporic cultures. But he also criticizes the anti-essentialism that, for fear of making essentialist assumptions on what is ‘African’, fails as a consequence to recognize the shared cultural and intellectual flows between the African diasporas and Africa. To illustrate these flows, Gilroy coins the term ‘the Black Atlantic’ as a metaphor of how ideas and cultural expressions have been moving between black communities, crossing the Atlantic connecting Africa, Europe and the Americas, creating flows in all directions, not just from Africa outwards. His conclusions seem to be – in the way that he moves from laying out the dilemmas to moving into the cultural examples – that one should investigate how these flows are manifesting themselves and what they have in common, without tracing ‘roots’ or ‘essence’ of African-ness back to African *origins*, but investigating what the circulating themes – or, we may say, *discourses* – are, and how they are manifested. Gilroy thus seeks to explore what these African connections consist in and create, without tracing them to a fixed ethnicity, seeing ethnic identity as an infinite process of construction.¹⁷⁷

Both soukous and reggae are then examples of the ‘Black Atlantic’, in the way they move between continents while retaining and nourishing an Africentric

¹⁷⁶ Gilroy consequently uses the term ‘Africentric’ where others say ‘Afrocentric’. I believe this is a statement that its focus is somehow centred on Africa, not on ‘Afro’, which is a somewhat outdated term associated with ‘African-ness’.

¹⁷⁷ The link to Foucault’s ideas of how discourse creates its subject is evident, although Gilroy’s constructivism stands on its own feet.

perspective. But while reggae has been associated with testimonies of political, religious and ethnic struggle, the soukous seems to be associated with an African identity and image that is little attached to political or emancipatory connotations, despite the extremely troubled history of Congo up until this date. Still, such connotations have never stopped reggae from becoming party music, nor stopped both styles blending together, as in the stage appearance of Ras Nas. But while the reggae developed in an African diaspora yearning for the ‘homeland’, the soukous developed in the middle of Africa from a desire to be worldly. Both are examples of how music becomes a tool for creating a meta-space that can be inhabited – and occupied – through musical practice.

Ras Nas’ performance as establishing a diasporic space

Speaking from this point of view, we may thus see how particularly the last performance described is approaching an *envisioned* Congo from many sides; from East and West Africa, and also from the distant diaspora in Norway, creating Ras Nas as a cosmopolitan, modern African who easily finds his way to new urban settings.¹⁷⁸ At the same time this performance presents some imagery of popular African-ness that may be deconstructed as stereotypical. Both these interpretations, however, are plausible, and alive *in* the performance. What the performance description and subsequent comparisons with the literature accentuate, is how the artists – or, in this case Ras Nas – makes use of a large bundle of cultural threads, woven together in a shared experience between a somewhat multiculturally oriented audience, and a cosmopolitan-African

¹⁷⁸ I argue that the music performed is more of a re-enactment of the Congolese soukous than of the ‘Tanzanian Jazz’ or *Muziki wa densi* – the Tanzanian version of the popular dance music spreading from Congo from the 1960s and 70s (Kirkegaard, 1995). This performance adds the toaster, and also musically differs from the cooler Tanzanian dance style that initially inspired Ras Nas. I have, however, not explored to what extent this style of performance also corresponds with the more recent development of the soukous in East Africa, yet my point is that this diasporic performance creates a more trans-African *form* by incorporating performers and performance styles from both eastern, western and central regions of Africa, yet with a clear orientation towards Congo.

orientated artist and ensemble, creating his own performance space where these connotations are alive on many levels. This is the space of the cosmopolitan ‘African in the world’, the modernity of a popular club scene brought from the envisioned Congo, or urban Kinshasa, to a stage in Mid-Norway, or anywhere this space can be recreated.

Two types of diaspora

Juxtaposing and comparing the two performances, what stands out is the ways in which they are different and similar: in one, there was an East African diasporic audience observing a not-so-genuine soukous band, where, for example, the important guest-starring *toaster* was missing. In the second, there was a local, mostly Norwegian audience observing a soukous performance that more closely resembled the styles of performance that Ras Nas draws upon. Rather than speculating on why one performance was artistically more successful than the other, what my analysis points out is how *diaspora* comes to mean different things, most visibly in how it establishes different spaces. In the first, there was a concrete reconnecting diasporic performance that the audience was looking for, tying them to a present-day scene in Dar es Salaam as a shared point of reference. This connected diaspora has been made possible by recent vehicles of globalization – such as Appadurai’s ‘mediascapes’ (1996) – creating a type of diaspora that is no longer an island out of touch with its ‘motherland’ or point of reference, but constituted by webs and trajectories of communication and travel that keep going back and forth between the diaspora and the shared point of reference it connects to. In the second performance, what emerges is how the performers establish a diasporic space *out of* time and place, connecting to ideas of the African in the world – such as the diasporic narrative of *reggae* music, coupled with the cosmopolitan urbanity of soukous practice. The artistic diaspora that Ras Nas establishes is thus creating its own in-between space constituted by a historic image of an urban, modern Africa, and an overarching cosmopolitan African-ness that finds its home anywhere in the world.

In Chapter 2 I discussed the term ‘hybridity’, where Bhabha (1994) suggested that rather than using the term *hybridity*, which suggests that diasporic life realities and narratives of self were only a mixture of some ‘pure’ origins, scholars should be exploring the *in-between spaces* – diasporic ones, implicitly – which individuals shape for their life situations and identities. When I apply Bhabha’s term and perspective of *in-between space* to this practice, I consider the term is taken even further, as this space is not just one shaped by narratives in a new context for one individual, it also represents a connection to a shared, narrated and virtual space.

Conclusions

What I have discovered through these analyses is how the performances of Ras Nas actively link to the idea, or the *reality* of diaspora as a global virtual space, enabled through a ‘Black Atlantic’ consciousness, and by re-enacting particular modes of performance. By connecting to narratives of the ‘African in the world’ – here in the form of soukous and reggae, which approach Africa narratively from the inside and outside – ideas and images are connected to global discourses of African-ness. These images make up historical discourses of ‘the African in the world’ that still create spaces possible to inhabit. I argue that through his musical practice, Nasibu, in the role of Ras Nas, establishes and inhabits a virtual diasporic space, which does not require a particular present-day scene *in* Africa, but carries Africa with it as a space that goes beyond its geographical and even historical boundaries.

An auxiliary point is how this reality puts my initial focus on *recontextualization* into a new light. By recontextualization I have been referring to how the artists observed are re-contextualized into Norwegian scenes and discourses through their practices situated in Norway. Through the analysis in this chapter the relevance of Norway as a context goes right into the background, as the recontextualization into virtual and global spaces of diaspora is foregrounded.

The functions of diaspora and diasporic bonds will be further explored in the next chapter, observing how an artist of a different generation and genre utilizes these realities on an even broader basis.

CHAPTER 8:

TAKING IT BACK

- Musical reconnections of the diaspora

Background: hip hop and discourses of otherness

So far in this dissertation I have mainly referred to observations of the various practices of Kossa Diomande and Nasibu Mwanukuzi. This has followed from a grounded theory logic, where the leads of certain topics have been unfolding from my initial questions, developing through several phases of my work. There was one aspect, however, that I laid aside for a later stage of my fieldwork. This concerned questions stemming from the absence of youth on the scenes that I was initially exploring, and a couple of striking contrasts between observations of hip hop performances and more ‘world’ orientated scenes. As is discussed in Chapter 1, I sensed that the hip hop scenes I encountered had a different approach to representations of difference, and thus possibly could shed light from a different angle on my questions on how African immigrant performers treated discourses of ‘otherness’ in their practices.

As I entered into these issues at a later stage of my work, after already having observed the practices of Kossa and Nasibu for some time,¹⁷⁹ I was well aware that I could not cover the whole concept of cultural diversity found in hip hop practices and scenes. Rather, it was a specific follow-up on several issues that pointed me in the same direction for the theoretical sample of a third main artist

¹⁷⁹ My first fieldwork observation of Stella Mwangi was a performance in Kristiansand in June 2008, before I had finally decided I would include her in this work. The observations where I was conscious of including her in the data for this dissertation, were from September 2009 and onwards.

to include in this work: youth, African-ness, hip hop, diaspora, and urban culture.¹⁸⁰ Which, I found, were all likely to be treated in the musical practice of Stella Mwangi, a young female rap artist born in 1986, who came to Norway at just four years old with her Kenyan parents, who were political refugees.

My questions to these observations were, first, as they were with the other observations: how and whether discourses of otherness would be treated, in this case in the hip hop practice of a Kenyan immigrant in Norway. Second, through this outlook I hoped to explore hip hop's possibly alternative treatment of the issues raised, and yet to get deeper into this than my initial impressions of a kind of 'sameness' established on hip hop scenes.

"Small places, big places"

It was late September in Lillehammer, the winter Olympic town, which was already getting quite cold in the afternoon. Despite the chill, I discovered that tonight's concert was to be held outdoors at a local high school, as if insisting that the summer season with its outdoor cultural events was still not over. I walked from the railway station, finding my way to the venue at the outskirts of the town, on a hillside near the Olympic ski stadiums. I found a small crowd of young people cheering as teams from their schools competed in a cookery competition, inspired by a TV reality concept. Subsequently, on an elevated modular stage with lighting and side drapes, a few skits were acted out by other students, before tonight's show gradually moved up the ranks of professionalism: A local Michael Jackson-imitator-dancer received applause, a local young singer performed cover songs, and a DJ offered cool dance beats for a while, before the host announced the last performing acts and headliners: second last was Stella Mwangi, before the last, and hottest at the moment: Lars

¹⁸⁰ Opening this new investigation in my work thus also closed some doors thematically. This is the grounded theory methodology of not following all the leads of the new data, but rather the ones that connected to the stage that my research was currently at.

Vaular, a rap artist from Bergen with this year's summer hit: 'Solbriller på' - 'Sunglasses on'.

This local cultural happening, a local organizer informed me, was called 'UFO – *Ungdom Formidler Opplevelser*, or 'Youth Providing Experiences', a regional initiative where youth from neighbouring municipalities were allowed a budget to organize cultural events for other young people in the region. "So, why Stella Mwangi?" I asked. "Well, she was here two years ago, and some of the older kids saw her then, and wanted to invite her back." "Is she well known among this group?" "I suppose not, I reckon most people here have never heard of her". A statement that contrasted somewhat with the enthusiastic introduction of Stella by the host:

Host speaker: (...) She was here for a similar happening to this two years ago, but at Vargstad High School. Her hit 'Radio Tuning' has been on turntables a lot lately, among others on NRJ,¹⁸¹ she's been headlining a hip hop festival in Texas, performing at *NRJ in the Park* and *Norway Cup* – ladies and gentlemen: This is Stella Mwangi!

After a brief applause there is a twenty second interval of silence. Then the stage fills with smoke, a DJ appears behind a draped table at the back of the stage, and a murky beat starts pumping slowly, almost like a heartbeat. Two female backing vocalists in dark party dresses line up at the right front of the stage. Then, as the DJ introduces a grand piano theme into the beat, expanding the sound picture from the lo-fi to a wall of soul-like sound, Stella, in blue leather jacket and purple tights, and with straight reddish hair, appears out of the smoke and lights. She addresses the audience in a voice curving down for dramatic effect:

Går det bra, Lillehammer? ("Are you OK, Lillehammer?")

And, still in this musical, dramatic voice:

Trekk litt nærmere til scenen! ("Draw a little closer to the stage!").

¹⁸¹ NRJ, 'Energy', is an international hit radio station, which was at the time also broadcasting in nine cities and urban areas in Norway. See www.nrj.no and www.nrj.com

From speaking the messages she moves directly into the music, speaking, or rapping, in the same voice, aptly introducing herself through the title track of her album ‘Living for Music’:

I say, welcome to my world, this is a new girl...

A welcoming shout arises from the small crowd of some twenty teenagers standing in front of the stage, while three or four girls try to be a better crowd, waving their hands during the song, stretching out to Stella on the stage, who in return touches their hands from time to time as she passes by. Four to five metres behind this small crowd, three boys in baseball caps and hooded sweaters line up, stick their thumbs in their front pockets, and start nodding simultaneously yet almost invisibly in sync with the beat, producing a subtle synchronized movement. Behind them, as the asphalted school recess area shifts to a grassy hill, a scattered and more detached crowd is sitting, standing, observing the stage show from around the mixing desk.



Figure 15: Stella Mwangi (to the left) on stage in Lillehammer, September 2009. Photo by Sindre Vesterås / UFO, courtesy of photographer.

