



Crossroads in Music

- **Tales from the MOVE project about musical education, culture and exchange**

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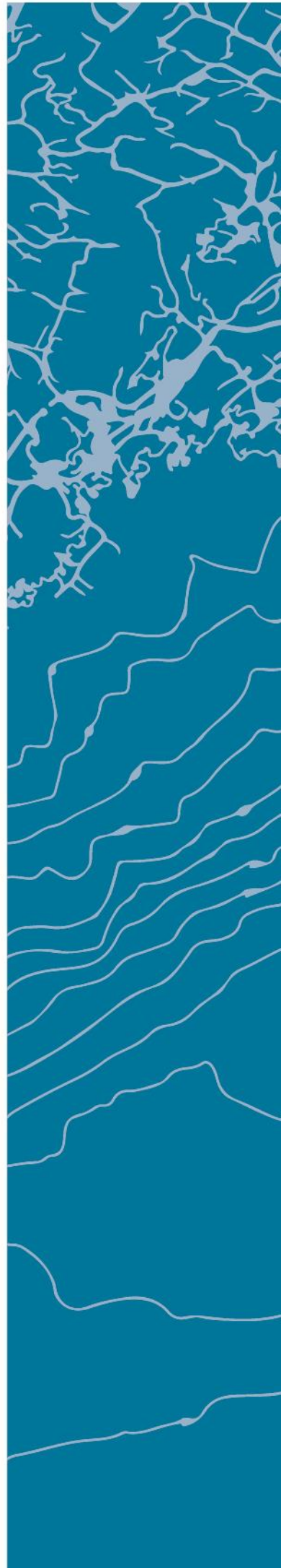
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Abstract

Once a year a group of young musicians set out on a journey that will be quite unlike anything they have experienced before. Most of them will travel several thousand kilometers and partake in a culture that is vastly different from their own. The project they are partaking in is called MOVE (Musicians and Organizers Volunteers Exchange) and is an international exchange with the aim of giving young musicians and organizers the opportunity to work with music and culture in a vastly different environment than their own, and thereby exchange competency, experiences and ideas.

This thesis is a gathering of narratives from the MOVE project in Music Crossroads, Malawi, and the analyses of these. These narratives and the analyses depict life in the MOVE project.

The data and narratives in this thesis is gathered through a five-week field work conducted in January – February 2018, in Lilongwe, Malawi. Supplementary methods include interviews, participant observation and Grounded theory.

Sammendrag

En gang i året setter en gruppe unge musikere ut på en reise som for de fleste av dem, kommer til å være ganske ulikt noe di har opplevd før. De fleste av dem vil reise flere tusen kilometer og delta i en kultur som er veldig forskjellig fra deres egen. Prosjektet di deltar i heter MOVE (Musicians and Organizers Volunteers Exchange) og er et internasjonalt utvekslingsprogram med mål om å gi unge musikere og organisatører muligheten til å jobbe med musikk og kultur i et miljø som er veldig forskjellig fra deres eget, og dermed utveksle kompetanse, erfaringer og ideer.

Denne mastergradsavhandlingen er en samling med narrativ fra MOVE prosjektet på Music Crossroads i Malawi, samt analyser av disse. Narrativene og analysene skildrer livet i MOVE prosjektet

Dataene og narrativene i denne mastergradsavhandlingen er samlet gjennom et fem ukers feltarbeid, utført i Januar – Februar 2018 i Lilongwe, Malawi. Supplerende metoder inkluderer Intervju, deltakerobservasjon og Grounded theory.

Foreword

The beginning of this master course was a somewhat turbulent time in my life on a personal level, but the start represented a personal journey I am very glad I undertook. Being able to follow an interdisciplinary master course with such an amazing group of students has been very memorable, and I am sad that part has come to an end. Thank you very much to everyone in my class for all the inspiration and perspectives, and most of all, all the laughs.

This thesis has been quite a journey, and I mean that in many ways. Not only has it literally taken me to the other side of the world, but it has challenged me both with my academic writing, my English and my interpersonal capabilities. Writing in English was an important decision that was made in the interest of transparency and openness. My thesis and my field work affect directly or indirectly people who does not know the Norwegian language and it is important for me that the published text is available for them.

Thank you so much to the institutions that welcomed me with open arms. Thank you to Mathews Mfuné and his wonderful staff at Music Crossroads, and to Bjørnar Sørensen at Trøndertun for receiving me and answering all my questions.

Thanks to my supervisor Tormod Wallem Anundsen for guiding me through this process. Thank you for thorough and honest feedback along the way and for taking all my ideas seriously.

But most of all, Thank you to the MOVERs. Thank you firstly for the work you do. Thank you for using a year to bring the world closer with music. Thank you so much for participating in my thesis and thank you so much for welcoming me into your home with smiles and open arms!

Zikomo kwambiri!

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Chapter 1. Introduction

In this chapter I will introduce the background for choosing musical and cultural exchange as my field of studies for my master's in arts. I will also talk briefly about places I have visited during my field work, and the intentions behind the visits, as well as the demographics I have been working with. I will also present and discuss the research questions that I seek to answer in this thesis.

1.1 Background for Choice of Research Field

Throughout this master¹ program I have sought to make my current education relevant to my previous education, which is teacher training. The education sector in Norway is now implementing a five-year teacher training programme, so that all the next generation teachers will have a master's degree. I'm one of the last students to end the four-year programme and choose therefore to take my masters right away. My main field of study is music, but I believe the master's in arts programme institutes this very well, while at the same time giving me a broader experience base so that I can also become a resource in other fields than just music.

I have continuously sought to make my masters relevant for my teacher training by having a didactical mindset in my self-chosen projects. When the last year of the programme started I had grave difficulties in deciding upon my field of research. Being a musician and a music teacher, I started a pilot about instrument practice routines, but it led nowhere, and my motivation hit rock bottom. At that time, I learned

¹ My master's is an interdisciplinary master's programme in fine arts, with specialization in music.

about a Fredskorpset² exchange programme called MOVE³ that works with musical and cultural exchange with young adults between the age of 18-25 years. Since one of my prime motivations with this master is to be able to work with older students in the future, I found the MOVE project to be an ideal platform for extending my knowledge about this student demographic in a musical context.

FK exchange programmes demand a high grade of activity from the students which puts them in a challenging position: Not only are they put outside their comfort zone by being in a new and vastly different country, they are also expected to assume a leadership role and teach music to other students. Getting further knowledge about the social and musical aspects of such an exchange and the participants therein can help me to become a better teacher for students that undertakes bigger projects in their academic careers, be it an exchange programme, a long-term project in for example a boarding school or even an academic project like a bachelor's degree.

I have also a personal interest in extending my knowledge of other musical cultures. I have for many years played in a band who takes a lot of inspiration from reggae, latino, afrobeat and ska music, and being able to do field work in the country I have taken interest in will let me experience and partake in this music, culture and its appliance in society for the course of my field work. This will extend my artistic horizon as a musician and give me new musical insight. Field work as a base method also gives me the opportunity to experience a form of mini-exchange program for myself. I am in some sense traveling on the same premises as the MOVE participants, e.g. going alone, getting to know people and culture from scratch, being outside my comfort zone, albeit in a compressed time frame.

² Fredskorpset can be further read about on their web page www.fredskorpset.no/en

³ Jeunesses musicales Norway, or JM Norway is the organization that operates MOVE. It can be read about on their page www.jmn.no/prosjekt/move

1.2 The “MOVE” project

“Through music and culture we develop youth leadership, empowerment and international perspectives.”

The MOVE project (Musicians and Organizers Volunteer Exchange) is an exchange program for musicians and people, age 18 – 25, interested in arranging and facilitating culture. It is a collaboration between four countries and their respective musical institutions. They are Music Crossroads Malawi⁴, Music Crossroads Mosambique⁵, Projeto Guri Brazil⁶ and Trøndertun Folkehøgskole⁷ in Norway. I have been able to do field work in two of these institutions, namely Trøndertun, and Music Crossroads, Malawi which will form the empirical base for this thesis, with the field work at Trøndertun being in preparation for the five-week field work undertaken in Malawi. The introductory statement of this chapter is MOVE’s overarching goal, and it aims to give young people the opportunity to work with music and culture in a vastly different environment than what is initially known to them. Working in different environments than one might be used to lets the exchangees, internally known as MOVERS, gain cultural knowledge and insight in international work as well as exchanging experiences, competency and ideas with the people in the receiving country. The

⁴ Further reading: <http://www.music-crossroads.net/academies/mc-malawi-academy>

⁵ Further reading: <http://www.music-crossroads.net/academies/mc-mozambique-academy/>

⁶ Further reading: <http://www.projetoGuri.org.br/english/>

⁷ Further reading: <http://www.trondertun.no>

MOVERS can work both within existing projects as well as starting their own projects within the institution they work together with or in the local community where they live. Typical work that the MOVERS do is planning, arranging, playing and advertising for concerts and festivals, partaking in and holding workshops, doing various studio/recording activities, and teaching music for children and young adults. In addition, they are required to participate in JMN's social media pages which also gains them experience in film, photo, and various multi-media technologies. Every MOVER will have to write one blog post during their stay. These are distributed throughout the year so that it is possible to stay up to date with all the contributing countries during the course of the exchange year.

The MOVE project is setting some quite lofty goals for itself with regards to what it aims to achieve. Their mission statement is, as stated in the introduction to this chapter: *“Through music and culture we develop youth leadership, empowerment and international perspectives”*. I talked to Kine Granholdt Lundervold about this statement to learn more about MOVE and what they do. She is JM Norway's project coordinator for MOVE, and probably not coincidentally, she is also an ex-MOVER. After having a discussion about it I asked her to write to me to clarify the intentions behind this statement.

Where does this goal come from?

-This goal is formulated and admitted by the contributing agents in MOVE; Music Crossroads Malawi, Music Crossroads Mosambique, Projeto Guri, FARK, Trøndertun and JM Norway. When one is a part of a FK-exchange programme, it is essential to have a fundamental objective that everyone involved have agreed to work towards. This is the cornerstone of everything we do. Even though the various institutions work differently is this the common goal that unite our work.

I asked her what they meant by the term “*International perspectives*” and how it related to international work and/or music, and she stated some facts about the MOVE programme that I find to be a great explanation for what they stand for and what they seek to achieve.

«It is increasingly recognized within the development discourse that music and culture are important engines for development and growth. Music connects people and breaks barriers within language and culture. MOVE aims to provide young people a platform to build skills within music and organizational work and leadership (like arranging events, festivals, project managing etc.) We wish to contribute to youth involvement and participation through their visibility in the civil society and to make them an active part of the society through musical and cultural activities. The training they receive in project work and leadership within musical projects will give them important tools to also be able to address other social issues (for example working with children, youth or disadvantaged groups). Music becomes a tool to enhance leadership, skill development and the cultural sector of a society or nation as a whole. The goal is also to empower the participants with new tools and intercultural understanding as young leaders within the cultural field; providing a creative platform to enhance their careers. The partners will facilitate this growth and this will also enrich the organizations and the local communities and societies. To work under other cultural and infrastructural conditions than the participant is used to will undoubtedly create personal and professional development for each individual.»

Fredskorpset-utveksling (Ung):
MOVE - Musicians and Organizers Volunteer Exchange



Figure 1.2. This map shows how the MOVE projects sends distributes the MOVERs.

(N.B. I noticed that there is a mistake in that there is a missing arrow between Malawi and Brazil. It should be present.)

Trøndertun takes in four students from the other MOVE countries, Malawi, Mosambique and Brazil. When I visited Trøndertun, to prepare for my field work in Malawi, I intervied Bjørnar Søreng who is the MOVE coordinator from Trøndertun, to gain a deeper insight into the MOVE project and the what they were doing on their end here in Norway.

“The students that are visiting us from other countries have the possibility of learning a lot about Norwegian culture and a lot about the people. The MOVE project also expects them to take leadership roles, and not to be passive observers. Practicing leadership is very important, and our visiting students teach classes like for example the weekly Brazilian drum class. But perhaps the most important thing for Trøndertun about the MOVE exchange program, is that each year, about 150 of our students end their school year at Trøndertun, having lived together with and befriended four

students from vastly different cultures and backgrounds than themselves. This enriches their understanding of the global society.”

Here he talks about the premises that the MOVE project set for the exchange, and how they solve it, by for example having a student to do a Brazilian drum class, but he also emphasises that Trøndertun as a school is benefitting by having exchange students here. Having students from Africa and Brazil offer unique insights into other parts of the world and therefore enriches the students year here. Apparently, music is not the only thing that is taught at Trøndertun.

1.3 Research Questions

As stated earlier, I want to use this thesis as a platform for getting a better understanding of a particular student demographic, the processes they go through, and the role and effect exchange programs can have on students and their environments. I believe this will better prepare me for working with young students and musicians in the future.

My research questions are:

-«How do young musicians experience their own participation in another culture while attending an exchange program?»

-“What motivates young musicians in relation to their participation in an exchange program?”

-“What does musical experiences and academic capital do with the way a young musicians participate in an exchange program?”

The term “*young musicians*” refers in this thesis to the demographic that is deemed qualified to attend the MOVE project by the collaborating institutions. Age is generally set to 18-25, but exceptions have been made⁸. The selection process differs somewhat from country to country, but everyone attending have been through a written application, a self-introductory video, and an interview process. In this thesis I use the participants own term MOVER throughout to refer to a person who is involved in this particular exchange program.

The term “*participation*” refers to the totality of the MOVERs involvement in the project, both socially, at home, at the institution and in musical and educational practice and activities. Being away from one’s normal social area while actively partaking in another society consumes the totality of one’s existence. Recognising this gives one the opportunity to see the consequences that for example one’s mood of day has for one’s musical activities, and vice versa.

With “*Personal/Musical experience and academic capital*” I refer to the level of musical experience and academic capital the person displayed previous to starting the exchange program. This could be their musical skills in terms of theoretical knowledge, overview of musical history and level of playing a particular instrument. Academic capital is the potential of the individual’s education and academic experience.

⁸ There are some 26 year olds, but no 17 year olds to the extent of my knowledge. Being of the age of maturity (18 in Norway) is more important than being over 25. Some MOVERS turn 26 during this period as well and are obviously not excluded for this reason.

The empery in this thesis is collected during my field work in Malawi, and through a pilot conducted in Trondheim. Having a pilot where I field tested and developed my theories is in thread with Grounded theory (Chapter 3.1). The pilot's main purpose was to field test my theories, build my methods and gather information about the MOVE project. I tested my methods and conducted the first interviews to strengthen my data collecting abilities in Malawi, so that I could focus less on it when I was in the field. The interview techniques will be further described in chapter 3.4 I also tested how my technological aids in the field, namely a Zoom HD-video/audio recorder made for recording music and my camera, both my phone and digital camera. I will test these for functionality and file safety.

1.4 Relevancy and Connection to Art Studies

In this assignment I am looking at the MOVE project, and what ramifications it has for music education and ultimately, me as a teacher. The MOVE project is an exchange programme with education and leadership in mind. This exchange is supposed to benefit the students that does the exchange as well as students and locals at the receiving end. The places that the MOVE project visits are educational institutions with music, dance and culture in focus. These are the kinds of places I aim to work in the future. Writing this assignment will help me further my understanding of these institutions and their music students by working closely with and observing them in practice. Culture is also a very important aspect of this thesis. The students that visits Norway come from very different countries and cultures and vice versa. The reason cultural understanding is important for a Norwegian teacher is that the demography of the Norwegian school has changed very much in the last years. Students are now growing up in a more multicultural classroom than before and understanding how this affects teaching and didactics will help me to become a more proficient teacher.

Chapter 2. Preparing for Malawi

To better prepare myself for my fieldwork in Malawi I decided to visit Trøndertun Folkehøgskole. This School has a renowned music department which is an important part of the MOVE collaboration. This school sends its students to Malawi, Mozambique and Brazil and in return gets students from these countries to stay there for a year. Getting in touch with Bjørnar Søreng and Trøndertun folkehøgskole was easy. After just a phone call and an email I had an appointment to visit them – and even to live in the school’s guest apartment for a few days. This is the fourth year Trøndertun does this exchange, and the participants who are visiting Trøndertun this year comes from Malawi, Mosambique and Brazil. To help the MOVERs to get to know each other, the school started a MOVE band with all the participants.⁹ This band is still active and coincidentally they do not have a bass player. This goes very well together with my wish to be an active participant in my field work because it lets me step in as the bass player. This also gives me leverage when it comes to getting to know them. The MOVE exchange program is made with cultural exchange in mind. The participants are meant to learn something from the place they visit as well as teach something in return. After counselling with my supervisor, I found out that I could use the ensemble sessions as informal interviews. Playing music together is fantastic way of building relations and trust and is therefore a great medium for getting to know the participants – especially since I was only able to stay at Trøndertun a few days.

Trøndertun is situated about twenty kilometres outside of Trondheim. The school has two focusing points which is dance and music and has customized facilities for both disciplines. The students live here, and there is a dormitory on campus. There is also a

⁹ I believe it was the initial thought that the MOVERs would constitute a band, and that some measure is taken to facilitate this when the outtakes for the MOVE project is made. What is meant here is that Trøndertun was active with teachers in the start-up phase, to make sure the band got the best possible start.

cantina that serves four meals a day. There are about 120 students across all the disciplines, including dance. The students are typically from 18-22 years of age and most of them have completed Norwegian high school.

At the time of writing this thesis, there are four students visiting, and that is why I traveled to Trondheim to visit. These are the MOVE participants. Two of them are from Brazil, one is from Malawi and one is from Mozambique. Among the Brazilians there was one male drummer, age 22 and one female guitarist, age 20. The man from Malawi played piano and is 22 years old while the man from Mozambique is a singer/guitarist and is 23 years of age.

During this stay I played with and interviewed the students. The goal of this visit was to collect empirical material and to better prepare myself for what to expect when I go to Malawi. A preconception of Malawi, the workings of Music Crossroads and the types of students affiliated with the MOVE project would let me get up to speed faster when I arrived in Africa as well as lessen the expected culture shock.

Chapter 3. Theory and Methods

3.1 Grounded Theory

As explained in the introduction my thesis began where my first pilot ended. The wish to understand and learn more about a student demographic was the initial catalyst. I needed a theory to support my exploration of this field and grounded theory was a fitting framework for finding my focal point. Grounded theory allows the researcher to explore the best way to proceed in simultaneously to gathering empery. Working with people, their stories and their subjective conception of the world and the process they are in is challenging. Every person is vastly different and will respond accordingly. Throughout the collection process the theoretical base of the thesis grows.

An example of this theory was implemented in this thesis is the Interview guide (see Figure 3.4). This guide was made for the Malawi interviews, but it was based on my experiences with the interviews I did in Trøndertun. Experiences I had with the international profile of the interview subject, the language barriers, the rhythm all the way down to the recording equipment I used was tested to see what worked and what didn't. I did not even plan on making the Interview guide to the extent I did, but after the Trøndertun field work, it became very logical to do so. The Interview guide is customized for the Malawi interviews, but made based on the experiences and knowledge gained in my pilot project in Trøndertun.

Grounded theory is a way of perceiving qualitative research that aims to ensure that the research conclusions are *grounded* in the field where the phenomenon have been researched in (Glaser & Strauss 1967) (Corbin & Strauss, 1990) (Strauss & Corbin 1998). Being inspired by grounded theory in this thesis is viewed as a good way to approach the field work because of the vastly different environment the empery is collected in. Malawi in particular is a country that is very different not only to

Norway, but other African countries as well¹⁰. By the use of grounded theory, one also assures that the theories and perspectives one has before entering the field will become preeminent and therefore affect the data collection too much. In addition to the field itself being different from what I am used to work in, the people studied, namely the MOVE participants are both cultural, and personally unique. Grounded theory also corresponds well with open interviews and narrative ethnography as it lets one focus on the respondent's unique story and state of being.

My work is a methodological approach which is influenced by Grounded theory. My thesis questions were made after my visit to Trøndertun. I gathered observations and made interviews with the intention of broadening my understanding of the MOVE project and it's participants, and through following these, the project that I currently have, arose. Grounded theory is said to be one of the most used frameworks for analysing qualitative data. (Bryant & Charmaz 2007) It's a process where one uses a set of guidelines and methods that results in the creation of "*a grounded theory*". Grounded theory can be said to be especially effective in researching social interaction and phenomenon (Corbin & Strauss, 1990). The process of continuously collecting and comparing empery will results in a theory that is related to one specific field, or social phenomenon (E.g. my interview guide). The main goal of grounded theory is to make a theory that clarifies the social phenomenon in the field and makes it easy to understand and put words on what is happening. (Gibson & Hartman, 2013). The resulting theory will therefore be both adapted to the field in which it is in use, and also the person or people using it.

¹⁰ This was talked about by the Mozambicans and the Malawians throughout my field work.