Becoming a hip hop community

My first notes¹⁸² read: “She’s giving everything for a modest audience”, indicating a well-produced stage show that felt a little out-of-this-world in this small and increasingly freezing schoolyard. With smoke, lights, rehearsed dance moves, good sound, energetic show, and just the way the whole urban expression, the ‘hip hop experience’ was created, reproducing a space of sound and behaviour that could be recognized anywhere as some kind of a hip hop get-together or community.

The contrast – or even incongruity – between the urbanity or *worldliness* of the expression on stage, and the very modest and local venue and audience was striking, as the major part of the audience was just standing there, hardly moving, not giving much feedback. Backstage, after the show, I asked Stella how she felt about the performance. First she complained about the DJ’s CD player skipping due to a swaying stage, messing up the beats, like songs stopping half way through (which I hadn’t even noticed, and supposed the audience didn’t either). I then hinted at the smallish and, at least at first, somewhat reserved audience. “That’s OK” she said, “The audience was great. It’s our job to get them going. Small places, big places.”

And, true, gradually the whole place *had* turned from a ‘small place’, a local schoolyard with reserved kids, into being something else: bit by bit it *became* a hip hop venue. A recognizable ‘hip hop community’ was established through small markers of known behaviour, from the boys nodding in sync, producing the cool response, to the audience gradually taking part in the dipping hands-down responses initiated from the stage as the show got more energetic, and the stage call to encourage more audience response: “Let’s hear some nooise, Lillehammer!” The reality of the stage space gradually seemed to extend into the audience, until the small crowd moved in sync with the performers in what

¹⁸² During this performance, as with others, I took keyword notes on my mobile phone, as if sending messages. This offered a discreet way to note down immediate experiences and reflections to be fleshed out afterwards.

appeared as an intimate space between the stage and (at least the front of) the audience, transforming the local space into what could be recognized anywhere as a hip hop venue or even community.

I noted, asking myself:

What is hip hop? Is it a shared area? Not much ethnicity on stage here, the way I read it.¹⁸³

In hindsight this question seems more like a statement and early conclusion than a question: this was why I was there in the first place, since I had already experienced hip hop as being more of a ‘common ground’. Based on observations from my screening of artists at the hip hop venues at *Musikkfest Oslo* in 2007 and 2008, and a few other hip hop scenes, I thus already had an idea of hip hop as a way immigrant youth could represent themselves while focusing less on their difference. What I had observed was that a broad diversity of immigrant youth could be strongly represented on stage and in the audiences, yet – unlike more world orientated scenes and ‘official’ representations of cultural diversity, such as school performances – this evident cultural diversity was not thematized as such. Not as *diversity*. Sometimes lyrics performed in these hip hop venues would express experiences of marginality, thus any immigrant group could pick up on or inherit one African-American reality often expressed in rap; the ‘ghetto’, and the underdog position and experience of oppression or marginalization. Other times, such as in the debates referred to below on the ‘hip hop summit’ of AYIN, Afrikan Youth in Norway, the ideas of hip hop and rap were thematized as a specifically African heritage, which both may show some inspiration from or affiliation to the Afrocentrism of reggae, or the black pride or self consciousness of African-American rap, as a second inherited feature. Still, this inheritance of the ‘African’ element in hip hop had a clear character of *appropriation*, something being made available for all.¹⁸⁴

¹⁸³ Again, field notes made on my phone during the performance. Originally in Norwegian.

¹⁸⁴ Knudsen (2008) argues that the young immigrants he observes in Oslo do not primarily regard rap as being *African-American* – it’s just theirs. I don’t see any conflict between this

Hip hop and rap as urban culture

Reflected in the vague terminology ‘hip hop and rap’, there seems to be a general consensus among both scholars and insiders on seeing hip hop in terms of *culture*, or – if preferring this terminology – subculture, and rap as its major musical expression. Yet hip hop culture also contains multiple musical and other expressions and markers, with a predominance of urban – and *low* urban – references and imagery of clothing, dance, street art (such as graffiti) and vernacular language. For the latter, the adoption of local and immigrant language and slang into rap keeps forming an innovative and localizing element (Knudsen, 2008; Mitchell, 2001; Rose, 1994).

Furthermore, the culture of hip hop seems to operate on two levels. First, through mainstream globally commoditized expressions, such as the multimillion dollar industry of the popular music market where rap blends into R&B and pop, and where it is difficult to say when it stops being hip hop. Second, it still retains its credibility as *street* expression and young protest culture, which again is part of the imagery the popular artists pick up, so there is a circular movement of images taking place. It is on the ‘street’ level, too, that we may find the global appeal of hip hop and rap, where a multitude of young performers worldwide take up hip hop expressions and imagery to be *appropriated* into localized forms.

This local adaptation has, as Mitchell (et al.) have pointed out, become a global phenomenon that not only tries to mimic its origin in African-American expression, but appropriates the symbols and themes of hip hop and rap to form expressions anchored locally through language, themes, and ownership of the genre, to express the life realities, struggles, counter-culture and identity of people in their own local contexts (2001). Hip hop is thus mainstream in its global reach and deep impact in youth culture, yet remains exclusive in order to nourish group affiliation through its sign language; it does not include all

observation and my argument of immigrant youth inheriting or appropriating African-American discourses and images of subaltern-ness.

generations, or even all youth. Like any genre it thus has its *distinctions* (Bourdieu, 1984), which are set not only to include, but also exclude.

In the interview Stella uses ‘urban music’ as synonymous with rap, which reflects how hip hop and rap have been seen from the outset as representing *urban* youth culture, with its imagery, expressions and themes, which are then possible to obtain through local appropriation.

Providing urbanity

At the moment of my observations of Stella on stage in Lillehammer, it already seemed clear that this stage appearance went beyond representing African-ness, which is the implicit conclusion in the questions I noted: this is apparently some kind of a shared area, at least there is something going on here different from the minority/majority discourse of cultural ‘encounters’, which tends to focus on ethnicity, recognizing cultural difference, and origin.

For the audience, Stella was not on stage representing ‘African-ness’, or ‘Norwegian-ness’ for that matter. She was there as a young urban artist, creating, together with the audience and its responses, a shared experience of belonging in young, urban culture. This observation thus demonstrates how a very local and modest venue was being *made* urban and global. Stella’s African origin was apparent, yet her function was to represent *urbanity* to a small place. The local, young audience received her as an artist of an urbanity that they aspired to, and she possessed.¹⁸⁵

¹⁸⁵ Berkaak (2002) reflects that in popular music as such, ethnic *otherness* may actually be an asset that offers a particular credibility, arguing that “...cultivating ethnic otherness has been a key part of the genre project throughout the 20th century” (p. 5, my translation). This would be even more true in hip hop, and I am not overlooking that this may be part of the credibility that Stella possesses on stage. My point above is just that this is not a performance of cultural difference, but one that is establishing a community that shares a certain imagery and certain discourses.

Through the subsequent analyses and reflections I will demonstrate how Stella has access to this urbanity through a cosmopolitan diasporic strategy, which also becomes a fundament for and orientation of her work.

Making it big – in Africa

Stella's comments about "small places, big places" may serve as a pointer for the relationship between different sites in her practice; between the local and the global, and, more concretely, between the place where she was born and has family ties, and the place that she lives, in the diaspora. The observation of how Stella brings urbanity to a 'small place' through her performance in Lillehammer thus becomes a point of departure in a story of how diasporic reconnections are utilized in the shaping of a musical career.

The next 'big place' appears just one month after the show in Lillehammer, in Nairobi in October 2009: Stella Mwangi is called onto the stage in the TV studio hall as a finalist in the 'Best new act' of MTV Africa. The crowd – probably mainly made up of Kenyans – cheers loudly, shouting her name, as she moves into performing her hit 'She got it', which has been aired on MTV Africa lately. Yet in Kenya it is just the latest in a series of hits that have given her a name on the Kenyan hip hop and pop scene in the last couple of years.

On her blog she wrote:

I have had the best time at the MTV Africa Music Awards in Nairobi, Kenya. Even though I didn't win the award, I felt **I won the people cause they showed me so much love**. It all felt like a dream! I met the two guys who truly inspire me to the fullest. WYCLEF JEAN and AKON!!!!¹⁸⁶

¹⁸⁶ Blog entry at stellamwangi.com 14 October 2009 (Mwangi, 2009). English as in original, also bold and capitalized text as in original.

In the interview with me one month later, she described this experience:

I've got a very large *fan base* [in Kenya]. When they were to announce '*The best new act*', who the winner was, the whole *crowd* said my name about five times in a row, but then another one won. What Akon said to me afterwards was: 'You know, you should have won, but you must remember you won the people. Not winning *the award* means nothing, but receiving so much love means a lot.'¹⁸⁷

Reception

The reception at the MTV Africa awards – including the mingling with major international hip hop stars Akon and Wyclef Jean – contrasts not only by its glamour and size with a local Norwegian venue. It also contrasts with the reception Stella received in the media in Norway on the same release that brought her the nomination from MTV Africa.

When Stella Mwangi released her album *Living for Music* in 2008, the single *Take it back* was already a hit, particularly in Kenya. And although *Dagbladet*, a major Norwegian newspaper,¹⁸⁸ promoted her broadly on several occasions and across a number of pages (as in 2008 under the header: “Hey! Ei Norsk jente som faktisk kan rappe!” – “Hey! A Norwegian girl who can actually rap!”), she had yet to break through to a larger Norwegian audience.

¹⁸⁷ Interview with me, November 2009. My translation from Norwegian, *italics* mark words originally in English.

¹⁸⁸ *Dagbladet* is one of the largest Norwegian newspapers, a non-subscription Oslo based paper, often counted as the most important ‘cultural’ paper in Norway, despite its tabloid news approach.



Figure 16: Facsimile of front page of colour supplement *Dagbladet Fredag*, 8 August 2008

The part of the reception in Norway that did trigger the most attention and debate was the critique of her album in October 2008 in *Natt & Dag*, a free, yet culturally significant ‘street’ newspaper in Oslo (Øverland, 2008). Here music critic Andreas Øverland ripped the album apart in a rather blunt manner, giving it 2 out of 6 points, illustrated by a frowning ‘smiley’. After quoting *Dagbladet*’s homage to her, he went on to state that:

The debut disc from this new superstar, the country’s greatest talent and God knows what else *Dagbladet Fredag* has not implied, is in fact far from the level it should have been at. Particularly with the adjectives and previews taken into account. (Hopelessly titled) *Living For Music* does not bear witness to a Norwegian superstar. It doesn’t even bear witness to a real new artist. *Living For Music* is just another disc that will sell less than fifteen hundred copies. Another Norwegian urban act that disappeared before it arrived. (Øverland, 2008. My translation, parenthesis as in original)

When her manager in Norway responded by publicly accusing the critique of racist motivation, even referring to private communication with Øverland to support this claim, a long public debate followed, particularly on the web pages

of VG and Dagbladet, both major national newspapers.¹⁸⁹ Øverland shrugged off the accusations, stating that it was his job to offer an honest view, and that any polite critique would actually be more racist, possibly hinting at Dagbladet's massive promotion of her.¹⁹⁰

Evidently the reception of this album was vastly different in Norway and Kenya. In Norway she was celebrated by some media, particularly by Dagbladet, and had some enthusiastic blog followers, yet, although she had been the opening act for various international female rap artists visiting Norway, she was not known to a broad public and was usually performing in local venues like the one opening this chapter, and 'below the radar' of popular media. In Kenya, on the other hand, she was celebrated as a major new artist, marked out by the MTV Africa award nomination and performance.¹⁹¹

Although diverging reception between Norway and Kenya is not necessarily so surprising for any album, it could be rewarding to observe this discrepancy between the contexts that she is performing in, and ask what it is telling us. In the following, I will look more deeply into how this discrepancy in reception may illustrate concepts on two levels: on the macro- or structural level, I argue that this reflects the relationships between different cultures and continents. On the micro- or agent level, I read this as artistic strategies; how a young artist

¹⁸⁹ The debate in Dagbladet was on its daughter web page for celebrity news, www.kjendis.no

¹⁹⁰ It is not known if it resulted from this unusual and clumsy support from a manager, yet the fact is that Stella broke with her manager in Norway shortly afterwards.

¹⁹¹ It is difficult to tell sometimes just *how* big someone is in a different country. In Stella's case, sales figures in Kenya are difficult to obtain, and there is a huge 'street' market that is not counted anyway. The number of blog and web comments – such as those on YouTube, seeming to be coming from a lot of Kenyans – does offer a hint, but apart from this what we are left with are the narratives offered in promotion. This promotional mode seems to also be found in the way she is presented at Lillehammer as someone who "headlined a Texas hip hop festival". Being fairly unknown, this seems likely to be an exaggeration of having performed at a festival (depending, of course, on the size and type of festival. And the speaker is probably referring to Kansas, not Texas), but being nominated as the 'best new act' on MTV Africa – not only nationally in Kenya, but for the whole continent – is indisputably significant.

navigating different markets and national scenes has worked to utilize particular diasporic bonds to create an international career.