3.2.1 Field Work

Gathering empirical data through ethnographic field work (for short I use “field work” in the rest of the thesis) is largely about living in and experiencing the field over time (Hastrup, K. B. 2010) and getting used to the fieldwork mindset is therefore important. During my stay in Trøndertun I lived at the school to experience the field thoroughly over time. I did not go back into town to sleep at a hotel, which would constitute a break from the field. A school is not a unfamiliar area for me, especially since I am a teacher. What was most important for me in this field work period was to experience how it was to remain in the mindset for a few days, without breaking away from it.¹¹

My work is not situated in the practice room, and neither is it a study of a work of art. In my thesis I am doing a great deal of traveling and will therefore need a theory to support that framework. To describe my interaction with the community and societies I visit, I have chosen to use field work as my primary theory while at the same time being inspired by grounded theory. (Reflections from Sanders, C. R. 2001). Field work will be one of my main theories throughout my thesis since my empery is gathered in the places I visit during this period, namely Trøndertun Folkehøgskole and Music Crossroads in Malawi. Fittingly, as I have never travelled in Africa before, the history of field work as way of collecting empery is riddled with people traveling great distances and taking part in drastically different cultures than their own- Field work is by definition broad, and it incapsulates many different disciplines. One can for instance do field work at a in linguistics, archaeology, botanica and geography,

¹¹ The work I did with my bachelor thesis was also with observing at a school, but in that case, I obviously got to go home when the school day was over. A boarding school, like Trøndertun is, implicates that the students stay there after “closing hours”, since they live there. When I now compare the two, I notice that going home when the day ends constitutes a break with the field. The format that staying at Trøndertun offered is therefore a very good exercise in staying in a certain mindset through an extended period of time.

but in modern times it is often used in an anthropological context. (Hastrup, K, 2010, p. 56) (Reflections from Bryant, A., & Charmaz, K. (Eds.). p. 114-126, 2007)

3.3 Participant Observation

The field work in Malawi will be conducted over a five-week period. It is important to reflect and be aware of what kind of role one have in the field. Gould talks about four fundamental observer roles that one can in hold as an observer. These are spread among an axis, from *absolute observer*, through *Observer as participant* and *Participant as observer* to *Absolute participant*. (Gold, R. L. 1954) (Postholm, Jacobsenm 2011 p. 52). During my pilot in Trondheim, I lived at the school, and during my Malawian field work I lived together with the MOVERs in the house. I actively tried to partake in the MOVERs activities as much as I could, be it band, choir or drum class, or even just dinner. My role, as defined by Gold, would be somewhere between *Participant as observer* and *Absolute participant*. I judge it thus because, I obviously were there as an observer, but it is impossible to be an observer for five weeks straight, so, during the days where I did not record anything, I still actively participated in whatever the MOVERs were up to. The potential downfall with this role is that it can be intrusive, so it is very important to do ones best to fit in in a natural way. It requires intrapersonal caution. This role is peculiar in that it led me to become very similar to the MOVERs, and I even sensed that the students at Music Crossroads largely saw me as “just another MOVER”. The advantage of this is that it led me to gain the deep insight into the exchange programme that let me write well depicted narratives as well as giving me the contextualization required to do the analyses.

3.4.1. Interviews

Interviews are a very good method of gathering qualitative empery. It is also a natural choice when it comes to supplying my field work. Throughout the field work, questions arose which can be dwelt on and answered in an interview. Interviews are therefore a qualitative information gathering tool that is very well suited to answering “*why*”. This contrasts *observation*, which is very well suited to finding out “*what*”. (Postholm, Jacobsen 2011). Interviews are highly customizable, which makes them very useful. It’s a very common way of gaining empirical knowledge in the human sciences, and within some disciplines it is ranged as the most used tool for gathering empery (Tanggaard, L., & Brinkmann, 2010). Holstein and Gubrium (Holstein, J. A., & Gubrium, J. F. 1995). tells us that it is important to recognize that the interview is not a neutral technique and does not yield unaffected responses from the subject. Rather, the interview must be seen as an active interaction between the attending parties that naturally leads to socially negotiated, contextually based answers. (Tanggaard, L., & Brinkmann, 2010) (see also Fontana & Frey, 2005). Ones relation with the interview subject naturally affect the response given in the interviews, and in my case, the interviews had been conducted after living together with and observing the interview subjects for four weeks.

In my interviews I wanted to collect stories. This was because of my intent to use narrative ethnography to present the empirical material and use as a base on which I could make my analyzations. I choose to save the interviews for the last week, so that I got the chance to get to know the MOVERs as well as possible before starting out. I found that to be a wise choice as I knew a lot more about them, their journey into and throughout the MOVE project as well as their individual projects in Malawi. I did interviews in my bachelor as well and dwelt a lot on them when I contemplated the interviews I was going to do in Malawi. With each qualitative interview being unique and each interviewer being different I find it helpful to concentrate on some overarching goals instead of specifics. I find that setting larger goals for the interview beforehand makes it easier to focus on the subjects’ response and the unfolding

conversation. One of my main goals was talking as little as possible, so as to let the subjects story remain in focus.

Open interviews differ from structured interviews in that the questions are not predetermined. Whereas closed or structured interviews have a set of (often very) concrete questions that they seek to gain a concrete answer to, an open interview takes on a shape that more closely resembles a conversation.

“The loosely structured interview is a difficult genre, that demands training and interpersonal sensitivity from the interviewer’s side. The strength of this form of interview is that it can enquire very close to the interview subject’s life and world, and that it can be done at the precise moment that the interview subject has something to tell”. (Own translation of: Tanggaard, L., & Brinkmann, 2010 p. 35)

A closed interview is often easier to define than the open interview because the parameters are predefined, and the question/answer dichotomy is more easily understood. The conversation – the backbone of the closed interview is harder to describe since it contains numerous variables. I ask the reader to keep in mind that I only use open interviews in my thesis and therefore put the following paragraphs in that context. Interviewing and research in general is a craft that is learned over years, and what I put forth is my thought and predetermined guidelines I have utilized while conducting the interview in this thesis.

To structure the interviews, I devised an interview guide for myself, which was going to help me with the structure, but not necessarily the content of the interview.

Tanggaard and Brinkmann (Tanggaard, L., & Brinkmann, 2010) suggests this as a good way of conducting semi-structured interviews, and although I wanted to do open interviews I found it to be well worth it to both to secure my ability to maintain progression throughout the interview as well as to make sure to have all the required

formalities in order. As an extra backup, I also included a few planned questions as a backup if the conversation stalled, but these were as near as makes no difference not used.

Interview guide	
<p>Phase 1: Setting the frame and mood</p>	<p>5 minutes: Loose conversation (off-topic) with aims to setting a good and comfortable mood.</p> <hr/> <p>5 -10 minutes: Information</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Say a little about the theme of the interview, and what I'm looking for. -Explain what the interview is going to be used for and a little bit about my thesis. -Explain about anonymity and confidentiality -Inform about the ability to break off the interview at any point or change one's mind regarding participation in the study -Explain about recording and make sure this is accepted. -Ask and if there is anything unclear about the interview
<p>Phase 2: Experiences (The aim of phase 2 is to gradually move into phase 3)</p>	<p>5 – 10 minutes: Opening and transitional questions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Warm up questions about music and when the subject started with music. Gradually lead the respondent to talk more about themselves

	<p>(This is an open interview which means that listening to the respondents answer and asking good follow up questions is the most important job of the interviewer).</p>
<p>Phase 3: Stories in focus</p>	<p>The main bulk of the interview. Time depends on the stories being told and the development of the interview in general.</p> <p>Narrative ethnography is kept in mind here so it's important for the interviewer to keep attention to the narrative that is unfolding through the conversation.</p>
<p>Phase 4: Coming full circle</p>	<p>Ca. 10 minutes.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Bringing the narratives to a conclusion -Ask if there is anything the interview subject wants to add. -Ask about things that could have been unclear. -Talk about people (3rd parties) or certain situations that could demand extra care in how they are portrayed. E.g. other musicians they have worked with and clarify how, if at all, one can talk about them in this thesis.

Fig. 3.4 – Interview guide (the shape is adapted to fit the thesis)

As stated above, every interview is unique, so I saw the development of this interview guide as a helpful tool for me personally with regards to the sets of interviews I conducted the last week of the stay in Malawi. I found that the interview guide, in combination with my knowledge of the MOVERs resulted in good interviews. By “good”¹² I refer to the character of mood present in the interview, as well as the open and share-friendly atmosphere present during the talks, and the empathy that emerged. One thing that I found to be particularly successful was the interview guides ability to get the subjects talking. The 5 minutes of off-topic discussions, often about the day so far or some activity or experience we had shared in, set the respondent in a talkative mood. I also think it somehow belayed the interview so that the subject felt both more in control of the conversation and safe in the setting. It also made the transition into the rest of the interview feel natural and even almost wanted.

To provoke the respondent to give the kind of answers I was looking for, namely a narrative-like recount of their life and musical background, work and life in Malawi, I had to use trigger words. I tried to form my questions in a way that made use of certain words in combination with different types of interview questions, which I will elaborate upon shortly. Typically, I would form my questions in a manner like this: (E.g.) *“Can you tell me the story about the period of your life when you first decided to study music in high school?”* This would usually get the respondent talking about their junior high school experience, and how this led them to music high school. The respondent would usually feel like high school, which was the story I was really interested in, would be a natural subject to continue upon, and would do so. This type of phrasing of questions lets the respondent hit the ground running, so to speak. When it comes to the part of the story regarding high school, and as an added bonus, the interviewer gains insight into the back story, which serves to deepen the primary story. As mentioned above I used different types of questions to get the narration started as when I wanted something expanded upon or clarified. Tanggaard and Brinkmann

¹² Good as in the mood presented in Phase 1 in the interview guide.

(Tanggaard, L., & Brinkmann, 2010) (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009) refers to different types of interview questions. Firstly, they refer to *introductory questions*. These are questions that are supposed to motivate the interview subject to tell concrete stories about their life and experiences, that may bear relation to the research theme. These questions correspond well with my wish to generate narratives as empery, as is the case with narrative ethnography. These questions are the (e.g.) “*Could you tell me about the time that...*” or “*Do you have memory of a situation where you felt like...*” The strength of these questions is that they give the respondent the chance to talk about them self on their own terms and tell the stories that they themselves find interesting. The very same strength is also its double-edged sword. If these questions are poorly formulated, the respondent could be inclined to start a long story about something that is beside the topic of the interview.

After introductory questions, where the theme and setting are defined, it is advantageous to use *follow-up questions*. These mainly serve to keep the narrative alive, the respondent reassured, as well as motivate the respondent to expand upon relevant aspects of the narrative. The interesting thing about these questions is that they are both verbal and non-verbal. Follow up questions relate specifically to something that the respondent said. In non-verbal form they could be everything from a nod of the head, a surprised “*ah*” or some other manner of body language. I found that the body language of the interviewer greatly affects the respondent in open interviews. A professional interviewer integrates this into her interview and uses this to her advantage. If the interviewer seemed distant or uninterested, the respondent would cut her answer short and the interview would be compromised. At the same time, the body language used needs to be genuine, because if the respondent would notice that the interviewer was ingenuine, they would be inclined to think that they and their narration was not taken seriously. I found that the only way to use body language, was to do it with honesty. If one truly listens, one can, from the narration that is unfolding, use genuine and honest body language as a form of feedback.

Probing and specifying questions are also useful to guide the interview in the direction one wants it to go. These are questions that serve to clarify or deepen a subject.

Whereas probing questions ask (e.g.) “*Can you tell me more about...*” the specifying questions are more direct: (e.g.) “*What happened then?*” or “*How did you react to this situation?*”.

In relation to narrative ethnography it is important to avoid, or in any case minimize the use of questions that break off the narrative. In Tanggaard and Brinkmann’s (Tanggaard, L., & Brinkmann, 2010). review of question types I find that *direct questions* and *projective questions* could fall into this category. An example of a direct question could be “*Did you ever experience anyone talking negative about this subject?*” This could break the respondent away from the narrative and have her think about other episodes with relation to the question just asked. Projective questions could nevertheless be used effectively. They serve to put another person into the context of the subject being discussed, by asking about the respondent’s interpretation of this person’s actions or thoughts. Used right, and with ample timing, it could serve to deepen the interpersonal understanding of the narrative that is unfolding. Being able to control the direction of the interview is also important. One can use *structural questions* to regain focality within the interview either after a direct question or if something were to sway the respondent away from what one wanted to talk about. These questions could be formulated as (e.g.) “*Let’s review/talk more about the time you...*” or “*How about if we change the subject to the time you...*”. Open interview is not diametric and is therefore interpretable by both the interviewer and any eventual listener. It’s important to use the tools one have at disposal to minimize the risk of unneeded interpretation. One can use *expounding/interpreting questions* to have the respondent clarifying its position. To maximize the amount of clarification one can achieve it is constructive to use statements that the respondent gives in the questions. E.g. “*Is what you mean here, that you were afraid when you played that concert?*” in response to a situation where the respondent talked about a frightening concert experience.