Becoming an artist

Stella Mwangi grew up in Eidsvoll, a very small town an hour's train ride from Oslo – a town every school kid knows for being the place where the Norwegian constitution was ratified in the year 1814, and for little else. As a young adult she moved to Lillestrøm, a larger town closer to Oslo, now in many respects a suburb to the capital city. Her artistic career grew out of the association 'Afrikan Youth in Norway' (AYIN) and particularly the 'R.I.S.E' project lasting from 1998 to 2003, which also featured other young artists who have grown to be more established.¹⁹²

Tormod: How did you become an artist?

Stella: My dad used to come to our school to teach us [me and my sister] Swahili and Kikuyu, and included Kenyan songs in his teaching. I think I was about seven. Then my sister and I started to perform at his university, after his professor invited us to perform at a party. (...)

[Later,] rap came by itself. It was Express yourself through rhythm and poetry. (...) When I was eleven, my dad contacted [the leader] of Afrikan Youth in Norway. We learned to write our own songs. That's how it all started. After that it's just been going upwards. (...)

Afrikan Youth taught us a lot, but you decide for yourself whether you want to be an artist for the rest of your life, or just have it as a hobby. I was one of those who chose to have it for the rest of my life.

Tormod: What does Afrikan Youth in Norway mean by 'African'?

¹⁹² Sources: My interview with Stella in November 2009, my interview with the leader of AYIN in 2007, and the Norwegian Wikipedia page on AYIN (Wikipedia, 2013a).

Stella: I learned to be proud to be an African. Outside of Africa, too. Learn to use your African rhythms, African *knowledge and everything*, in the area where you are, teach people what being African means. (...) AYIN wanted to gather all African youth in Oslo and as far as they could reach from there, to feel they were not alone.¹⁹³

Africa as centre

From an hour-long interview, this is the initial part where Stella presents her artistic background, which has also been presented in various versions in the media and in her web bio; performing from childhood, the youth projects, the pride in expressing herself, namely by putting her experiences into words over beats. In several presentations – but not in this interview – this is presented as an act of fighting racism and prejudice. A main category emerging from this interview extract is the link between African-ness and expression: “*Express yourself through rhythm and poetry*”.

I will explore further the discursive connections between these narratives, her songs, the ideas of the organization that brought her forward as an artist, and her career development or artistic strategy. They all seem to deal with ideas of Africa and African-ness in similar ways, where Africa plays the role of the *centre*. Without making this a causal connection (as if saying: “Stella has an Afrocentric point of view *because of* her background in AYIN”), my analysis indicates that an Afrocentric orientation is present both explicitly in the statements of the organization Afrikan Youth in Norway – which is disseminating an Afrocentric discourse actively through its work, seminars and media statements – and implicitly in Stella’s self representation through her narrative, in some of her songs, and in the orientation of her artistic career.

Afrikan Youth in Norway (AYIN) has a declared objective to offer support for young people in Norway of African heritage, with a base in Oslo and “as far out as they can reach from there”, which apparently included Eidsvoll. In an informal interview in 2007, the leader of AYIN at the time expressed their

¹⁹³ Interview with me, November 2009. My translation from Norwegian.

philosophy to me as ‘Afrocentric’, which he defined as describing history and the world with Africa as the centre of events, seeing Africa as the major mover behind historical processes.¹⁹⁴

In AYIN’s programme for various annual versions of *Afrikan History Week* – such as the one I was observing in June 2007, presented in Chapter 1 – this Afrocentrism is linked to rap in a particular way: venues with rap performances and debates are named ‘Street Prophets’, actively challenging what they see as a commercial and superficial rap scene that has ousted and supplanted the original prophetic voice of rap through ‘bling-bling’ and gangster imagery. For AYIN, rap and hip hop are ways of expressing African consciousness. Or, as Umar bin Hassan expressed at the ‘Street Prophet’ roundtable debate: “We’re all part of a global African village.”¹⁹⁵

Such a statement of the ‘global African village’, put forward in an international board of artists of African heritage, seemed to speak to the spirit of the event. But it also referred to a seemingly shared idea of hip hop – and rap in particular – as expressions of an underlying ‘African’ reality, and ‘Africa’ as an entity beyond its geography. In the interview, I asked AYIN’s leader about this statement, which was repeated and underscored by him as the debate chair. “It only means that we’re claiming it [rap] as ours, not that all rappers are African.” The statement confirms the role of an Afrocentric outlook: to place Africa – and oneself as an African – at the centre of events. This perspective on Africa as the ‘centre of events’ also holds true for the way Stella built her career when establishing herself as a musical artist.

¹⁹⁴ Informal interview October 2007, which had as its primary focus to learn more about AYIN, while also asking for help in finding relevant hip hop artists of immigrant background in Norway whom it might be interesting to observe further. It was in this interview that he pointed to Stella as one of a handful of young hip hop artists in Norway who might be of interest to me.

¹⁹⁵ Umar Bin Hassan from Last Poets (US), a collective of slam poets, which Rose (1994) sees as one of the important predecessors of rap. The debate took place at a ‘Street Prophet’ and ‘Hip Hop Summit’ roundtable debate, June 07 at *Cafe Sør* in Oslo, as part of ‘Afrikan History Week’ – www.afrikanhistoryweek.com

Musical reconnections

As part of the overall exploration of Stella Mwangi's artistic strategies, I will present her track 'Take it back', a hit single from 2007 and part of her debut album *Living for music* (2008), to demonstrate how 'Take it back' was placing her between Kenya and Norway, yet mostly addressing a Kenyan or (East) African audience. The opening rap lyrics of 'Take it back' offer a story of the artist reconnecting with her family in Kenya:

Lyrics, Stella Mwangi feat. Michelle: 'Take it back'
(Mwangi, Kwambo, & Rogstad, 2008).¹⁹⁶

I'm on my way back home
Already packed my bags can't wait to get home
Clear everything else away
Don't wanna do nothing else but walk my way. I'm going
Back to Kenya, back to the fine weather
Back to grandma, ain't nothing else I'd rather
Sit on the porch and drink grandma's porridge
Talk to my elder, listen while they speak knowledge
Next morning be on my way to Nairobi
Do another song bet now they all know me
And magazine can write all kinds of bullshit
But let me tell you this, STL will always do this
Lift your hands swing them around like a million buck
Make sure everybody here knows what's up
It's been a while now finally I'm coming home
With the perfect beat, go a head and shake it all

Chorus (sung):

Heshima kwa huyu dada,
Jamani anetoka far

Tunawakilisha and,
We're taking it back just taking it back
Rumblin's beat -we're on fire,
STL, Michelle aha

Translation¹⁹⁷

Respect (to) this sister
People, she came (all the way) from
far
We are representing, *and*
We're taking it back just taking it back
Rumblin's beat -we're on fire,
STL, Michelle aha

¹⁹⁶ Lyrics from CD booklet, *Living for Music* (2008).

¹⁹⁷ Translation from Swahili by Mahsin Basalama.

Tunawakilisha and,
 We're taking it back, just taking it
 back

We are representing, *and*
We're taking it back, just taking it back

The sound of the instrumental accompaniment to ‘Take it back’ is synthetic, the opening ‘hook’ – to use Burns’ terminology (1987) – is made of two simple two-bar synth motifs interlocking, one with thick falling synth strings on a variant of the *claves* rhythm, the other an ostinato sounding something like a Caribbean steel drum dance beat. Together with an airy synth bass and sharp drum machine, its synthetic feel somewhat eased by seemingly acoustic conga fills on top, this makes up a basic rumba beat behind Stella’s (or *STL*’s) rap:



Figure 17: Opening ‘hook’ of *Take it back*

Stella’s English pronunciation has echoes of Harlem, New York, offering connotations to African-American female rappers like *Eve*, while the chorus, introducing sung lines in the voice of an artist just referred to as “Michelle”, bids the audience, in Swahili, to “respect this sister” who came from far away, now “taking it back”.

In the last half of the second verse she comes back to the themes of family and of Kenya as ‘the place’:

But on my way back home I don’t wanna stress
 I just wanna lay down and watch the sunset
 Hang around with my cousins, we be chilling man
 Turn the volume up on this we be cruising man
 STL baby knew this time would come
 That I would take this, back to where I’m from

Through your fist in the air if you feel this
People here show love, cause this the place!

Comparing these verses and the overall lyrics with her statements in the interview, the act of *taking it back* stands out as her artistic and business strategy in Kenya:

Tormod: How did you come up with the idea of being launched as an artist in Kenya?

Stella: In 1998 I realized that hip hop was big, urban music was big. I went back there in 2001 with my mother. I started telling my cousins that this is what I want to do, to make an effort in Kenya while living in Norway. In 2005 I was there for some months while doing music.

Tormod: Doing music?

Stella: I had meetings with artists, did songs with them, was in studio, released my first single, was on radio interviews, was *on the grind*, *puzzled* myself through. And we managed, me and my cousin (...). He is my manager in Kenya now, I started with him even back in 98 (...) he sent me songs while I was in Norway, so I could listen to what was happening, and prepare *collabos* until I got back to Kenya. I came back in 2005, [and] after having been there for 3-4 months things started going very well, the radio started playing my tunes. (...)

My father has always told me it is important to know where one's from. It's fine you moved to Norway at the age of four, but you still need to have respect for your home country, know your mother tongue, you must be able to talk to your grandparents. That's one of the reasons I chose going back to Africa to do it. (...) The best thing there is – you've been growing up in Norway and go back to your home country and have that recognition. That's *huge*.

Tormod: Do you have more recognition in Kenya than in Norway?

Stella: *Urban music* is much bigger in Kenya. Here [in Norway] it's still growing (...) I'm not rapping in Norwegian, I have a bit of *Western sound*, mixed with some African, whatever way you like to see it, *it just happened* that I made it better in Kenya. What I'm working on here in Norway, I want the same... I want to make it big everywhere, really.

Taking it back – to the market

The track 'Take it back' presents the narrative of a diasporic Kenyan artist reconnecting with the parents' (and as she expresses herself: also her own) home country. It is filled with ideas of the Afrocentric, the way AYIN taught her to "use your African rhythms, the African knowledge and everything". In the

lyrics, the ideal is to listen to her elders, while they “speak knowledge”. Africa is the source of knowledge, of music, and of belonging.

Interestingly, in this diasporic reconnection, Africa is also the *market*. This is where she, with the help of relatives, has systematically been growing a fan base and, consequently, a business. In the constellation of ‘big places / small places’, Africa – which in her choice of words is synonymous with Kenya – is the ‘big place’, it is the urban culture, it is the most up-to-date. It is even where she has turned to get updated on urban music or hip hop, and from where her cousin, turning manager, has sent her songs since she was twelve. “Cause this the place!”

While Stella ascribes her lack of equal success in Norway to this country’s being less musically up-to-date and more provincial, the critic from Natt & Dag had the opposite approach: That up-to-date was what her album wasn’t. Yet, what is ‘up-to-date’ depends on where you view things from, or, more precisely: which market you are addressing.

The lyrics partly in Swahili may seem to address an East African market, as this is where Swahili is spoken and understood.¹⁹⁸ But it also serves to position her as *transcultural*, which speaks to diasporic audiences, and potentially also to urbanized Western audiences. Nevertheless, the overall sound in this track has a more East African than European or Western appeal, as it uses the sharp and ‘cheap’ synth sounds that are often used in East African productions, such as the Tanzanian Bongo flava. In Chapter 7 this feature of ‘cheapness’ of sounds was discussed, and whether this represented ‘leftover’ instruments or aesthetic preferences, or a combination. In this song there is not so much of the talked-of use of reverb, but the synth motif has the recognizable sharpness of timbre resembling old Yamaha DX7s or early synthesizers of the eighties. This sonic marker seems not to have been re-aestheticized in Western musical production

¹⁹⁸ Swahili, or Kiswahili, is one of the official languages in Tanzania and Kenya, but is also understood (and sometimes taught) in the larger East African region; parts of Burundi, Rwanda and Uganda, even DR Congo.

(yet), and therefore may still be read as old-fashioned in a way less desirable to Western audiences. In this track it therefore reveals an orientation towards a non-Western market. With the language and rumba rhythm feel, the song is even more geographically located in an East African popular music market, yet with clear Caribbean references that offer a certain type of ‘party vibe’. The ‘Rumba’ feel here is thus not going so much towards soukous, but rather towards what may be perceived as a more ‘cheesy’ Caribbean party sound.