Being aware of how one’s questions affect the interview setting, and not least the respondent’s questions is vitally important when conducting qualitative, open

interviews. It helps the interviewer structure the flow of the interview by exploiting the effect these question types have on the respondent. In the case of narrative ethnography, the ideal answer is a story, and a proficient implementation of these question types can serve to sway the respondent towards this producing this. Albeit a useful tool, there is one decisive factor in open, qualitative interviews, and that is the interviewer herself, and the interviewer's ability to listen.

“It is yet again important to emphasize that an interview can never be reduced to a question about questioning-techniques. The most important thing is that the interviewer listens actively, which means attentively and sensitively to what the interview respondent is talking about. It can take several years of training to become proficient at this, but even unprofessional interviewers can prove to be excellent at conducting interviews. It could very well be the case that one has acquired the necessary listening skill in other parts of one's life.”
(Own translation of Tangaard and Brinkmann, 2010. 42)

After the interviews, which often lasted an hour, (which indeed is very long) I felt somewhat depleted of energy. Even though I was very happy after having conducted the interviews, both feeling that the interviews went well and that I got to know the MOVERs even better, I felt the need to gather myself. Listening intensely in this manner is energy consuming. I had some thoughts about the length of the interviews, and even read about the interview length, and where some sources even suggested (E.g. Tangaard and Brinkmann, 2010) that 20 minutes¹³ would be the perfect interview

¹³ I see the value this time aspect has, but under these circumstances I decided to go longer. Working with narratives and the unique way they are told means that you cannot break of a narrative and pick it up in the same way you can with other subjects.

length. 20 minutes was in my interviews often where I started to get the best data. I found that even though the process drained a lot of energy (which it also might have done for the interview subjects), the trade-off of getting the interview flow that I felt I was able to achieve outweighed the drawbacks of the interview length. I also conducted no more than an interview a day for this reason. It was important for me to give the interviews the required attention that they deserved, and therefore I needed to be well rested. The interview week was not excluded from all the other activities we had to do at music crossroads, so it was important to structure the week so that the respondent was both available and rested for the interview.

What I collected during the interviews were thoughts, stories, discussions, anecdotes, commentary, and themes that inspired me to write genuine and topical narratives. The interviews and what they gave me as background information and insight¹⁴ were of vital importance when writing the narratives. The interviews served also as an impression base that both led me to have a greater understanding of what it means to be a MOVER, and gave me greater insight into the persons I deal with in this thesis.

3.4.2. Interviews, one on one

Conducting interviews one on one is an intimate process. One becomes all too aware of the role one poses when sitting down for an interview, in the twosomeness that emerges, be it as interviewer, or interviewee. The primary acting party is often the interviewer, since she more than likely facilitated and arranged the interview. As an interviewer it is important to try to minimize any discomfort that could develop during the space of time where the interview takes place (Tanggaard, L., & Brinkmann, 2010) (Postholm, Jacobsen 2011). The advantage of interviewing only one person is that one

¹⁴ The recorded interview material is somewhere in the range of 7 hours.

can focus solely on the person being interviewed.¹⁵ It is easier to follow one person's narrative than following two people.

3.4.3. Group Interviews

I conducted two group interviews in my research period. One in Trondheim with the MOVE group there, and one in Malawi, with the two participants from Brazil. I did this for somewhat different reasons. With the group in Trondheim I did not know them well enough to single anyone out yet, and a group interview is experienced as a safer environment. The advantage with group interviews is that you do not only get individual opinions, but rather a collective understanding of the opinions that exist in the group. One gets the sense of interviewing the group *as a group* and not as separate individuals. The meanings and utterances that appear are often discussed within the group, which leads to deeper insight (Dalen, M, 2004). On the other side, strong individuals could affect the group and sway the replies that are given. Politeness could ironically also be a problem. One of the interview subjects could potentially break away from an interesting or relevant story to give way for a less relevant story from one of the other interview subjects. The interviewer needs to be attentive to this potential problem.

An interview is an intimate situation, and it's hard to get a good interview if the subject feels maladjusted or uneasy. People generally feel safer in a group so it's often easier to conduct group interview with people you are just beginning to know. With the group interview in Malawi, I knew the interview subject well, so I primarily chose this approach because it could potentially give me insight in how the participants from

¹⁵ During our lectures, Tony Walberg talked a lot about "*Henvendthet*" and what it implies. It roughly translates to giving your entire attention, from audio and visual attention, all the way down to how you angle your body towards who or what you observe. "Vendt" in Norwegian refers to how your body is angled, so it is a physical expression as well.

Brazil worked as a group. Interviewing two people who are in a similar situation (in this case: from the same country, speaking the same native language and participating in the same exchange program), together can lead to interesting and useful insights. Another reason for choosing to group interview the Brazilian MOVERs in Malawi was language. Even though both were operating at a very high level of English at the time of the interviews (relative to how long they had actively been using English), it is not common for Brazilians to be fluent in English. I wanted the interview subjects to be comfortable with talking, and even using each other as scaffolding if that would be needed. (with inspiration from Olsson og Sørensen 2003)

3.5 Narrative ethnography

Stories are an engaging way that humans use to interact with the surrounding world. Stories and narratives have been around as long as recorded history, and the pains some people have gone through to record stories, be it chiselling it into stone or writing on parchment shows how important these stories have been to the different cultures that made them. Narratives are effective in saying something about society and social context.¹⁶ They have survived so long for a reason and one could argue that this reason is the stories ability to interact with us. In social sciences, and in science in general there has traditionally been a trend to be as neutral as possible. As if undusting an ancient dinosaur bone, every breath, and every interaction contaminated the specimen. In sociology, this resulted in the field or persons being studied was objectified, rather than subjectified. The main criticism of this point was that the researcher became an observer and did not interact with the field of research, but merely observed and described it.

¹⁶ One can see this trend all the way back to ancient stories ability to comment on moral and law, e.g. the Greek story of Pandora: Do not give into temptation, or Cain and Abel's story about jealousy.

“Major criticism of the positivist approach focuses on the fact that it does not allow human actions and social interaction to be properly scrutinised or represented. Positivist research tends to place the ‘observer’ or ‘researcher’ of social phenomena outside the social reality, independent from the very social and historical fabric of which they are a part, and thereby posing problems in understanding that reality.” (Goodson, I. F., & Gill, S. R. 2011)

Interaction with the field in this manner leaves the observer with descriptive data that could miss out on the interpersonal and social interactions. Later researchers saw the need to address the distance between the researcher and the field. Researchers describe the *Narrative Turn* which, in sociology has taken place the last couple of decades.¹⁷ The narrative turn is the period where social researchers recognized the need for empathy in the intersection of biography and history. One became for example more interested in hearing the nurses story about how he or she subjectively experienced her job, instead of just gathering an objective observation of what he or she did during that day. This lead the researcher closer to understanding how it was to be a nurse in a given institution.

¹⁷ One talks about the narrative turn in sociology as having taken place mostly during the 1980s and 1990s, but roots stretch back all the way to the Chicago school of Sociology during the 1920s and 1930s.

“Narratives provide opportunities to gain insights into the lived experience of individuals and thus can illuminate an understanding of the ‘field’ or culture as a whole. This has always been what qualitative social researchers are interested in rather than abstract and decontextualized information and numerical data for computational analysis. (Goodson, I. F., & Gill, S. R. 2011).

One of the main arguments against narrative ethnography is the question concerning neutrality. A story or a narrative is subjective by nature. If one accepts this premise it can be used to gain insight into the *subjective experience* of one observer. This is a strength that cannot to the same extent be achieved through objective or quantitative research. One should also keep in mind that even academic prose is to a large extent subjective. Just like in a narrative, the researcher/story teller is choosing what will be included in the actual thesis or story, and even how to word and present it.¹⁸

With this in mind, the depiction, through narratives, that have been collected in this thesis become ample source material for gaining insight into the social setting of the MOVE project. It can be hard to gain insight to the daily lives of the people who choose to spend a year of their life in a remote country through the MOVE project. To bring the reader closer, and to give a more intimate presentation of my empery, and the MOVER’s life’s, I find narrative ethnography to be a good presentation tool. The stories collected through my field study will be presented as narratives and will be analysed afterward.

¹⁸ An acquaintance of mine, who is writing his Ph.D. made me aware of this.

In this thesis, the reader will notice a genre change, where I change from the academic prose style to a narrative form. This change is also presented in italics and marked by an indent, so as to further clarify the change in genre. The narratives are written out in full without any interruption so to immerse the reader in the story (but footnotes are allowed, as I see these as an opportunity to supply further information without breaking the reader away from the narrative). The story will then give the reader insight to the daily life and situations that the MOVERS and I experienced in Malawi. Preceding the narratives are a small introduction. These explain my intention behind including the given story and what element they are supposed to dispute. Following the narratives are the analyses, where the story will be analysed and contextualized through the empery from the interviews.

3.6 Narratology and analytical approach

Narratology is one way of study of narratives. With narratives being such a wide genre, or even phenomenon it is hard to find a definitive way of analysing it. It is very hard to define in positivistic terms what narratology is, but Meister (Meister, J. C. 2003) suggests that it can be helpful to define it *ex negativo*.¹⁹ He goes on to suggest that it is not a theory. He states that the 80s and 90s saw a widening of the narrative scope – the way of viewing and commenting on narratives. It can rather be seen as a perspective.

¹⁹ Ex Negativo refers to a way of explaining something by stating what it is not. It is often used to clarify abstract concepts.

Since there is no unified way of studying and analysing narratives, it is helpful to sketch out the researcher's preferences when analysing. There are several suggestions to how this can be done Riessman, Kholer suggests the following:

"... a speaker connects events into a sequence that is consequential for later action and for the meanings that the speaker wants listeners to take away from the story. Events perceived by the speaker as important are selected, organized, connected, and evaluated as meaningful for a particular audience"
(Riessman, C. K. 2008, p. 3)

Narratives are often descriptions of events happening on a micro/local scale with a certain persona. Such events can be analysed in terms of given parameters such as *thematic, frequency, mood, or reaction/response*. It is for instance useful to isolate and comment on the subject's frame of mind, in relation to the given situation to gain knowledge about the subject's personal assessment of the situation.

Chapter 4. Narratives and Analyses

Chapter 4 will contain my empirical data. Each narrative is given its own subchapter, which is further divided in three. The first part is an introduction to the story, with information about how it was gathered, why it is included in the thesis. Following this is the narrative itself – uninterrupted (As mentioned, footnotes are allowed, as I see them as a way to give the reader relevant information without breaking them away from the text), so as to immerse the reader in the story, and lastly, the analysis of the story.

4.1.1 About: Arriving in Malawi

This story, together with the story “Nkhotakota” are meant to depict and describe the environment where both the exchange and the field work takes place. This is important because it both gives the reader insight into the country and environment that the thesis is situated in, as well as setting the tone for the rest of the narratives. These two narratives are therefore more descriptive and general in nature, as well as of a certain length, which I saw as necessary, as these two stories hold the majority of the descriptive information about the field work and the MOVE project. “Arriving in Malawi” is, as its title suggests the portrayal of the first 24 hours of the field work and how it was experienced. Fascination of a new place, and the initial experience of Malawi is important factors here, and I included my initial reactions to suggest how a MOVER could possibly experience the same thing, and having discussed this topic with the MOVERs on several occasions, it became apparent that they talked about this at length upon arriving. One of the most profound things of the exchange program is traveling to a new place, and when you are in your early 20s, as many of the MOVERs are, this does make a certain impression.

4.1.2 Arriving in Malawi

Getting of the plane in Lilongwe, Malawi was quite a profound experience. I was not only at the end of a two-day journey – starting all the way north, in Nesna at the coast of Helgeland, and now ending as I, with tired feet stumbled down the airplane stairs. I had executed the trip all alone, and by this time I had not met anyone currently residing in this continent. The air was warm, and the scenery was amazing – and surprisingly flat. Taking in the Malawian scenery for the very first time was something I think will stay with me for the better part of my live. The dry wind which had struck me as I stepped out of the plane quickly gave way to an intense rainfall that hit me before I got to the buss that would shuttle me to the terminal. Although it lasted merely a few minutes before giving way to the bright African sun again, I was already soaked. I had made first contact with the African rain season and the beautiful country I would reside in for the coming five weeks.

Describing the season as a rain season has different connotations than what it does in Europe. Here the rain season is not a period of the year where it rains a lot - it is the only period where it rains at all. I remember how glad I was that I got to come in this part of the year – when the colours were vivid and green, and the air so refreshingly clean. After clearing the passport and immigration checkpoints I gathered my luggage and proceeded towards the parking lot, all the while trying my best not to look as lost as I no doubt did. The sigh of relief finally came when I saw a Norwegian flag with a white note under it, saying “Eirik Dahl”. I had met my first Malawi MOVER.

After gathering my stuff and getting into the car we headed out for a roughly 40 min drive. Even though I had been traveling quite a while I was wide awake. There were just so much to observe and experience. Lilongwe looks like

no European city²⁰. The buildings are mostly brick or wood and the roofs are metal sheets. There is a blatant lack of road signs and street names – houses do not even have numbers. Asphalt roads with broken and jagged edges gave way to dusty dirt and sand roads latent with scars from the latest rain showers. Resounding in my head is the warning about traffic being the most dangerous thing in Malawi, but still, this is what I signed up for, hell, I even wrote the application myself!

After a 40-minute drive drew closer to the MOVE-house, affectionately known as “Azungo House”, which roughly translates to “White people house”. Area 23 is one of the poorest in the Lilongwe areas. It is considered the slum area. The main roads are paved, but most roads are dirt and sand. After heavy rainstorms one can see the locals having to rebuild and repair parts of the roads where the water have formed rivers. There is no workforce to speak of, one merely repairs the vicinity where one lives and although there is no defined area of responsibility, it all seems to work out somehow. There are always people in the streets. I don’t think it is common to stay inside. Houses are often cramped and dark, which is probably why people tend to stay outside most of the day. All around the neighbourhood people are sitting in front of their houses. Selling the produce that they grow in their garden. This is one of the main sources of income for the people living around area 23. The next-door neighbours keep chickens and sells eggs, while further up the streets you find onions and leeks. Walking down in the opposite direction you find potatoes, tomatoes, mangos and avocados. Somehow, it all works out, and even though everything is home grown, you can find most everything right at your doorstep. That does not necessarily include everything one expects to find in a traditional European household though. Water and power in the Chilinde area is mostly found in a few buildings inside compounds – large brick fences with tall gates.

²⁰ The Mozambiquean MOVERS also told me that it does not really look like most African cities either.

The fences are often protected by shattered glass to dissuade people from climbing over. This is where the people who has “normal” jobs in the town centre generally live. The MOVE-house is also one of these types of houses. It is situated within a compound together with one other house. There is no lawn to speak of, just parking space for two cars, both owned by the neighbour.

Walking out of the car, with Jonas, the MOVER from the airport generously helped me with my luggage. I already knew that the majority of the MOVERS were inside. I was the “new guy” with them already having lived together for several months. Graciously, they had let me get a bed in their house for my stay here.

It is difficult to describe the sensation of meeting new people that you are predestined to spend a lot of time with. How would this work out? Would it even work out? Yet, when I entered the house, the mood was very good. Smiles and laughter were all around, and they were incredibly pleasant to get to know. It had already enough on my plate absorb regarding the geographical setting I was in, and the fact that I had travelled so long, and with me being as bad with names as I am, I really had to concentrate. It was nevertheless incredibly easy to like the people I just met. Each had their own outspoken charm and own strength of personality – both qualities I later came to think one needs if one is to survive, and even flourish within the MOVE experience.

*The house where I was going to live for the next five weeks had three bedrooms, and two bathrooms, with the girls having the biggest room with the adjoining bathroom. The boys shared a bathroom in the hall that lay between the two bedrooms. The living room had a big table, and there was almost always someone there to talk with. The kitchen was relatively big, and was equipped with a fridge a stove, a pantry and a sink with adjacent cold **and** cold water. The living room was the most important place in the house, and it served the purpose of sprinkling a little bit of western culture back into ones’*

lives. Here the MOVERS often talked or looked at movies together in the evenings. It was a very relaxed social arena.

The first day probably didn't, but it seemed like it started very abruptly. After breakfast most of us were attending the choir at Music Crossroads. Music Crossroads is roughly a 15-minute stroll from the MOVE-house. Most of the route is in the backstreets of Chilinde. Taking in the sights and smells for the first time was very memorable. Things go in a different pace here, there are no one running to catch the buss – because there are no buss timetables. Some of the MOVERS even told me that you could not even go for a jog. If you were seen running down the street, people would start to wonder what the hell you were running from. Being of western origin and walking in this neighbourhood generates some attention, especially from the kids around age 4 – 10 (rough estimate). Shouts of “Azungu Bhoo!” (hello white person), filled the streets and the children kept running up to us asking for a high five or a fist-bump. Passing numerous stores, selling everything from living chickens to car parts we eventually arrived at Music Crossroads. Music Crossroads was smaller than I first expected – I was soon to experience that what I previously viewed as a classroom was not necessarily so here. The main building had two big classrooms and held some offices and smaller group rooms. These were often used for instrument teaching. In front of the building, to the left was the lunch area. Chairs and tables were set out, and there was an open-air kitchen that made food. Some might find it a bit unhygienic, and I doubt very much that it would pass any European health inspection, but these women knew what they were doing. Slaughtering is done on sight by the guard and the women working the kitchen. They serve very simple food, mainly rice or Nsima (cooked maize flour) and some protein of your choice, but together with the Masamba (boiled pumpkin leaves, onions and tomatoes) and the sauce the meat is cooked in, it produces a very good lunch. I tried to eat there regularly, as did a few of the MOVERS. What I very quickly came to like was the use of the outside tent. On the backside of the main building, next to Music Crossroads very own, generator powered stage there was a permanent tent. The tent had no walls,

but only a cone shaped roof. It held a blackboard and numerous chairs. There is very little wind or weather to speak of – even in the rain season, so there was never a problem with the tent. It merely served as open space, outside with shade. It was used for everything from choir and drum lessons (which are both collective endeavours with everything from ca 7 to 15 people, to staff meetings. This, as well as one of the bigger class rooms was also the site the MOVE participants often use when they were teaching drums and choir.

In the main building there was a studio. There are two small rooms in the studio, one for recording and one for the audio technician. There is little soundproofing between the studio and the rest of Music Crossroads to speak of, so one must keep the schools schedule in mind when planning sessions, so as not to get audio “bleeding” on the recording. Access to power is also a difficulty. Power is usually available during the daytime, and not in the evenings which corresponds badly with the institutes schedule when it comes to noise. Another difficulty with the studio is with regards to the equipment. Decent audio and recording equipment is hard to come by in Malawi and holds great value. Music Crossroads is naturally very protective with their gear and they do not often let students work alone in the studio. This means that progress is almost only made when one of the MOVERS (one in particular) is on site. This problem is challenging with regards to the mission of the MOVE project. The MOVERS want to leave something behind after their year in Malawi, be it transcriptions, ensemble skills/experiences or concrete skills, such as the knowledge to run a studio and recording sessions.

Nevertheless, the people at Music Crossroads, both students and staff are very helpful and very eager to collaborate with the MOVE participants. It’s a very friendly place, and one is expected to meet and greet everyone every day. This friendliness continues across Lilongwe and out in the districts. There is a good reason for Malawi being called “The Warm Heart of Africa”.

4.1.3 About: Nkhotakota

This narrative is about a visit two of us made to Nkhotakota where two of the other MOVERs live. Nkhotakota is about three hours north, northeast of Lilongwe, which means that for most of the time, they are somewhat isolated from the rest of the group. This narrative serves to paint a picture of the environment that the MOVERs live in, how one can experience traveling in this country, and also what kinds of situations that arise when one is living in Malawi. Malawi, as compared to both Brazil and Norway is profoundly different (Mozambique is obviously the closest, but the Mozambicans insist that even the difference between these countries are notable), and when one decides to live here for one year, as the MOVERs have done, it is essential that one try to adapt and learn from the stay. The MOVE project states as much and want the MOVERs to exchange competency and experiences through the cultural exchange.²¹

²¹ This, which is also referred to other places in the thesis can be read about at <https://www.jmn.no/move>

4.1.4 Nkhotakota

“A lot of young people talk about traveling and seeing the world. Such fascination with the world we live in is surely one of the reasons why I found myself in Malawi at this time. The world seems to shrink massively when one is confronted with the facebook feed of far-flung friends, finding their fortunes somewhere around world, and us, getting an electronic glimpse of their voyage through the pictures they send home. Although I consider myself lucky to have travelled a lot despite my relatively young age, not only having visited several European countries, but also a few continents, I still have a yearning for more. As far as seeing the world – as in really having the sensation of being some place truly new and recondite – I am still somewhat of a novice. Serendipity would have it that I would get a strong sense of this feeling during my field work in Malawi, because, unbeknownst to me, two of the MOVERs held residence in a small city situated by the shores of lake Malawi.