Reconnection as strategy

The description of this track points towards the emerging concept of my analysis in this chapter. In ‘Taking it back’ Stella Mwangi, also actively using her alias ‘STL’, is reconnecting with Kenya musically, ideologically and also commercially. The lyrics describe a diasporic experience of reconnection, filled with respect and joy at both going back and having success. And musically, too, the song is addressing an East African or Kenyan audience, through choice of sounds and musical cues, such as the rumba rhythm. These features, and the ‘on the ground’ facts of her Kenyan success indicate an orientation towards a Kenyan, or possibly more generally East African market. The MTV Africa awards are a confirmation of this artistic business strategy, where from a position in Norway she is able to address this market through utilizing diasporic family bonds. This orientation towards Kenya and Africa corresponds with an Afrocentric outlook. Africa also makes up the point of orientation in a different manner, as the ‘big place’, providing an urbanity rather missing in Eidsvoll where she grew up, in her own words, “with hip hop and candy”.¹⁹⁹ The statement is a humorous contrasting of the associated drug problems of urban hip hop, depicting a rather provincial and innocent context to grow up in, with a *lack* of availability of the urban ‘cred’ needed in hip hop. Rather than collecting this credibility from Norwegian hip hop scenes, she turns to Nairobi.

¹⁹⁹ Quote from interview with me, November 2009.

How addressing a Kenyan market is possible from a position in Norway is also interesting. It might be explained by the African orientation towards the West, how in many African countries those who emigrate to Europe or North America are expected to support their families, and, more generally, are seen as those who have ‘made it’.²⁰⁰ But In Stella’s description of where she is performing, this does not seem to be the most important feature:

Tormod: You’ve told that you were performing in Germany, London, Kenya, the US: There is [has to be] an apparatus around this, how does it work?

Stella: It works very strangely, right now. I have no manager and no record company here in Norway. But I’m trying to get it for my next single. It really depends on what kind of contacts you’ve got, if you keep your contacts. All of this has been coming out of that. (...) For instance in [from] the US, I was called up by a guy who is really from Kenya, who had seen me two years ago, and wanted to have me perform in Kansas, right? So, it’s been going kind of in a ‘*meant-to-be*’ way, somehow you can’t define it. Such things that just happen when you are at *the right time at the right place*. (...) And then things just start happening. That’s really what’s happened.

Later in the interview we returned to the same issues:

Tormod: We were in the middle of questions regarding Africans based in Europe...

Stella: Yes, because Africans *abroad* are very good at booking artists who do well in Africa. That’s how I’ve been booked in Germany, in Kansas in the USA, because they have seen – they are Africans themselves who are *promoters abroad*. (...) That’s a huge benefit, and it’s been going well. Many believe that ‘You are only known in Kenya, and *that’s it*’, but no, that’s not it, because then I’m booked to other countries, where there are Kenyans.

Concept: A double reconnection orientation

The picture taking shape in this interview, and which points to the concept for this analysis, is how this artist has been utilizing a global diasporic network, placing herself in a reality of Kenyan-ness worldwide. Her diasporic networks are first employed to bring her from Norway to Kenya, and then, based on her

²⁰⁰ The systems of family remittances also make up an important economy, as has been pointed out in studies such as Plaza and Ratha (2011) or Singh, Haacker, and Lee (2009).

artistic success in reconnecting or ‘taking it back’, she is able to address a global diaspora.

The concept that this analysis arrives at, is how Stella Mwangi is operating as a cosmopolitan, who brings her globalized, trans-national credibility to various audiences in her fan base: the urbanity of hip hop collected *from* Kenya, and brought to local places in Norway, and the addressing of a Kenyan popular music market from a position in Norway or, in effect, the diaspora. This success could possibly have an element of her Western ‘having made it’ cred in Kenya, yet, generally, what stands out is the image of a young global Kenyan addressing other linked-up and globally orientated Kenyans – and Africans – worldwide. This also demonstrates how the Kenyan hip hop scene is not confined to a geographical area, but becomes a global diasporic reality. Based on Stella’s constant use of ‘African’ to denote these diasporic bonds, there is reason to argue that this also depicts a broader diasporic African reality, or perceived trans-African reality inside and outside of Africa, which becomes the reality she moves within.

With Africa or Kenya – or, concretely, *Nairobi* – also being ‘the place’ in terms of where she collects the urbanity or urban credibility needed in hip hop, it is tempting to extend the idea of ‘the global African village’. This is rather a matter of ‘the global African metropolis’, the big, urban centre, which provides the diaspora – and increasingly its hip hop practices – with points of reference.

To what degree it is also breaking through to a more mainstream global hip hop scene must be left to later research. Mitchell has argued that rap outside the US has little influence in the global market:

But the flow of consumption of rap music within the popular music industry continues to proceed hegemonically, from the USA to the rest of the world, with little or no flow in the opposite direction. (2001, p. 2)

Yet, this was in 2001, and both the ‘Black Atlantic’ reconnections and other global flows have been working for a while in the meantime. So this would be interesting to observe, to what extent the influences of global hip hop are also, in a visible and conscious way, drawing on its other emerging centres.

Virtual realities, mediascapes and future research

From Stella's travels 'back' to Kenya to her addressing a global Kenyan diasporic audience, this reality might be described in Appadurai's term of 'flows', how today's globalization allows networks to be maintained and exist as transnational realities of their own, not confined by the actual place or locality of the people who engage in them (1996). What would be interesting to explore in connection with this 'online' global diaspora or 'mediascape', is how Stella, through her web presentations, large numbers of YouTube videos, blogs, interviews etc. has established some kind of virtual, mediated reality, which actually becomes the core material of a diasporic career and orientation; all the well produced videos, her model styling in video and images, the highly produced music – and the responses she receives from fans online, confirming her success in Kenya and in global diasporic networks. Appadurai's 'flows' describes – maybe pointing more forward than he realized when first publishing these ideas in 1996 – a globalized reality different from the globalization just one or two generations back. The 'old' diaspora did allow maintaining contact with your family or place of origin, but not in the same flowing manner as today, when people may maintain identities and practices that make up global communities. These are not just in belief or idea – which shared narratives such as religion or diasporic identity have always offered – but create virtual realities, sometimes perceived as stronger than the reality of the context in which their members actually live.

This mediated reality is, in addition to the concrete reconnections, what makes Stella's type of global diasporic career possible. Many artists today work through the same kind of mediated reality, eagerly using social networks and presenting tools, but coupled with the virtuality of the diasporic networks that she moves through and utilizes – the narratively driven realities of being Kenyan and African globally – it seems that the mediated reality *becomes* the reality of this connection.

For future research it should be interesting to follow that thought also, to explore how a mediated reality is able to manifest itself as actual audiences in various locations, to explore the connections between the virtual reality of the ‘global village’ (McLuhan, 1962) and its manifestations in the physical world. So “being on the grind” in Kenya is about getting publicity, making this reality rotate and get its own life. As opposed to, maybe, the old idea of performing a lot for as large groups of people as possible. So perhaps it is less interesting to dig down to find whether Stella actually *headlined* a hip hop festival in Texas (or Kansas), or how big she ‘really’ is in Kenya. To this generation of artists and audiences – *and* diasporas – the mediated reality may be no less real than the hands-on or contextual reality. Or maybe this generation has just cracked the code for how these things may interact, accepting that if they believe in the mediation, it is also real. And, sooner or later, it will manifest itself. These, as pointed out above, are topics that this research has opened up, yet further research is needed to give them more substance and insight.

Really going with the mainstream: Eurovision Song Contest 2011

I had stopped collecting data for this dissertation when Stella Mwangi suddenly appeared on the mainstream scene in Norway in spring 2011, through the national finals of the *Eurovision Song Contest*, in Norway known as *Melodi Grand Prix*, or MGP. Given my interest in her artistic strategies, together with ‘mainstreaming’ as one of the concepts I was exploring, it would be impossible to overlook this. I will therefore touch upon it briefly, more or less like a postscript to this chapter, just to see how this may fit into the larger argument in my dissertation.

In Norway, it doesn’t get more ‘mainstream’ than MGP – although throughout Europe constantly accused of tackiness, bad songs and more glam than musical content, this annually broadcast happening has one of the largest TV audiences for any cultural event in the world, and in Norway it is a ‘must’ to follow both

for those who love it, and those who love to hate it. In recent years, though, its status nationally has been improving, as the national broadcasting company, NRK, has put more effort into mustering a broader selection of artists and composers, and has applied the system of regional qualifying semifinals, adding some of the ‘reality TV’ concept to it; finalists being selected over time, and the audience following the process step by step, and also voting for the finalists directly. Stella’s appearance thus fits into NRK’s strategy of broadening the base for MGP nationally.

From the qualifying semifinals she was already the favourite, at least in the media, so (despite some web debate on whether this song was “really what should represent Norway” and a local politician’s losing her nomination for mayor owing to her Facebook comments being perceived as racist²⁰¹), it was no big surprise when Stella won the final and was sent to represent Norway in the Eurovision Song Contest in Düsseldorf, Germany. However, the same system of qualifying semifinals applied there, and she did not succeed in making it to the European final. The debate circulated in Norwegian media on whether this reflected strategic voting from the nations involved in the semifinal (predominantly Eastern European countries), if there were more racist attitudes in these same countries, or if this was just a song that was not fit to make it to the final. These questions are, however, irrelevant for this analysis. What catches my attention is the total makeover of Stella Mwangi as an artist when appearing on this mainstream scene.

²⁰¹ Dagbladet, 14 March 2011.



Figure 18: Stella Mwangi in the Norwegian final of the Eurovision Song Contest. Photo: Håkon Eikesdal, Dagbladet, courtesy of photographer.

The lyrics of *Haba haba* (meaning ‘little by little’) open with a familiar story:

When I’s a little girl my grandma told me
That I could be just anything I wanted to
When I’s a little girl my grandma told me
That I could be just anything I wanted to
She said that
Everything I work for
Everything I wish for
Everything I look for it is right in front of me
Everything I work for
Everything I wish for
Everything I look for it is right in front of me
And she said ah...

Haba, haba, hujaza kibaba
Haba, haba, hujaza kibaba
Haba, haba, hujaza kibaba
Haba, haba, hujaza kibaba

(Trans: ‘Little by little, fills the pot’)

Lyrics (extracts), Stella Mwangi: ‘Haba haba’
(Mwangi et al., 2011)

Thematically, the lyrics tie in to some of the same concept as *Take it Back*; going to her grandma’s wisdom, the aspirations of the artist, and the adding of

Swahili expressions into English lyrics. But musically and visually, this is a rather different artist.

The opening melodic phrase, sounding somewhat like a steel drum melody, goes on the clave rhythm, establishing a familiar groove while also introducing a four-bar chord progression G-C-G-D, which repeats throughout the song. This progression is popularized through South African music styles such as *kwela* and *mbube*, and the best known song with this progression (in the same mode even as *Haba haba*²⁰²) is ‘The lion sleeps tonight’ or ‘In the jungle’, the adaptation of Solomon Linda’s ‘Mbube’.²⁰³ The progression and ‘lion theme’ is highlighted in the vocal arrangement in the chorus bridge, still in a rather South African manner: adding two-step pounding bass and chorus interventions between the soloist voice parts, the same as in the way the bass and chorus in a song like *Shosholoz*a alternate with the lead melody.²⁰⁴ So the whole song immediately sounds recognizably ‘African’, particularly *South African*, through rhythm, harmony, and the vocal arrangement.

A major change is also that Stella’s main expression – rap – is replaced by song, something she otherwise leaves to others in some choruses in her tracks. Also visually, the ‘hip hop girl’, with her street fashion and constantly changing hair colour and style, has been replaced by an image more recognizably ‘African’. This new image is underscored in the cover photo of her corresponding album *Kinanda* (Mwangi, 2011), displaying her in full body profile with large, curly lion-like hair, massive golden bangles, tights and high-heeled platform shoes, and a colourful top – the same colours repeated in her heavy eyeshadow.

²⁰² In the semifinal in Düsseldorf the song was pitched up one half note to G sharp, probably due to the challenges to Stella’s singing in a full register in the lower parts of the verse.

²⁰³ The story of the ‘adaptation’ of *Mbube* to Western popular music scenes and markets in the 1950s is now a widely disseminated example of copyright issues regarding non-Western musics, where the composer and even recording was known, yet was not credited, since the music was regarded as ‘traditional’ (Erlmann, 1999a; Malan, 2000).

²⁰⁴ The old South African resistance song *Shosholoz*a has been popularized through, among other things, sports, both in the Rugby World Cup in 1995, and the football (soccer) World championship in South Africa in 2010.