It was originally Jonas’s idea to go. I was still orienting myself in Lilongwe and familiarizing myself with Music Crossroads and the people working there, when he suggested that we could travel up to Nkhotakota for a few days. I had met Jakob and Anita, the MOVERs that live in Nkhotakota previously, as they sometimes come down to socialize in Lilongwe during the weekends, but I had only heard talks about the place they lived and worked. “It wasn’t their choice to live there” Jonas said during an evening conversation. Darkness comes abruptly in Africa and with it, the heat dissipates swiftly. Horror stricken and paranoid of getting malaria, I had just sprayed myself with insect repellent for the second time that evening while Jonas had just relaxed on the porch. The duality between being overly afraid of malaria and wanting to sit outside in the calm evenings was somewhat paradoxical, but I had really come to like these evening talks, where I got to learn so much about life in Malawi, as well as getting to contemplate the day’s events. “JMN is the ones that suggested that they lived there. Its roughly the same as them deciding what country we get to go to as well, I guess, but you can always wish for a specific place, but they

will ultimately have the final say.” He continued. “But it’s very different up there, much more rural and remote. And, it’s only the two of them that work with music. I think you need to be quite strong as a person to handle that kind of day-to-day life.” I was not sure what to expect from this trip – whatever I had expected from Lilongwe had turned out to be very different indeed, and when I learned that Nkhotakota was even more “different” I just had to get up there.

We went down to the bus depot early that morning, having been told by some people at the bus depot the day before to get there in good time. The day starts at dawn in downtown Lilongwe, and most stands, shops and businesses had been open for quite a while by the time we got there. There were shouts and loud noises everywhere. Every piece of pavement was pelted with plenty of footsteps and every side street and alley were full of people. I have never experienced this kind of ambulation anywhere before – even the busy boulevard of New York’s Time Square dwindled in comparison. There were smells of exhaust, mixed in with the noises, and it all seemed quite chaotic for a small-town northerner such as myself. Jonas’s strides were decisive and quick, and while I walked beside him, just one step behind, I thought that I was contended with him being there. As far as I could tell we were the only western people in the area at the time, but him being a good 10 cm taller than me lead him to absorb most of the attention we got. Cheerfully he greeted the people we met, but respectfully declined countless offerings of everything from shirts, shoes, avocados and the most fire hazardous homemade wooden electrical multi cords you can imagine, while I just tagged along. He knew very well how to interact with the locals. The bus depot itself is, as you could imagine, was also different to what I was used to. There were no designated spaces for specific locations. For me it seemed like a parking lot. Most of the busses were old and tattered, but business seemed to be booming nevertheless. I was a bit stressed out that we hadn’t found our buss yet. Could it have gone already? We had no way to be sure – there is no app, like you would get back home – not even a time table. Walking along the rows of busses we looked in the

windshield for the signs saying where the bus was heading. Continuously people came up to us. “Azungu! Where are you going!?” Circumnavigating the depot, we finally found the right bus. The bus was old, and bore marks of miles upon miles of Malawian roads, but still not the worst in the lot. There seemed to be quite a lot of people on the bus already, so I was anxious to get on board, and after paying we got inside the bus. Jonas who was first, took the seat behind me – it seemed we got the last two. Turning around, I sighed with relief: “Phew... We just made it...!”

Roughly two and a half hours later the engine fired up. We had been sitting still, just waiting for something to happen. What I perceived to be a full bus, apparently wasn't even close to what the Malawians thought of as full. Talking to some of the people around us we found out that the bus only goes once a day, and the bus driver wants to get as much as possible out of the trip. There had been people entering the bus almost continuously since we came, and the central walkway was by now filled with rice bags, maize flour and people sitting on top of them. In my seatbelt-less two-person seat we were now four people. Jonas's seat counted three – but luckily for me, there were two children in my seat whereas Jonas's seat held three adults. Amidst the rapidly increasing passenger number there were also an alarming amount of baggage being filled onto the bus. By now the walkway towards the front of the bus was not only full but had formed a toroid shaped passenger hole that were only barely possible to climb through.

By the time the bus left, we had been exposed to several pushy salespeople and a lot of involuntary bodily contact. But the relief that I experienced when the bus finally left Lilongwe was very strong. We were finally on our way and I could yet again experience the Malawian countryside and the utterly amazing sights it held. Several thoughts came to me while traversing this magnificent landscape. Primarily, I have to admit, egoistic ones. Thoughts of how lucky I was to experience this country, which I had barely heard of before committing to coming here, but also thoughts of the MOVERS, who were brave enough to

give one year of their lives to aiding this cultures growth through sharing their knowledge and experience of music and music management, despite their young age.

When one becomes a resource to society is sometimes culturally dependent on age, and back in Norway one is not overly expected to actively contribute before roundabout age 25. Before that one is mostly expected to study. In Malawi it is quite different. I got to know the maid who worked in our compound very well. She told me several stories about life in Malawi, where one could be married away at the all too tender age of 14 and from there be expected to run the day to day of the household. Some of the MOVERs that came from Malawi and Mosambique already had a few years of working experience in various professions ranging from teacher to translator. Authority in Malawi is achieved through other means than in Norway, and although old age is held in high regard, it is not necessary. The tall and jovial man who greeted me at the airport just two weeks ago, and who was now sitting behind me on a bus midway from Lilongwe to Nkhotakota, held a lot of authority back in Music Crossroads. I remember vividly the number of people who contacted Jonas on a daily basis upon him arriving there. There were always people wanting to talk to him about studio work or practice sessions.

Sitting on the bus, my streams of thought were often abrupted. Gazing through the window upon the amazing scenery of this magnificent country one could meditate about the place, setting and surrealistic aura of this place, but from time to time one became very aware of the all too cramped inside of the buss. Turning to Jonas I said in Norwegian “My body have had continuously contact with three different people for the last hour, and the boy next to me, who seemingly never have seen a white person, have been pinching my skin for half an hour now.” The answer came abruptly: “Four people...!”

Climbing through the incongruous and vaguely portalesque hole in the wall of luggage that occupied the entire front of the buss, I saw a chicken. It was

laying right next to the mountain of baggage, wrapped in a plastic bag. It was calm but uneasy, probably finding the bus ride even stranger than what I did. Although it was wholly unexpected, I was not surprised to see a chicken laying there. Maybe I was not the most cramped passenger here after all... Pushing the absurdity of the situation away for a second, my thoughts yet again wandered to the MOVERS who signed up for one year of these kinds of bizarre experiences. Stepping out of the bus and into the free air was quite a blessing. This was Nkhotakota. Both of us hadn't had a drink since this morning and, now, pushing through midday and into evening it was about due time. Jonas went up to a roughly 8-year-old girl who was selling water and soft drinks by the roadside. Buying a bottle and getting ready to leave he was abruptly stopped. "Mister! You have to drink that here!" None of us were ready for that reply but we stopped and waited a few moments so that Jonas could finish his bottle and give it back to the girl. Bottle pawning is seemingly more important here than in Lilongwe.²²

Since cars and tuk-tuks are very scarce here, we had to settle for an alternate mode of transportation, so, after a short two-kroner bike ride, we arrived a little outside Nkhotakota town centre, at the house where Anita and Jakob lived. It felt very good to be greeted by the Jakob's friendly face. Anita was still at work at the Nkhotakota Culture center, where the two of them were on a day-to-day basis. Jakob is a bass player, such as myself, and have experience with everything from revue bands, jazz ensembles and rock bands. And I suspect he might also feel well at home within the funk genre. He is known within the MOVE community for loudly blasting Pavarotti tunes during late night cooking sessions. The two Norwegian residents are strikingly different from one another. The happy go lucky Jakob finds his contrast, in the Norwegian-

²² Later it would be explained, when Jakob would tell us that this was in fact one of the poorest districts in Malawi.

Hungarian Anita. An excellent singer and flutist, who is equally at home in both disciplines. Anita has a great sense of humour and a dynamic outlook on life, maybe inherited from the Hungarian part of her ancestry. Perhaps the dichotomy of Anita and Jakob works out well, with Anita providing the flare and sense of urgency, and Jakob providing the calmness – whenever the opera cooking sessions are not in force. The house was relatively small but suited two people very well. But it was very unequipped. Things in general are scarce in Malawi, and even if you have the money required, it is not given that you would be able to purchase what you want – simply because it does not exist out here. That is especially true out here in Nkhotakota. The bedrooms held one bed and a closet, and the living room held a few chairs and a table. As far as décor went there were none, except a huge map of Malawi painted directly on the wall. “Ghosts of MOVERs past?” I thought to myself but making no remark. I was happy to be here, but admittedly it had a bittersweet aftertaste. It felt very remote indeed. The comforts of water and power back home in Lilongwe were not to be depended on in Nkhotakota. “If we have power in the morning, we usually don’t have it in the evening, and vice versa.” Jakob noted after we had settled in. “So fully charge up your phones and electronics whenever the power is here. It could be gone for days – we never know. Jakob showed us out to the lawn where there was some outdoor furniture. With daylight fading it didn’t take long before Jakob headed in to get some pesticide incense. At the time we were six people with western origin in Nkhotakota. It is so remote that no one really goes here if they don’t have anything to do, which is mainly aid work. It was me and Jonas, visiting Anita and Jakob, who were working with music, and two other Norwegians who were working with other projects – mainly power and infrastructure. I was quite proud when I learned about Norway’s foreign aid role in Malawi and how it stretched out all the way to remote places like this. Jakob knew quite a bit and was eager to share. “There are not really much to work with at the culture centre. And with power being so arbitrary as it is, one never knows how the day is going to be. It is also very hard to get hold of qualified music teachers in Malawi, and out here

its next to impossible.” It seemed very challenging to live out here for one year of your early 20s while your friends back home continue to lead their normal lives. Still, Jakob seemed not only proud of what they accomplish, but him and Anita seemed to settle in the town relatively well. Jakob had even gotten a name among the locals: Yakobo. Jakob simply was not rural-Malawian enough.

Day two in Nkhotakota was very bright and sunny. While Lilongwe is situated in a more temperate 1000 meter above sea level, Nkhotakota lies on an altitude just shy of 500 meters. This makes it both warmer, and more insect infested. Jakob proposed to take me and Jonas for a walk and show us the general area, and especially Lake Malawi. I was anxious to see Nkhotakota and looked forward to the trip, even though it meant having to deal with the intense heat. We had power the night before which meant that it was gone this morning. Jakob was by now very used to this and made arrangements for us to fry up some eggs and beans over a makeshift stovetop made from a few bricks and some coal. Breakfast was very good, but in all honesty, it was because of the company. I still struggled to grasp how it would be to live here for a year, with the social implications, the remoteness, and the general state of housing and infrastructure – to really be in Jakob’s and Anita’s shoes. I was not sure about how I would handle it myself. It would be tough, for sure. While struggling with these thoughts, I also longed to experience it, and to get a taste of the culture and the setting the MOVERs lived in.

Crossing the front lawn and navigating between the absurd number of free roaming goats – by what means are the locals able to manage and herd this seemingly unrestrained goat population? – we started to head down one of the main roads. Even if there are well over 30.000 people in this city, there are very few cars. One can freely walk in the middle of the road, as both people, goats and cattle do, and rarely have to get out of the way. The environment was simply stunning. Yet again I took time to appreciate that I got to see Africa in this season. Everything was lush and vibrant, and everything was calm. The

sense of time was even more relaxed than in Lilongwe as we strolled down the hot asphalt road. We had talked and joked about African time a lot already, but the conversation came up yet again. There was no sense of urgency at all, yet moments like these were the ones where African time was not a nuisance.

“Even the teachers are late, and it’s not even rare!” Jakob said with a smile. “And even if the students don’t show up for a bass lesson, they don’t tell you! I even made a WhatsApp account²³ for them and asked them to simply let me know if they would not come, so that I didn’t have to sit there alone all day” Jakob added. My thoughts circled back to one of the dinner conversations in Trøndertun, where one of the Mozambicans said, “In my country, you are not late until you don’t show up!”. One is obviously expected to be on time in Norway – often down to the minute. What a situation...

“Let’s get of the main road about here. There is something I would like to show you guys.” Jakob said. We left the road and headed into what was somewhere between a neighbourhood and a field. There were houses scattered around but there were dirt paths and corps in between. In Malawi, every square meter of free land is planted, often with corn, and this was even more true here in Nkhotakota. We headed through this area and almost everyone yelled hello to us. The kids that were outside playing often came up to talk what little English they knew with us, before just as suddenly as they appeared, they scampered off. I’m not sure but I think Jonas knew where we were heading, because he started to talk about how much he liked big trees. It was an absurd but very entertaining conversation – a prelude for what was coming, and suddenly we were there. This was the Livingstone Three, under which Livingstone sat and negotiated the end of the slave trade that had plagued the area with local

²³ The locals use WhatsApp much in the same way that the majority of Norway electronically communicate through Facebook’s messenger. With the cellphone network being as new as it is, 3g is as common as calling.

chieftains. Jakob seemed proud to be able to tell us so much about the area of the town, and he took pride in the uniqueness of the place he was living in. No one else could tell the stories he would come back with after this year. It was truly amazing to see how at peace he was here. We sat under the Livingstone tree for a while, but after a short while we had gathered quite a lot of attention, and even though interacting with the locals was very pleasant, they were simply rapidly becoming too many... ..We pressed on.

The road led us down towards Lake Malawi, and I could vaguely make out fishing boats on the water. Passing the ruins of the Bondo Mosque, situated on the beach, Jakob pointed out a sign which told the story of the Mosque and the Muslims of Malawi. The bottom read "This monument was maintained in February 2014 by the department of antiquities, with funding from the Norwegian Embassy".

"That is just so funny!" Jakob exclaimed. "Here in Malawi, the locals do not hear the difference between L and R. They mix them up, and interchange them all the time. Here they have even written Nolway instead of Norway." This is true for all of Malawi, which they sometimes even call "Marawi". People had even called me Eilik, seconds after introducing me as Eirik. For us, it was so strange that it led to an endless array of bad jokes – for example the one about the upcoming election.

With the sun beaming down on us we headed up the shore of lake Malawi, walking close to the waters and observing the fishermen and women while they worked. The water had a brown tint, which Jakob said came from the rivers that wash sand into the lake during the rain season. When he first came here, the lake was bright blue. It was incredibly hot, and we were all getting tired out. Jakob was leading us towards a lodge he often visited. Not surprising he knew the history of this place as well. "This used to be a brothel" he told us. Now it serves as a lodge, and the top floor is a bar." We found shade under a parasol and got something to drink. "I need to go here sometimes to stay sane" he told us. "Nkhotakota is in its own league when it comes to beauty, but it is

intense out here sometimes. It's proper Africa, you know, with goats everywhere and water cuts at a regular basis, and there is only one thing certain about the power, and that is that you never know how long it will be until it comes back on again." We sat there for a while before heading home to find a slaughtered goat hanging from the neighbouring tree. The neighbours were very pleasant and had become good friends with Jakob and Anita, so later that evening, after a knock on the door, Jakob came in to the Kitchen with a whole leg of lamb the neighbours had given us. Things are certainly different in Nkhotakota, but neighbouring kindness prevailed.

The next day we were going to visit the Nkhotakota culture centre. This is the place where Anita and Jakob work. It could be both snakes and monkeys on the way to the culture centre, so we had to be careful where we walked. I wanted to see some monkeys on the way to school, but it was not to be. Rather we found ourselves in the middle of a herd of cows just as we were entering the compound of the Nkhotakota culture centre. One of the cows even got through the main gate, and we had to herd it out. Even the road to school hereabouts present unique situations and they are never what you expect.

The culture centre is a compound with an administrative building, a kitchen, a band practice room, and a building with class rooms. Anita had gotten there before and was working in the office in the administrative building while Jakob was preparing for a bass lesson. He invited me to join, and even suggested that I could substitute for him. "I'm the only bass player here, and my student could use some input from someone else but me". I felt very unprepared and was not ready to take on the challenge he presented, but his smile and his laid-back manner made it hard to say no. I suggested that he would start out, and continuing with his planned programme, and that I could take over and subsidize towards the end of the lesson. I really liked the way he interacted with his student. He had talked about him before and told me how dedicated he was. It must have been very inspirational for a young bassist such as Jakob to be appreciated and valued in the way he was by his student. They seemed to be

good friends and mutually appreciate the interchange. “I’m not bringing back my bass to Norway” Jakob told me in Norwegian. “It’s great to see the value a decent musical instrument has here in Malawi, and especially in remote places such as Nkhotakota. Most instruments are imported from South Africa at great expense and are very hard to get hold of. They are not only heavily used, they are literally worn down to the bone, and when they become unplayable, which means a different thing here than it does in Norway, they get dismantled and used as parts to keep other instruments going.”. Someone else was going to get to use Jakob’s bass, and it will probably see a great deal of use for several years to come.

Just as in Music Crossroads, Lilongwe, lunch was served outside. It’s remarkable how logical it is to use the outside areas, and even now, with frequent heavy showers coming in unexpectedly, everything dries up quickly and you are able to get back to being outside.

Leaving Nkhotakota left me with an ambivalent feeling. The place, and the people were so special, so unique, but I kept imagining how it would be to live there and wrestled with how Jakob and Anita would have it here over a year, isolated, with the rest of the MOVERS living quite far away. They were dealt a rather special card, one I was not sure if I would have wanted if I was attending the MOVE project. Still, their experience, being more extreme and more challenging would probably leave an even deeper imprint.

4.1.5 Analysis of “Nkhotakota” and “Arriving in Malawi”

Arriving in Malawi starts with a description of a first meeting with Africa. It talks about the sensation with seeing Africa and taking it all in. The mode, and curiously naive outlook the story takes is notable. Everything is new, and everything is exciting, which leads the narrative to become subjective as well. This is a state of mind that people often have when confronted with a brand-new setting. This mode, or state of mind, is also very close to what Sunniva experienced, here described in an outtake from her blogpost:

“The first time the “wow, shit I’m in Africa” hit me, was while driving from the airport to our new home. Sitting in the car with 6 other, rather new people, (Mozambique’s arrived later that evening) I knew I was going to live 9 months together with. Looking out through the window at an orange and dry landscape, scanning the fields trying to see any “african animals” I have seen on animal planet. The driver just laughed allot, when I asked where all the animals where at. It honestly felt like I was part of a scene in some kind of adventure film.”

This says rather a lot about how the MOVERs experience their arrival in Africa. Comparing it to an adventure film is a very direct way of saying how one perceives the environment. The nature is mentioned a lot in both “Arriving in Malawi” and “Nkhotakota”, just as it is a recurring theme in most of the blog posts about the MOVE project. This means that the interaction with the nature, and the expectance of seeing African animals, which is for instance mentioned on the way to school in Nkhotakota, and in the blog posts are an important part of the MOVERs stay in Africa.

The MOVERs also experience a lot of things they subjectively perceive to be strange during their stay in Africa. It is worth mentioning the chicken on the bus (not to mention the entirety of the Malawian bus situation), the fire hazardous multi cords, the

goat in the three etc. Things one perceives as strange or weird says a lot about one's own expectation and perceptions of normality. Just as the punchline in a joke often is almost what you expected, but just a bit weirder or more unexpected, the things you take notice of are the ones that are outside your subjective norm. It is notable how Sunniva talks about the names of the shops she has seen or passed in the blog post. Choosing to include some of these funny business signs in her post shows that they, and their weirdness (in western eyes) are something that she notices and thinks about. These experiences are some of the things that shape the way the MOVERs perceive their exchange.

The "Nkhotakota" story also contains a few of the challenges that the MOVERs face. Especially in Malawi, the exchange program is shaped by the country's infrastructure. Sometimes there is power and water, and sometimes there is not. Roads, buses and traveling is also very intense. One needs to bear in mind that most of the MOVERs have little experience with living alone in the first place, with some of them having only gone to boarding school, and some of them never even having lived away from their parents before. The first breakfast in Nkhotakota is a very good example of this, and how Jakob handled it. The power is gone, but he has guests, and wants to make breakfast. He simply builds a makeshift stovetop and lights a fire.²⁴

From the story, one can see that Jakob, or "Yakobo" has settled very well in the community. Both from navigating the scenery when he showed us around, and the way he adapts to the living situation shows a person who is managing the exchange program well. He has also become familiarized with the town he lives in, which can be seen through his knowledge of the local history and buildings. It seems to me that Jakob is very proud of the community. In his blog post "The Warm Heart of Africa"

²⁴ The MOVERs talk about the preparation course they attended. They say that they were continuously reminded that adaptability was the most important thing to prepare for with regards to the exchange program.

he speaks warmly of the people he meets and interacts with and how they tell stories of their ambitions and dreams. He also applauds them for being warm and inviting, but never hides that the work and surroundings are challenging.

Through the field work, the MOVERs talk a lot about the absence of “stuff” and how this differs from the materialistic west. We all have countless electrical gadgets, and the purchasing power to further extend our collection, but here things are different. Like it is described upon entering the house in Nkhotakota – it is close to empty, even *if* there is a western organization who have rented it. Another very good example on this is the segment where Jonas, who just arrived in Nkhotakota, bought something to drink, he was not able to leave before had returned the bottle. This speaks volumes of the poverty in this area. Jakob has seen and experienced this through living here. What he says towards the end of “Nkhotakota” is very memorable. Even though he is a student and does not necessarily have a lot of money he is leaving his instrument behind. He has first-hand experience of how valuable an instrument can be and will do a valuable deed with leaving his instrument for the next generation of musicians in Nkhotakota.

4.2.1 About the story: “A visit to the church”

The story about the church visit shows how Music Crossroads stretches out from the campus to other musical institutions. The outreach profile that Music Crossroads has does affect the MOVERs stay in Lilongwe through them being asked to participate in upcoming and, evolving projects. This is the story about one such interaction with an outside institution, where the MOVERs were the ones that stood for the contact. It also paints a picture about the call for the MOVERs time and competence. Still, probably the most important observation made is in relation to gender roles. Malawi is a country that is challenged on this point²⁵.

²⁵ Malawi is ranked as country 170 by the UNDP. The Gender Inequality Index can be found here: <http://hdr.undp.org/en/content/gender-inequality-index-gii>

4.2.2 A visit to the church

“Having played double bass for some time, I have often heard the jokes that airport personnel find incredibly funny – the ones that they think no musician have ever heard before - “Wouldn’t a violin have been easier?!” “Have you ever considered a piccolo?”. Sunniva is not swayed an inch by such jokes. This, relatively small girl, has carried her cello across most of Norway, on and off stages all the way from the far north to the far south, in and out of cramped band busses and what have you, and right now she was carrying it down the main street through Area 23 and Chilinde. Accompanying her was Gabriel. Gabriel is a very charming young Brazilian who is somewhat of a multi-artist. He is a pianist, and even an arial dancer, but here in Lilongwe he is working mostly with music theory, a discipline he excels at, and which is sorely needed here in Africa, because there are so few teachers with this competency. Gabriel’s project is among others to transcribe and arrange local songs for choir. He sometimes works in the morning, which is the time of day where I do most of my work, and we can share a cup of coffee and a few laughs. Even if it is a 20-minute walk to the church where Sunniva, Gabriel and I were heading, there were no talk about taking a bus or a car – not even a tuk-tuk. Sunniva intended, as always, to walk.