Figure 19: Front cover of *Kinanda* (Mwangi, 2011). Photo by Joon Brandt, design www.visjonwiruz.com, LWN

The pose and gaze of the artist resemble imagery that offers exotic and sensual connotations, while the artist image also seems *retro* in the way it plays on 70's disco style. Yet the surroundings situate this image in a very established 'African' context; behind her, flamingos and spears fly out like sunbeams from the light that seems to radiate from behind her waist, reflected like a 'star' (hence 'Stella') in her wrist bangle. Behind her, a small aeroplane, as on a safari, is headed towards Mount Kilimanjaro, while in the foreground savannah trees grow out of LP records floating in a sea, crossed by small fishing boats with the

classical triangular sail, known from lake Tanga and the East African region. The colour scheme is golden to orange to earth red-brown, as in countless sunset images of the savannah, also used (perhaps needless to say) as image and colour scheme in posters and covers for Disney's *Lion King* musical and film.

The only urban reference in the cover of *Kinanda* is a shadowy silhouette of a city skyline in the background, possibly hinting at Nairobi.²⁰⁵ The same cover design concurrently fronted her homepage, which also went through a makeover, replacing all her old photos and videos with images from this release, and the *Haba haba* video of Stella leading a group of children through city streets.

My purpose with these analytical sketches of music and visual representations is to point out how Stella Mwangi, when *really* trying to go with the mainstream and presenting herself to a broad Norwegian public, turns from the way she brings Africa as shared urbanity into hip hop, to presenting what for a Western audience is a collection of recognizable symbols or markers of Africa as something different. The musical markers are to a large extent structures and sounds from South African popular music, while the visual symbols and references are more touristic representations of East Africa. This turn to African markers in this performance and production is not so much like the 'push into tradition' that was observed in the NRK presentation of Kossa in Chapter 5, although there is a certain move in that direction. I will also argue that it does not so much resemble the 'play of common references' found in school performances in Chapter 6, since it lacks the aspect of sharing, or community. Nor does it resemble the analysis of Ras Nas' performed diaspora in Chapter 7, where Nasibu brings his own contemporary Africa everywhere. Finally, it is different from the urbanity that Stella collects from Africa and brings into her hip hop performances and productions.

²⁰⁵ Although a close-up scrutiny reveals it is an image of downtown Seattle, Washington. But in this context this functions as a reference to any metropolis; the skyscraper skyline by the water from countless postcards from the urban traveller.

Rather, I will argue that these markers serve to connect to popular African imagery and sounds that are familiar to a broader audience. This turn then seems to represent the conception of Stella – or her producers – of how to ‘mainstream’ her as an artist by emphasizing her as *African* in ways that were recognizable to a Norwegian and European audience. While hip hop may have been too exclusive for the broad public, there seems to have been a broader appeal in something recognizably African. With the background in previous chapters, particularly the discussions on Norwegian multiculturalist discourse in Chapter 4, this may be understood as another example of the broad appeal of ‘recognizing difference’ in Norwegian national discourse, which may further result in a ‘mainstreaming’ strategy through otherization. Yet, the underlying reason for this appeal among the audience is not explored here, my point here remains that in order to be *produced* for a broader public, Stella goes further into established African imagery and sounds, in a very different way than she does in her hip hop practice. What this does reveal is how production targets perceived realities of reception among different audiences.

Reciprocal gazes

In order to explore this idea of reception, I will in the last section of this chapter compare this artistic strategy to some of my other observations in this study, summing up some of the issues of representation I see at work in the process of presenting artists to different audiences. This also serves to bring to a close the discussions of representation brought into this work by the world music research and literature discussed in Chapter 2, before moving into the conclusions in the final chapter which build less on representation and more on agency and positions achieved.

Diasporic modern-ness

I will start with a quick look at the video for Stella's hit 'She got it', which got her the nomination for the MTV Africa award in 2009. *She got it*, Stella explains in the interview, is "...more Western, *crunk*".²⁰⁶ This may refer to its heavy underlying guitar riffs, which distinguish it from the other tracks on the album *Living for music* (2008). In the video a band of young, male, introvert, bearded European musicians are backing the contrasting five outgoing, young, African, women, who, obviously, have 'got it'. The five women offer connotations with the Spice Girls, and similar circulating imagery of young women displaying their *girl power*, as opposed to the submissive prop status of women in a large number of hip hop videos of male artists circulating the 'gangster' imagery.

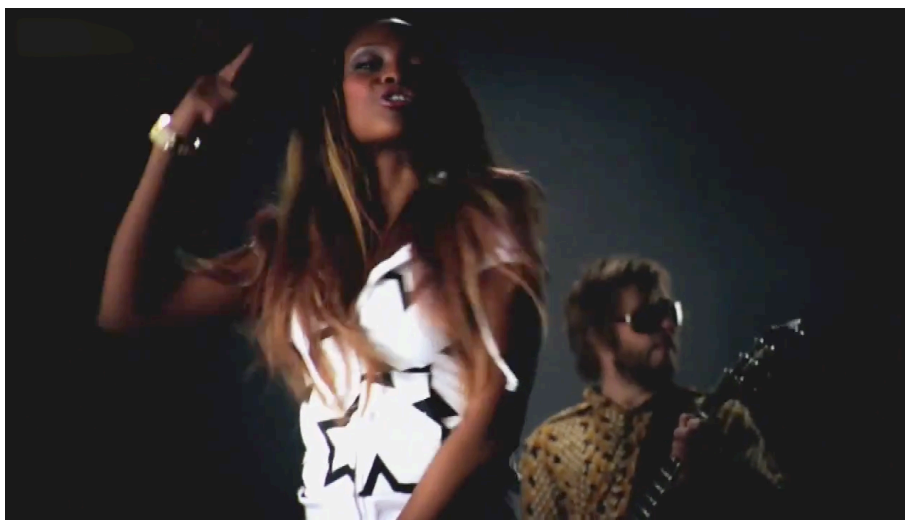


Figure 20: Screenshot from video *She got it*. Stella Mwangi, 2009, Director Frederic Esnault

I find it interesting that her most successful production for an overall African market, is the sound and video that places Stella as an African in the most Western context.

²⁰⁶ Interview with me, November 2009.

A second example is Kossa's production of the CD *Café Crème*. This record presents a synth-based soukous style, with a sound environment of synthetic brass and drum machines very different from anything he currently performs in Norway, either in his band *Touba Orchestra* or in the school productions of *Afrisah*. In an interview I wanted Kossa to comment on this and other productions, in comparison with the practice described in Chapter 5:

Tormod: I hear from some of [your] older records (...) that having a little synth and things like that in it...

Kossa: Yes... No, that was made just for Africa. I haven't sold it here. Because myself I don't like [so] much what is there. The way I work at [this] time, if I take it to Africa, they will not play [it]. Some journalists, *some* play a little on radio. (Imitating in a deep voice:) "No, it's traditional stuff from village". That's how they think. "So, if you want to sell," [they] said in the Ivory Coast, "you must make a little modern, or synth and guitar and blablabla, more like 'boom, boom, boom, boom'. Then you can sell." Therefore I had to make those. When I do it like that, it's for Africa. When I [make] quite traditional, it's for Europe.²⁰⁷

I find the statement quite intriguing in how it is very clear on strategically addressing different audiences with different music and expressions, which also implies different artistic representations.

In a music video produced for *Sofialako*, one of the tracks on *Café Crème*, the viewers are taken from images of village children in the Ivory Coast, to Kossa walking the streets of downtown Oslo in winter, talking into a cell phone. The neon lights from the malls, like 'Oslo City', are highlighted, and in between Kossa's addressing the camera with his song from a modern flat and sound studio.

²⁰⁷ Interview with me, 15 October 2010.



Figure 21: Stills from music video *Sofialako* with Kossa Diomande. Produced by Tony Blesson, courtesy of artist.

Kossa is also seen dancing with a group of Norwegian women, in an Ivorian style. This feature, according to Kossa, caused a sudden interest in this video production from a national TV channel, and seemed to impress the TV viewers in the Ivory Coast the most; how Norwegian women could dance so well in this style.²⁰⁸

This video tells a story of a diasporic modern-ness, through the synthetic soundscape, and the ‘exotic’ yet modern imagery of a Northern European capital in winter. Both this music and video are virtually unknown to Norwegian audiences, as it is targeting a different audience, to whom Kossa is a fellow countryman who has ‘made it’ in the West, proven by his modern context. But the music is not just a matter of proving your success; it also seems to be part of musical taste or preferences, in a longing for something far away.

On otherness, sameness and reciprocal gazes

Getting back to my anticipations before approaching Stella: It turns out not to be that simple; that hip hop – either in a narrow sense as rap, or broadly including R&B and most things ‘pop’ – ensures cultural diversity and overcomes the otherization of minority groups. Obviously, hip hop does provide arenas having the potential to establish new kinds of ‘sameness’ that do not follow ethnic or cultural divergence lines. Knudsen (2008, p. 66) argues that, in contrast to the

²⁰⁸ Interview with me, 9 September 2009.

officially initiated projects of cultural encounters, this arena – i.e. hip hop on the ‘street’ level of urban youth creating music together – is where multicultural or cross-cultural interaction is actually taking place. Knudsen also refers to Kitwana (2005), who claims that hip hop is a multicultural movement which is breaking down racial antagonisms in a way not seen since the civil rights movements in the 1960s.

Yet a part of my analysis questions the extent of hip hop ‘sameness’. Illustrating this is the reception of Stella Mwangi’s album *Living for music*. This production was very much designed for a Kenyan or East African audience, and she was not ‘making it big’ in a Norwegian context before she *really* went mainstream, in the Eurovision Song Contest.²⁰⁹ This mainstreaming turn also implied heeding her African heritage and ‘roots’, which better fitted Norwegian expectations of what an African artist is. While Kossa has produced separate CDs for Europe and the Ivory Coast, Stella had, before MGP, just the one representation in video, web sites and CD production. This hip hop representation seemed not to make it so strongly in Norway, but seemed to thrive in Kenya and connected diasporic networks.

Although the questions of transcultural musical relations are, as has been pointed out throughout this work, much more complex than an issue of taste or musical representation, the elements of taste in this observation seem worth noting, since they nuance the belief in how hip hop or any other genre travelling between contexts would automatically imply a deeper cultural sharing or identification: what appeals to certain young African audiences may be regarded as too ‘cheesy’ for a European market. And vice versa: the sound of ‘tradition’ seems to remain a preferred feature for many European audiences, while it may not hit the spot in African markets.

²⁰⁹ ‘Making it big’ in MGP was a relative success for Stella, as with many other artists, and after this she has returned to a stronger base in hip hop. This development, however, is outside the exploration of this dissertation.

If we are to look into the issues of representation and distance and projected images as critically raised by the world music literature, we should also observe how these are processes that are not restricted to certain positions to view from. Rather, as briefly illustrated in these examples, these processes may be found in any view, particularly those that observe from a distance. Is this then an example of a reciprocal strange love? A love for what is at a distance, the imagining of all the good things the other has to offer? ‘The other’ coming to represent African ‘tradition’, as viewed from various places in the West, or the artifice and technical savvy of European, or Western, technology viewed from, among other places, Africa? It may, in many instances, seem so. Are we all square, then? “We look at you in a way that locks you in tradition, you look at us in a way that locks us in the position of the inventor and future, and we both want what the other has.”

It’s probably not that simple. Since there is, as Edward Said would have pointed out, the imbalance of power behind those outlooks.

Pointing towards conclusions

My initial questions for the observations of Stella Mwangi concerned how hip hop scenes and representations would treat (or not treat) discourses of otherness and origin. Although my idea – or ‘prejudice’, in the Gadamerian sense – was that this would somehow be significantly different from what I had observed in the other practices, my analysis in this chapter grows to find Stella’s practice also casting light on the same issues that have been taken up in the practices observed so far. Thus these final observations point towards my conclusions for all performers observed, both as regards how they are encountering similar discourses in their recontextualizing processes, that is, when creating their performance practices in Norway, yet also how they go beyond this context by utilizing the works of globality, diaspora and cosmopolitanism in their artistic strategies. These observations thus form models of how African immigrant performers in Norway – at least *these* performers – create their practices.

CHAPTER 9:

CONCLUSIONS

In this final chapter I will first return to the questions posed, or arrived at, at the end of Chapter 2, and demonstrate how these questions have been explored and answered through the empirical Chapters 4-8. This will be done by returning to the analytical concepts that have been developed in each of these chapters. These concepts stand as conclusions in their own right, in the sense that they represent for each chapter a point of arrival reached through careful analysis of the actions and events of the practices observed.

Second, after recapitulating the analytical concepts, what remains to consider is whether and how these different concepts interrelate. I will argue that I see the various practices dealing with corresponding questions and problems in a way that may serve to develop an overarching model from these concepts, or, in line with grounded theory methodology, to generate *a* grounded theory.