The afternoon sun was beating down hard on us, but a slight breeze made it a very pleasant walk nevertheless. We were heading to a project Sunniva and Gabriel had been working on for a little while. A local church has, despite the acute lack of both instruments and qualified teachers, a small chamber orchestra, and Sunniva and Gabriel have been helping out. It was just that time in the middle of the day, where everything quiets down a tiny bit, before suddenly springing back into life, with people going home from work and school, passing through the alleys and markets. We walked up to the compound curcumin the church and through the tall main gate. Churches here looks more like houses than what they do back home. I never saw the familiar protestant churches with spires, like those we have in Europe here in Chilinde.

The aesthetics were closer to what one could expect from the more modern church movements, such as for example the Baptists and the Seventh Day Adventists. A small group of two violinists and one cellist were sitting in the front of the church as we entered. Sunniva was going to have a lesson with the cellist, and for today, Gabriel was here for the meeting. He sat with me on a bench a little away while Sunniva unpacked and commenced to join the cellist.

The practice session was somewhat reminiscent of the youth orchestra I played with in high school – technique and intonation was rather fleeting, but one could sense some kind of attentiveness that often follows dedicated, yet unexperienced musicians. The only thing being notably different was the apparent lack of women. From what I could gather, Sunniva was the only female on the grounds. I never asked, but I think they felt privileged to be able to be here. Instrument and organized musical activity is scarce in this part of Africa. Sunniva had told me about one student in particular. He was very dedicated and practiced whenever a cello was within reach. They were now sitting next to each other, bow in hand and fingers to strings, alternatively playing together and one by one. I deduced that Sunniva, the teacher, and also the woman, was the younger of the two by a few years. But she was also the one with the competence, which her student really seemed to recognise. I thought about the country's gender inequality situation, and how far from western standards we were. Sunniva was now the midpoint in the room and at the same time the culmination of knowledge. What a wonderful way of bringing forth society I thought – through music and education, two things so close to my heart, and also, close to the MOVE project's goals. My thoughts raced back to Music Crossroads, and the attention which Jonas, with him being a tall white man would get every time he came in the morning, but here Sunniva was – gaining and maintaining the same esteem on merit alone. Her student gave and her able fingers full attention whenever she spoke or demonstrated anything. As I perceived them, he was, in this time, in full recognition of the immense value a versatile and talented cellist such as Sunniva was for them.

Throughout the session we had heard some brass instrument coming from the back room. After a while it ceased and a handsome, well-dressed man in a white shirt came out and called us over. It was time for the meeting we had come for.

The man we met with was both pleasant and inviting. He oversaw the musical activity in the congregation and had started a collaboration with Music Crossroads that eventually landed Sunniva and Gabriel here, in his office. Between them they had knowledge of theory, musical skills, and experience with different ways of practicing and teaching music, with Sunniva having played in both bands and chamber orchestras, and Gabriel being the pianist and theoretician he was – all things the congregation needed to broaden their musical profile. Still, like so many places in Malawi, they lacked the equipment and teachers.

“We do not keep the keyboard here for safety reasons, but if you need it we will can schedule to have it over”. The church owned an electric keyboard, and they really loved it. Loved it so much in fact, that it was removed from the vicinity. For me it was absurd that an institution who seemed to relish music, would hide away one of their potentially best tools, but one could easily understand how much of a loss it would be to see it stolen. “What we really need is intonation exercises, and if you could to that with the entire group it would make a huge difference.” the orchestra leader told us. Having equipment like a piano readily available in a room regularly used for music is a matter of course in Norway, but here in Malawi it is quite different. Even if one were to have a keyboard available, there is no guarantee we would have the electricity to use it. Gabriel was able to do the exercises that they wanted, but needed to have his instrument, the piano at hand. It was very clear how much the orchestra leader wanted them here. He kept suggesting several weekly meetings and sessions, and I am sure that he would have them there every day if it was possible – it was a tiny bit intense, but Gabriel and Sunniva

still had their day to day operations at Music Crossroads, so they held back and managed not to be over rumped in work. I thought it must have been quite eerie to be in such high demand – to really feel that someone is saying “Hey! We need you a lot!”, all the while having to think about the fact that your everyday operation is somewhere else, and if you accept too much responsibility, you will end up not doing a good enough job somewhere.

After the session we walked home again. Traversing the same route, with the afternoon sun a lot lower on the horizon. I can only imagine the two of them, although seeming to be very content, to be a little bit conflicted about where and how to spend their time. The MOVE project is continually evolving throughout the year, and new projects and plans are always coming up. There were already talks about a new project in a small city district called Dedza and some of the MOVERS had also started to plan for the upcoming Nkhotakota festival. I thought to myself that, being in the same position, I would hesitate to let someone peg me down, in fear that I would be missing out on something else. I was already getting a sense of the passing of time here in Lilongwe, and it is highly relative. Some days drag out before anything happens, and the heat seems to somehow stretch time even more, while other days, and weeks pass through with incredible speed. The MOVERS are here to contribute to the culture of Malawi, and to learn stuff along the way, so it is easy to get carried away by the prospect of a new and exciting project. I like the sense of adventure that comes with brand new projects, and the prospect of working with new people, as no doubt, does the rest of the group here. But everything in moderation, maybe, even, including moderation.

4.2.3 Analysis of “A visit to the church”

The area this narrative is set in, Chilinde, is considered the slum area of Lilongwe. The MOVERS are also navigating the scenery on foot. They are seemingly very comfortable in the community. The best argument for this is the fact that Sunniva brings her cello along (something she does regularly). Sunniva would never traverse the streets with her cello if she felt unsafe. A musician’s instrument is a valuable item, with a cello often being particularly valuable, which is strongly emphasized by the churches reluctance to have their own instrument (the piano) on site. The narrative is also set in a church, which with Malawi being a prominent Christian nation, is an institution that holds some authority in the local community²⁶. Yet, the trust and safety that is felt by the MOVERS is not wholly felt within the church. With western eyes it is very strange that a church should be surrounded by a compound wall, but here it is quite common. The fear of break-ins is so eminent that the church even keeps their valuables off-site, deeming the church to be a not safe enough area, as emerges through the conversation with the churches representative.

Sunniva seated herself next to a seemingly older African male to tutor him. In the cultural context of the country, this is a rare event.²⁷ One got the impression that this was somewhat extraordinary, with Sunniva taking such a leading role. *“I deduced that Sunniva, the teacher, and also the woman, was the younger of the two by a few years. But she was also the one with the competence, which her student really seemed to recognise.”* Age and gender both, are factors that could deter a person from getting into a position where one is accepted as a teacher, but in this scenario, this did not happen. The student’s attention to Sunniva throughout the session is proof that he

²⁶ This information, along with the poverty rate of Chilinde, was given to me by the MOVERS during the field work in Malawi, where I lived in Chilinde for five weeks.

²⁷ There were no female teachers in Music Crossroads besides the MOVERS. The positions held by women were in the kitchen, cleaning or in the secretariat/administration.

recognized her competence, skill and was able to see past gender and age. Jonas, another MOVER used as a contrasting example. His authority is granted on sight, with him being both tall (which granted him a certain presence), white and male, while Sunniva's competence is recognised together with her proving her abilities.²⁸ One concludes that the cost of assuming a teacher role is somewhat higher for a female than a male. As well as appearing to be a sexist society with relation to teaching positions (as far as I could gather from my field study), age was also a factor. It's not empirically feasible to pinpoint gerontocratic tendencies in Malawi, but it is peculiar, even though it appears to be a bequeathed tradition, that teachers titillate themselves as Master.²⁹

The main purpose, besides Sunniva's lesson, was the meeting, and we met with a person characteristic of Malawi.³⁰ The person came across as formal and official. It was also apparent what he wanted to get from the MOVERS, with him clearly stating what exercises and with whom he wanted it. It is also apparent that he wanted staff power. Sitting in his office with the orchestra leader underlining the point of how needed the MOVERS were, and with the MOVERS also being guests in this country it is a safe assumption to say that it is hard to turn down such a request. Sunniva and Gabriel still appears quite pragmatic. They almost appeared to be prepared for this, which leads me to believe that they, having lived and worked in this society for a

²⁸ This was recognized and discussed within the MOVE camp, but I could not, throughout my field work detect any envy. The MOVERS were aware that this was a problem that lay not with them, but within the society.

²⁹ It must be said that Master Duma was a very pleasant and humble person. There is no disrespect intended in this statement, only an observation that this titillation in western form suggests leadership with age. I merely observed that elder people were treated a certain way in Malawi.

³⁰ While the youth seemed to try to emulate western clothing fashion, most of the middle age people were quite formally dressed, with collared shirts being regular for the working Malawian man, and shirt and skirt being normal for the women (Not those doing manual field labor).

period of five to six months at this point, have gained an understanding of how westerners are perceived and interacted with, as well as what westerners are predicted to know/be able to teach, and therefore being able to circumnavigate the orchestra leaders appeal.

4.3.1 About Classes at Music Crossroads

There are daily classes at Music Crossroads. In topic these range from music technology, music theory, ensembles and teacher training. For the most part, the staff at Music Crossroads conducts these classes, but sometimes the MOVERs are guest lecturers. There are two classes that the MOVERs are involved in every week, and that is choir and drum class. This narrative deal with these two classes and the roles that the MOVERs hold herein. It also comments on the different didactical situations the MOVERs navigate. It also comments on instances of colonial relations³¹, and describes how these unfold within the MOVE project.

³¹ Colonial relations are the relationship between the indigenous people and foreign people who operate within the country. Historically, the difference in status was forced, and still some remnants of this remains. In this thesis it is interesting to note the dichotomy of status between the MOVERs and the locals and discuss where it comes from.

4.3.2 Classes at Music Crossroads

“Are you going to drum class today?” This question often arose in the intermediary phase between now and the preceding choir. We were as usual standing in the shade of the front porch of the Music crossroads building. Juggling projects this and that way meant that one sometimes had to drop lessons to make time for other things, while other times one was in doubt of there was even going to be a class. Not seeing the teacher walking around on the grounds in the hours before often meant that he wasn’t coming. One never knew, but we decided to walk over to the tent that is often used for the drum sessions, and today we saw Master Duma. Vague myths of the origins of his name circulated in the MOVE group, and I had heard speculations about the title of Master being one he gave himself, one he had gain the right to call himself through his diligence in music and drum through many years, or one appointed to him through his position in the local religious and cultural community – I never quite figured it out...

Now, as we approached the tent, we saw that he had carried out a great number of drums and was tearing up cardboard. He laughed and spoke with the campus guard and greeted us warmly when we approached. Jonas opened the conversation with a hearty “Mwadzuka bwanji? (a traditional chichewa morning greeting meaning something like Good morning! and How are you? In one)”. “