Third, and last, I will return to some of the issues opened up through this dissertation: the needs or opportunities for future research, and some possible implications of the findings presented and perspectives raised.

Research questions and analytical concepts

In Chapter 2, the main research questions were posed, after a process of initial observations, by way of the explorative sub-questions circling in on them. To present them now in the opposite order, the main questions formulated were:

1. How do African immigrant musical performers in Norway navigate or utilize discourses of otherness, origin and African-ness in their practices?
2. Do they transcend these discourses and establish positions of 'sameness' or 'self' in their practices? If so, how?

The sub-questions may then be seen as the way of operationalizing this overall focus on discourses of Other and Same in relation to the process of recontextualization:

- How do the musical practices of African immigrant performers serve to recontextualize them into their current context?
- What spaces or discursive constructions are they being recontextualized into?
- How are *Africa* and *origin* treated as concepts in the observed practices?
- How do the discourses that these performers take part in and disseminate construct *them*?

The questions have been articulated from sub-questions to main questions through a grounded theory research process. This process is visible in how the operational sub-questions are initially open (observing recontextualization), then move into more narrow perspectives of discourse, and – finally – in the main questions homing in on ‘otherness’ as the discursive construction these performers are encountering, and ‘sameness’ as its possible opposite or strategic response. The way the questions are aimed at the field further illustrates the orientation of this work away from what I see as a dominant outlook on *de*-contextualization in research on travelling music and musical performers, to my aim in this work of focusing on what is actually happening when both are *re*-contextualized, and how these processes are enabled.

Analytical concepts

Each of the five empirical chapters has presented and analyzed a distinct practice, or, rather, a part of a distinct practice of the three main research participants that I have been observing. Initially, in Chapter 4 I presented *Bantaba*, the musical storytelling practice of Mandingo Trio, one of Nasibu Mwanukuzi’s ensembles and distinct from his *Ras Nas* practice. I argued that in this performance both audience and performers engaged in a multiculturalist discourse of *recognizing difference*, which invited a particularly defined performance concept of presenting the difference to be recognized. A

performance concept which presented the performers and music in terms of 'Africa' as such, played out in representing Africa as origin, as traditional, playful, energetic and somewhat childish.

Through analytically juxtaposing the performance observation against both the artist's statements of the practice that he envisioned and the government financing of performance projects, what stood out as an analytical concept for this chapter was a model of contradictory ideas that demonstrated fundamentally differing assumptions about what it is that enables minority participation – that is, what empowering processes entail – versus what is perceived as tending to marginalize. On the one hand multiculturalist discourse, which, I argued, implicitly guides the political desire to allow participation of minorities in the broad cultural arena in Norway, sees recognizing difference as a tool to empower minority groups and individuals. Correspondingly, in this view 'difference blindness' would work to oppress through making minorities invisible, thus having the effect of assimilation into a dominant, hegemonic culture (C. Taylor et al., 1994). On the other hand, and in contradiction to this view, Nasibu's statements clearly point in the opposite direction, as he sees initiatives associated with 'recognizing difference' as the dominant force behind cultural organizations and funding systems and serving to marginalize minority artists through requesting more 'difference', and by inviting colonial relations of support dependency. For him, consequently, the ideas of emancipation require a move in the opposite direction, towards 'difference blindness', for which he sees a particular potential in a market approach to musical production.

This analytical concept thus raises the fundamental issue of how ideas of 'Other' and 'Same' work as discourses that construct the performers in particular ways. This chapter demonstrates how these discourses have power to influence performance through representation, performance concepts and even musical production. It also demonstrates one discursive space that minority artists are offered, or recontextualized into: a Norwegian national project of creating and displaying a well-functioning diverse society. This analysis, leaning on a Foucauldian understanding of discourse, focused on how this 'national project'

could result in a production of otherness not only in performance but also through the funding schemes carrying out governance through discursive truths of how recognizing difference enables participation.

The analytical concept from this chapter, then, informs the further exploration of the remaining performance practices: how they are dealing with marginalizing discourse in different ways, and what types of strategies the performers apply to overcome marginalization or otherization, or to establish ways around this, to find alternative spaces or discourses or representations to engage with.

Same and Other

Nasibu's stated strategy to 'go with the mainstream' has also inspired the title of this dissertation: *Mainstream or marginal?* 'Mainstream' is a vision of *not* being marginal, both in terms of representation and market shares. I have focused mainly on the representational part, as a marginalizing representation is one – though not the only – obstacle to reaching a broader market, too. Marginalizing representation is what postcolonial theorists call 'otherness'. It does not just imply a certain *marginalized* image, but represents a *marginalizing* process of being defined as an outsider, someone distinct from 'us'. This is a process that 'keeps you in your place', hence the need for emancipation and strategies to get out of this position.

The idea of 'sameness' is usually not as defined or discussed as that of otherness, but I simply see it as the opposite of otherness, that is, being *us*, part of a community. *Otherness* is about being excluded from being defined inside a group or community. As mentioned in Chapter 8, excluding outsiders, or being exclusive, may be the very way a group distinguishes itself from the rest of the world, as any group needs to define itself as different from something else. On this note, Foucault has pointed out how normality has been defined by pointing to what it is not: madness, sickness or crime. Foucault's historical research, then, concerns how discourses of normality construct the deviant, or the various 'others' institutionalized and hospitalized and punished (Foucault, 1965, 1973,

1977). Like this construction, postcolonial discourse has since Edward Said's *Orientalism* pointed to how the West has defined itself as normality through projecting images of otherness – positive or negative – on anything or anyone else (Gandhi, 1998; Said, 1978; Young, 2001). However, engaging with postcolonial discourse should then explore the alternatives, observing how the need to somehow be 'us' – which must be seen as a universal human desire; to be part of some type of 'us', a community – may activate particular strategies or actions.

In terms of migration and recontextualization and discourses of cultural diversity this focus on 'sameness' must not be mistaken for a call for assimilation. Being seen as 'us' does not mean being *like* us, or confined to a defined normality. It is simply a matter of being offered a position as an acting subject, rather than an object acted upon, to use Freire's terminology (1970). Thus it represents the fundament for an emancipated position of *self*. The tensioned concept of Chapter 4 illustrates the diverging attempts to find such a position, which would potentially enable participation, or being part of a society.

In Chapter 5 the main data analyzed was a rehearsal with Kossa Diomande and an expanded version of his regular ensemble *Touba Orchestra*, rehearsing and making music for his commissioned work at Telemarkfestivalen 2008.

The concept derived through this analysis was how Kossa has moved from being a traditional performer in the Ivory Coast to being regarded as a composer at a Norwegian festival. In moving from being *in* tradition to utilizing traditional musical elements from one context in creating new music in a new context, Kossa has moved from one type of professionalism to another. His new professionalism is directed towards the requirements and skills of studio or session musicians in Norway. This is then an example of how both musical elements and skills – *and* performers – are first decontextualized and subsequently recontextualized to become something else.

What has enabled this transition is, I argue, the collaboration with the musicians in this regular ensemble and similar collaborations in Norway. Thus this transition also marks a process towards a group affiliation in this context.

This chapter also presented how a TV production from the festival framed Kossa squarely within a traditional representation. This TV production illustrated the difficulties of becoming ‘us’ or ‘same’: While Kossa’s recontextualizing strategy in this case was directed towards sameness – that is, towards a more Norwegian type of professionalism – the TV production presented him as still being ‘traditional’. In addition to illustrating the dominant discourse on African music as ‘traditional’, it also demonstrated how colonial discourse has a marginalizing effect through enhancing otherness, which, as Bhabha (1994) so strongly argues, is the case even with ‘positive’ otherness.

Chapter 6 demonstrated that while Kossa clearly defined his band practice as something other than tradition, the school performances that he did with Raymond Sereba in *Afrisah* did not try to escape the traditional image of African music and African representations. On the contrary, the performers fully embodied both their own *and* the audience’s image of Africa and African music, in a play of common references. The analytical concept arrived at was how the performers established a *community* with the audience both through reconstructing ‘Africa’ from fragments of common references, of music, and of dance, and also by a relational approach to performance (Bourriaud, 2002; Valberg, 2011). This element of relationality is found in how the performer-audience relationship is a defining element of performance, and in their sharing of experiences – of playing and dancing together.

In response to my questions of strategies of Other and Same, the observation of this relationality as some type of community established in performance – which must be seen as representing something fundamentally different from ‘otherness’ – thus became an important factor in my overall analysis for this dissertation. Furthermore, turning to observe these agent strategies rather than following the established reading of the performance from a critical, postcolonial view of its use of stereotypical representation also became a point

of reflection to turn from a postcolonial ‘gaze’, to criticize, too, the marginalizing perspective that postcolonial theory may in itself produce, arguing that postcolonial discourse may create the ‘Other’ rather than emancipate the subaltern.

In Chapter 7 I analyzed two Ras Nas performances. The concept derived here describes how *diaspora* may be understood as a virtual space inhabited through performance by observing how enacting soukous performance as an expression of African urban identity and African modernity created a cosmopolitan African. It also created a virtual ‘Africa’ as a contemporary and connected inhabitable diasporic space. Through focusing on the workings of diaspora and diasporic reconnections, this concept also challenges the framing of my own research questions, as the notion of ‘context’ is redefined from the simple observation that immigrant performers in Norway are recontextualized into Norwegian realities to observing the way they transcend these contextual limitations when staying in touch with and recreating diasporic realities as virtual contexts of their own. These contexts are observed as ‘virtual’ either in the sense of the urban Africa enacted outside its physical entity in a Ras Nas performance, or in the sense of the technologically enabled diasporic reconnection of the audience that is still connected to a shared, existing point of reference, such as the young audience staying in touch with the *Bongo flava* scene in Dar es Salaam, then suddenly materializing when Nasibu brings Ali Kiba to Oslo.

Chapter 8 continues the exploration of diasporic strategies through the hip hop practice of Stella Mwangi, who appropriates a global popular music form, collects the needed urban credibility of rap from Kenya and then brings it to a local Norwegian audience. Yet even more so she brings her music ‘back’ to a Kenyan market from a position in the diaspora in Norway, and then further to address global diasporic networks of Kenyans and Africans worldwide. This is most visible in how she is invited from Norway to *MTV Africa Awards*, or invited by Africans to perform in Germany and the US.

Together all these chapter concepts illustrate two major lines of action that answer my questions: one concerning the strategies of these immigrant African

performers to overcome marginalization or otherization *in* Norwegian contexts, and another demonstrating how they, despite being situated in this context, address far broader contexts through various diasporic strategies. Both these lines of action respond to my questions of which strategies these performers apply in establishing their practices as a process of recontextualization.

A grounded theory of recontextualizing musical performers

As presented in Chapter 3, research applying grounded theory methodology works towards developing and formulating theory, i.e. concludes by presenting *a* grounded theory. In this work I am not so much concerned with whether this is called a *theory*, or a model, or just a theoretical conclusion, or even findings. I don't think the conclusions or findings become more (or less) important by naming them 'theory'. However, as Charmaz (2006) points out: trying to build theory does push the qualitative research process a little further, and in a particular direction: to arrive at some specific type of conclusion with theoretical implications or properties. For this work, this holds true both for developing the analytical concepts in each chapter, and for trying to tie these together as theory here.

The grounded theory that I will then propose consists of two parts. Part one follows from the perspective of re-contextualization, that is, from observing how these performers situate their practices in Norway as context in a broad sense: as Norwegian scenes, localities, discourses or markets. Part two of this grounded theory derives from the recurring observations of how the artistic practices of these artists not only situate them in *Norwegian* contexts, but also go beyond these by way of diasporic connections and strategies.

Grounded theory part 1: Constructing ‘sameness’ through community

The concept from Chapter 5 demonstrated how carefully Kossa had worked to achieve a type of professionalism found among Norwegian jazz or studio musicians, demonstrated in the way his traditional musical material was processed, the way the music was composed and performed, all happening through the artist’s being absorbed into a new profession through the working collective and mutual learning arena of a permanent ensemble. In Kossa’s recontextualizing practice, this represents a process of reaching some kind of ‘sameness’, by establishing a common ground. By comparing it with the other practices, this process is featured as the first part of a grounded theory, a theory of how musical performers of African immigrant background in Norway work to overcome marginalization, or go from ‘otherness’ to ‘sameness’. The first step, or element in this process is how they establish a ‘common ground’. With the audience, or – in Kossa’s case – first with his fellow musicians, then approaching the audience from this position to demonstrate that he is now a composer, utilizing ‘tradition’ as building bricks rather than *representing* this tradition. This points out the second element, which is how these performers define their background as a natural part of this common ground, such as Kossa’s reshaping of musical tradition to become elements that his new professionalism as composer could utilize. The third, and somewhat implicit element is how they overcome the notion of ‘otherness’, or seek to overcome it, by making differences a less defining feature, as community is established by what the participants now have in common within this community. This moves *difference* towards the background as less significant, thus reducing the power of otherization both through absence of emphasis and by the group affiliation that is now established.

In the following I will point out how this model applies to the analytical concepts from the remaining empirical studies. The concept derived in Chapter 6 described how Kossa Diomande and Raymond Sereba reconstructed ‘Africa’ as a game of references with the school audience in the performance of *Afrisah*. In

this performance strategy they take these three steps in a somewhat surprising direction as they move towards what seems like increased otherness by utilizing all the images of African-ness known to the audience: the djembe, the colourful clothes, the strange language, and comic behaviour – the latter being a historical stereotype in black performance in Europe and the West. By embracing the references of the audience, such as by including expressions from the Disney movie *The Lion King*, the performance becomes a play of both new and common references that reconstructs ‘Africa’ as an experience between artists and audience. By entering this reconstructed space as a ‘common ground’, or the rhetorical *topos*, a community is established where both audience and performers can define themselves as belonging, with their backgrounds. In this space the performers’ *difference*, which is initially highlighted, moves to the background through the relational intimacy of the space, which creates ‘Africa’ as a shared experience.

My pointing out of the steps to overcome marginalization must not be read as a harmonizing concept – the critical aspects of stereotypical representation in this performance are still there. But treating the observations phenomenologically has enabled a closer exploration of what the performers’ *agencies* are – what they do, and what they achieve – which is all worked into this model which represents theory in the sense that Charmaz points out: as realities the agents act upon (2006).

In Nasibu’s practice as *Ras Nas*, the ‘common ground’ is sought in envisioning a cosmopolitan African-ness through a soukous performance that re-enacts a musical practice, which originally developed in Kinshasa from a desire to demonstrate the modernity of the African metropolis. This cosmopolitan approach creates an African that ‘belongs in the world’, in modernity, easily shifting between urban centres. The audience is invited to take part in this African modernity through the ‘club mode’ of the performance which is fully realized by the enticing *toaster*, the guest-starring trickster who heightens the energy of the event to transform it into an *extraquotidian*, or out-of-the-ordinary, space. In this process of re-enacting African modernity all three aspects are

worked into the performance situation; creating a common ground through the vision of African cosmopolitanism and modernity, defining an urban African identity into this space and, third, establishing a community by inviting into this space (even onto the stage) any urban identity that wishes to see not borders but being ‘of the world’ – that is, being cosmopolitan.

Stella Mwangi does something similar by bringing her urbanity from a convincingly ‘big place’ – Nairobi – to a small place, a local Norwegian scene where young people were eager to take part in the urbanity that she possessed. However, unlike the urbanity of soukous, this community was already very well established and defined, the idea of hip hop as a global, urban space that young people can take part in. Sharing the symbols of young, global urbanity marks hip hop’s ‘insider’ versus ‘outsider’ position, and in the observed context a community is established based on the sameness of this shared insider position. When entering this space as an artist of this desired urbanity, Stella’s background as African – or Kenyan – was a defining feature, not in terms of difference but rather in the way that she could deliver an urban *and* global experience.

Diaspora as living opportunity

The ‘big place’ that Stella draws on in her hip hop practice – although not explicated in the observed performance – comes from her connections to Nairobi and Kenya. This opens up for the second part of the grounded theory of this dissertation. The first part, with its three steps of action to overcome marginalization, particularly answers the questions of recontextualization in relation to particular Norwegian contexts, such as when these artists try reaching Norwegian audiences, which is where they face the need to overcome marginalization. Looking at how all of these artists also address different markets and networks leads to a new observation of how their diaspora is not just about being decontextualized from their place of origin and recontextualized into Norwegian society through their practices, with a need to become ‘same’ in

some way. Their diaspora is also a living opportunity: a market they can address, a network to utilize, and sometimes – as in Stella’s case – the *major* orientation of their practice. The diaspora made possible in today’s global world of travel, communication and mediated representations is no longer about being cut off. It is about being connected.

And in this connection these artists do not have the disadvantage of being marginalized. On the contrary, they are ‘same’ to begin with, although also having to prove this by demonstrating connection – language, belonging – while also playing into the modernity desired by the African audiences, which these diasporic networks provide, or the reverse otherization of what I have called ‘reciprocal gazes’ in Chapter 8. Yet here African artists in Norway find themselves with something of the ‘upper hand’, of being in the desired position, being the ones who have ‘made it’ in the West, that is, in modernity. This position opens for the possibility of utilizing diasporic networks in creating a career, like Stella, or in communicating with other markets, like Kossa. In Nasibu’s case, just assembling a huge East African audience in Oslo would not be possible without utilizing diasporic connections. What made this audience materialize was the actual appearance of a major *Bongo flava* star in Oslo – turning the seemingly ‘virtual’ reality of the global young East African space into a manifested, local happening. This particular performance observation of the young East African audience in Norway not being too interested in his soukous warm-up performance also demonstrated the dilemmas of the diaspora – that it is changing. What remains of the comparison of these observations, though, is that all address and utilize these connections. Each of the artists presented in this study has a cosmopolitan artistic strategy, yet in different ways. What they have in common is that their artistic orientation is global, following threads of discourses and – to link up with Appadurai’s idea of globality – also following flows of people, identities, ideas and finance (1996). This global orientation is like threads that tie in to other practices to enable individual artistry and also businesses. The performers are part of and engage with global discourses of urbanity, of youth, of tradition, of travelling, of change, of memory.

Grounded theory part 2: Transcending the national project

Comparing this observation with the first part of the proposed grounded theory, what emerges is an apparent conflict between the way these artists are perceived in Norwegian contexts, and the way they organize or orientate their own practices. Norwegian scenes and discourses are to a large degree defined by the national, and national discourses on immigration are about difference. ‘Overcoming marginalization’ and ‘creating community’ may again be perceived as harmonizing concepts, as they fit well with Norwegian policies of integration. Chapter 4 demonstrates that what is expected of immigrants in Norway, particularly those who raise their voice in public discourse – including reaching out to Norwegian audiences – is that they take part in building Norwegian society. It is thus expected of immigrant artists, too, that they should contribute to this process – the national project of creating a culturally diverse but unified society.

In many ways, these artists comply with these expectations. Sometimes they take active part in this discourse of building Norwegian society. This has often meant entering into a multiculturalist discourse of ‘recognizing difference’, which has been a dominant discourse on establishing a culturally diverse society, at least politically. Thus there is a danger that minority artists end up in a role in which they have to produce the difference to be recognized. Still, they sometimes accept the role of being the community builder, yet at other times fight shy of this discourse in favour of an orientation that is not confined to the national project or national discourse. This moving in and out of representations is sometimes effortless, smooth and even unconscious, yet at other times conflicted and painful, as Nasibu’s initial remarks reveal.

What makes the proposed theory of constructing ‘sameness’ less easy to accommodate in the national project of producing the desired unified culturally diverse society, is how this research shows that there is a discrepancy between these two realities – between recontextualization in the sense of addressing a diasporic reality, and in that of trying to situate oneself as an artist in a broader

Norwegian context, which more specifically requires strategies for overcoming marginalization.

Summing up, the first part of this grounded theory of recontextualizing performers concerns how these performers overcome marginalization by establishing communities of some 'common ground', while the second part describes how these performers also remain diasporic artists who work and construct themselves in the extended reality of diasporic networks, transcending national discourses. Juxtaposing the first part against the second gives rise to a dilemma and possible conflict between the national and the global. What tends to be taken implicitly as *the* project in Norway is only a part which these artists may opt in and out of.

Although there seems to be a desire by all these artists to participate in the society where they live, and where they have strategies of creating 'sameness' locally, being 'us' in some sense, this is not the only part of their reality, or not the only context in relation to which they define their own practices. A 'context' to operate in can also be multi-sited, it can be abstract, or virtual. It can even be out of time, as in the historical practice of soukous, which reflects a Kinshasa that is perhaps no more, but which can be reconstructed in performance. Performance thus offers a space that can be entered into by audiences and performers, recreating the lands, or spaces, across actual contexts of countries or nations.

Relevance, implications and future research

This work opens several possibilities for future research. Some have already been pointed to: in Chapter 4 I addressed the need for a more in-depth exploration of the effects of the public cultural support systems, based in the political goals and also the discursive orientations governing these systems. In Chapter 8 I also pointed to the vast area of virtual realities so as to explore the links between diasporic realities and various forms of virtual networks. The

extended reality of the ‘global village’ (McLuhan, 1962; McLuhan & Powers, 1989) is already a well-established – and also well discussed – theoretical model, but this work opens for some specific questions regarding how what has been perceived as ‘virtual’ contexts may be more material when it comes to the workings of diasporic connections that enable communities across physical distances. Diasporic musical practices are already being researched, but it would also be interesting to observe how a term like the ‘global African metropolis’ coined in Chapter 8 may be understood as a perceived space in the light of both diaspora, technology and narrative, including the musical practices it may nourish.

Furthermore, there are new Norwegian realities to explore. In many ways the realities of Norwegian cultural diversity and its discourses may have overtaken this work even before it began. Apart from a limited fieldwork on a hip hop scene, what I have not explored in depth are the many areas of popular culture where cultural diversity seems already to have moved beyond discourses of ‘difference’. Still, by developing this research based on the actual actions and experiences of a selection of performers who are strategically and consciously trying to find a place for themselves as performers in a Norwegian context, this work does claim to relevantly describe or reflect a broader set of experiences that artists share in this context. I am aware that current Norwegian society is now full of examples of people who succeed in going beyond being ‘Other’; authors, politicians, performers, debaters or economists who have become independent voices both in discussing politics, culture or economy in their own right, and in nuancing the formerly stereotypical image of immigrants as being something other than ‘us’. This does not alter the relevance of this dissertation, as it describes particular experiences of individuals, and discusses the strategic processes that, in different ways, these performers share.

The practices explored are all happening in contemporary Norwegian society, although they may not be perceived as hotspots of the current Norwegian music scenes. After giving up on finding the ‘ideal’ culturally diverse and up-to-date musical practice to observe in Chapter 1, this study has explored several small

narratives of globality and cultural diversity in Norwegian contexts and discourses. These all form narratives of different forms of African cosmopolitanism, and how these encounter Norwegian contexts and also reach beyond them. My claim is thus that it is irrelevant whether these practices are representative, up-to-date or peripheral, as they do offer an insight into how performance practices are constructed to form processes of recontextualization into Norwegian contexts and beyond. Researching the periphery may thus be just as relevant as researching the centre, as both are part of the same present. In this light, future research on artistic practices and cultural diversity could be built on the models proposed in this chapter; they can be developed and also considered for application in exploring other practices or fields reflecting issues of community, of otherness, diaspora or contextualization.

Implications

Mainstream or marginal? is the main title of this dissertation. This is also an important concept for my overall analysis, as initially outlined in Chapter 4. The political reality implied in this concept and title is that minority musicians are often kept marginalized through the limited availability of performance roles while desiring to be part of a larger body of cultural expressions and larger markets. This may serve as an allegory of the situation for immigrants and minorities as such: there is a demand that they be ‘integrated’, yet the spaces left or offered them in Norwegian society are often marginal.²¹⁰ One contribution of this work may then be how it demonstrates that building community in a diverse society does *not* require emphasizing difference, although difference *could* be utilized. But then the subjects easily slip into a particular multiculturalist discourse, which, in many ways, risks continuing the marginalization one is trying to overcome.

²¹⁰ A different point is that there is not always such a strong desire among some immigrants to integrate, which is a controversial discussion of its own. Still there is reason to reflect upon the premises for the integration that society desires or requests.

Representing or *presenting*?

From a political point of view (assuming policy makers were to ask: “So, should we just omit the whole funding for cultural diversity?”), a response from the point of view of the perspectives raised by Charles Taylor (et al.) would rather be to consider how *all* funding categories could be made better available to minority artists.²¹¹ One example explored in Chapter 4 was the *Year of Cultural Diversity 2008*, which coincided with my main data-gathering period. Comparing the substantial funding for ‘mangfold’ through Arts Council Norway in 2008 with the overall culture budget demonstrates that even in that special year resources made available for minority artists still made up a small ‘piece of the cake’.²¹² As with the works of the world music market discussed in Chapter 2, creating a separate musical market for cultural diversity through public funding may produce short-term effects of participation, but in the long run risks being counter-productive to the goals that brought it to life: the ideas of equality, the wishes to offer sustainable jobs in the cultural sector to minorities, and the wish to see minority artists better integrated into Norwegian music scenes. And the desire of the artists to make their music their living.

The challenge is, as has been pointed out throughout this dissertation, how minority performers can claim a more central stage and utilize a wider range of their expressions and experiences. What needs to be explored, then, is the spaces or arenas available to minority artists and minority audiences, and to what degree these are static or flexible in terms of representation. This challenge also goes to Rikskonsertene and other organizations promoting minority artists. It could be worth systematically exploring, through practice-based artistic research, in which ways minority artists can be engaged to represent more than

²¹¹ I do not claim this as an original thought, as similar points have already been made, for example, by Henningsen et al. (2010). Yet in discussing implications of this work I return to this point, which may serve to navigate the difficult dilemmas of *recognition* taken up.

²¹² Artistic expressions available to minority *audiences* is another issue, which will have to be left for later research.

their origin on stage. This implies not just representing, but *presenting* the whole of their experience and artistic world.

This challenge also addresses minority artists themselves, and I would like to end with recalling a part of a presentation I made at the *MinorLinks* conference in August 2009, where I had been invited by an African immigrant performer I had encountered through this work to present my research at what still felt like a very early stage. Feeling obliged to, I accepted the invitation and the suggested topic, which would initiate a debate on the pros and cons of the world music market for minority performers in the Nordic countries. Although made at an early stage of this work, I still think the statements stand their ground, based on an understanding of how mainstream popular culture – including a ‘mainstreaming’ popular music market – invites or even requires globalized expressions and experiences. According to my manuscript, I ended by challenging the audience of minority performers:

To what degree do you experience that there is room for using the experiences that you have – as persons with unique combinations of belonging in several continents and cultures? Theoretically, you should be the most modern of all, you should be at the forefront of popular music and popular culture, because you have direct experience of globalization, you know several ‘worlds’ and know what it is like to travel between them – metaphorically or concretely. So, how can you utilize this to attack a larger sector of the music market?²¹³

²¹³ From unpublished manuscript of my presentation at the *MinorLinks* conference (Anundsen, 2009).

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Kora vamp, <i>Moussoungima</i> (A. Cissoko).....	102
Figure 2: <i>Diom de Kossa & Touba Orchestra</i> . Left to right: Olav, Kossa, Khalid and Kenneth. Press photo by Marte Wenaas, image courtesy of artists. .	151
Figure 3: ‘Cow horn’ motif.....	155
Figure 4: Kossa at Telemarkfestivalen. Screenshot from NRK1’s broadcast “Telemarkfestivalen i Bø”, 30 August 2008	171
Figure 5: Kossa on stage with Touba orchestra. Video still, my recording, Ski kulturhus April 2008.....	176
Figure 6: Kossa playing djembe for school children in <i>Afrisah</i> . Photo courtesy of Eid ungdomsskule, 2009.....	176
Figure 7: Video still of <i>Sofialako</i> from CD ‘Café crème’, aimed at an Ivory Coast audience. Image courtesy of Tony Blesson and artist.	176
Figure 8: Video still from performance of <i>Afrisah</i> , October 2008. Rikskonsertene’s footage by Øyvind Lyslo. Courtesy of Rikskonsertene.	184
Figure 9: Video stills of dance instruction in <i>Afrisah</i> . From rehearsal at Rikskonsertene in Oslo, May 2008. Recorded by author.	202
Figure 10: Ras Nas (right) and Ali Kiba (left) on stage in Oslo, June 2008. Video still from recording by author.	215
Figure 11: Son clave	218
Figure 12: Ras Nas on stage in Trondheim, December 2008. Photo by author.	221
Figure 13: Core bass line of <i>Asha</i>	222
Figure 14: Synth rhythm pattern.....	222
Figure 15: Stella Mwangi (to the left) on stage in Lillehammer, September 2009. Photo by Sindre Vesterås / UFO, courtesy of photographer.	240
Figure 16: Facsimile of front page of colour supplement <i>Dagbladet Fredag</i> , 8 August 2008.....	247
Figure 17: Opening ‘hook’ of <i>Take it back</i>	253

Figure 18: Stella Mwangi in the Norwegian final of the Eurovision Song Contest. Photo: Håkon Eikesdal, Dagbladet, courtesy of photographer. 262

Figure 19: Front cover of *Kinanda* (Mwangi, 2011). Photo by Joon Brandt, design www.visjonwiruz.com, LWN 264

Figure 20: Screenshot from video *She got it*. Stella Mwangi, 2009, Director Frederic Esnault 267

Figure 21: Stills from music video *Sofialako* with Kossa Diomande. Produced by Tony Blesson, courtesy of artist. 269

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Appendix I: Initial handout with information about the research project

Til aktuelle informanter i forskningsprosjektet ”Cultural diversity and popular music in Norway”

(Foreløpig tittel!)

Jeg har kontaktet deg / dere for å spørre om dere kan tenke dere å være informanter i et forskningsprosjekt. Jeg skal kort prøve å si hva det kan innebære.

Kort om prosjektet: Jeg jobber med en PhD (doktorgrad) i musikk, og ønsker å forske på hvordan musikere i Norge med innvandrers- eller flerkulturell bakgrunn jobber musikalsk, innenfor populærmusikk (enten de kaller det pop, jazz, hip hop, world eller noe annet). Dette er jo et veldig stort felt, men i stedet for å se litt på hva mange musikere gjør, ønsker jeg å se mye på hva noen få gjør. Det kalles gjerne ”kvalitativ forskning”. Jeg skal være ferdig våren 2010, men satser på å være ferdig med å samle inn materiale / intervju / observasjoner i løpet av våren 2010.

Hvordan ønsker jeg å bruke dere? Jeg spør 5-6 ulike artister om å være informanter. 2-3 av disse bruker jeg mer tid på, og har de andre som et sammenligningsgrunnlag som jeg besøker av og til, i hovedsak for å gjøre et intervjuer, men kanskje også for å være med på en konsert e.l. For de jeg følger litt tettere, vil det være interessant å være med på ting som øvelser, konserter, studioarbeid, turnévirksomhet, evt. møter mellom musikere, eller med konsertarrangører og produsenter, eller arbeid i aktuelle organisasjoner. Altså alt som har med deres kunstneriske arbeid og nettverk å gjøre. I begynnelsen vil jeg bare være til stede og observere, men etter hvert kan det tenkes jeg ber om tillatelse til å filme eller ta opp noen sekvenser (for eksempel en øvelse). NB: Jeg prøver ikke å være ”usynlig” – jeg kommer til å prate med de jeg treffer, og kan godt hjelpe til med praktiske ting når det passer. Når jeg er med for å observere, er det meningen at situasjonen skal være så naturlig som mulig.

Hva ser jeg egentlig etter? Jeg har noen idéer til temaer på forhånd, for eksempel: Forholdet mellom musikalsk tradisjon og nyskaping, eller hva slags roller musikerne velger eller får i ulike produksjoner, eller rett og slett: Hvordan musikere med en flerkulturell bakgrunn skaper sin musikalske verden. Men først

og fremst vil jeg prøve å finne hva som er de aktuelle temaene i ”feltet”, i det dere gjør, og det håper jeg å finne ut ved å være til stede der det skjer.

Økonomi: Jeg dekker alle mine egne kostnader, men kan dessverre ikke tilby noen økonomisk kompensasjon for å være med som informant.

Rettigheter: Dere har rett til å være anonyme når jeg skriver om dere, f.eks. siterer hva dere har sagt osv. (Det kan være litt vanskelig å være anonym hvis jeg viser et musikkseksempel, men vi kan diskutere dette når jeg vet hva jeg vil bruke). NB: **Dere har rett til å trekke dere som informanter når som helst!** Dette betyr også at uttalelser som kan knyttes til dere som person, kan trekkes tilbake. (Dette er norske regler for forskning). Hvis dere lurer på noe mer, bare spør!

Litt om meg selv: Jeg er stipendiat i musikk på Universitet i Agder i Kristiansand. Jeg tok hovedfag i musikk på Universitetet i Oslo i 1996, og hadde sang som hovedinstrument. Jeg har undervist i musikk knyttet til lærerutdanning siden 1997, men er nå forsker med fokus på utøvende musikk.

Vennlig hilsen

Tormod Wallem Anundsen

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Appendix II: Statement of consent (to be signed by participants)

Oppfølgende Informasjonsskriv med samtykkeerklæring Fra Tormod W. Anundsen til deltakere i forskningsprosjektet med arbeidstittel "Cultural diversity and popular music in Norway".

Jeg viser til tidligere skriv, som dere fikk i innledningen av doktorgradsarbeidet mitt, der jeg har spurt artister / musikere med innvandrerbakgrunn om å delta i et forskningsprosjekt (se vedlegg). I prosjektet har jeg intervjuet flere artister, og også fått tillatelse av noen av dere muntlig til å gjøre opptak fra konserter og øvelser.

Nå nærmer slutføring av doktorgradsarbeidet seg, med bl.a. publisering av en PhD-avhandling. Med dette skrevet ønsker jeg kort å informere dere om hvordan materialet ønskes brukt, og også be om skriftlig tillatelse til to ting:

- a) Å gjengi deres bidrag (intervjuer med mer) med navn. Begrunnelsen er at det er vanskelig å anonymisere hovedartistene i avhandlinga, siden jeg sammenholder intervjuer og konserter med offentlig tilgjengelig materiale: plateutgivelser, konserter, avisartikler, anmeldelser med mer.
- b) Å lagre datamaterialet på ubestemt tid for eventuelt videre forskning, men oppbevart i henhold til personvernbestemmelsene (bl.a. slik at andre ikke får tilgang til materialet). Se utfyllende kommentarer*

Som tidligere nevnt vil det i selve avhandlinga bli sitert fra intervjuer, fra mine egne notater under feltarbeid (dvs en slags "dagbok" fra det jeg har notert gjennom observasjonene), og fra deres egne publiserte materiale (blogger, plateomslag og lignende). Dette vil bli analysert av meg sammen med annet offentlig tilgjengelig datamateriale (avisartikler, arkivmateriale m.m.). Før publisering kan dere få lese gjennom egne utsagn som knyttes til deres navn, og godkjenne personopplysninger. Med mindre det er faktafeil i det jeg har skrevet vil jeg antakelig ikke endre selve analysen min, men jeg vil tilby at dere kan skrive en kommentar eller muntlig gi meg kommentarer til det jeg skriver om dere, som kan legges ved avhandlinga som et vedlegg.

Formelt er det Institutt for Musikkvitenskap ved Universitetet i Oslo, der jeg tar doktorgraden, som er behandlingsansvarlig institusjon for datamaterialet og personvernet knyttet til dette. Endelig innlevering for avhandlinga er satt til juni 2012. Etter prosjektslutt vil jeg overføre ansvaret og datamaterialet til Fakultet for Kunstfag ved Universitetet i Agder, der jeg jobber. Når det gjelder fremtidig

oppbevaring, vil alt datamaterialet oppbevares konfidensielt, det vil si innelåst eller lagret elektronisk slik at andre ikke kan få tak i det. Jeg vil selv ha ansvaret for dette, og ønsker at det lagres på ubestemt tid, slik at jeg kan benytte det i eventuelle nye forskningsprosjekter.

Når det gjelder originaldata, kan dere, dersom dere ønsker, be om kopier av hele intervjuer og opptak jeg har gjort med dere. Konsertopptak og andre data der individuelle tredjepersoner (publikum) kan identifiseres, vil bli redigert slik at de ikke kan gjenkjennes.

* NB: Samtykke til videre lagring av dette materialet er frivillig, og ikke en forutsetning ut fra hva vi allerede har blitt enige om i forbindelse med selve PhD-arbeidet. Det er mulig å trekke seg fra dette uten å oppgi grunn, og materialet vil da bli slettet eller anonymisert, med unntak av det som da eventuelt er publisert. Dersom det blir aktuelt å foreta ny datainnsamling i forbindelse med oppfølgingsstudier, eller bruke det eksisterende materialet til nye formål, vil dere bli kontaktet igjen med ny informasjon og forespørsel om å delta. Godkjenning av lagring er derfor ikke en godkjenning av fremtidig bruk.

Kryss av ”Ja” eller ”Nei” etter hvert av punktene under:

Jeg har mottatt skriftlig og muntlig informasjon om PhD-prosjektet ”Cultural diversity and popular music in Norway”, og godtar at mitt navn blir brukt i avhandlinga av Tormod W. Anundsen. Jeg forstår at han selv står ansvarlig for analyser og kommentarer, og at jeg kan levere en kommentar til disse dersom jeg ønsker det.

JA NEI

Jeg godtar at intervjuer og opptak gjort med meg oppbevares ved Universitetet i Agder på ubestemt tid og i henhold til personopplysningsloven, og forstår at jeg vil bli kontaktet på nytt for godkjenning dersom dette materialet skal brukes til nye forskningsformål.

JA NEI

Dato _____ Signatur _____

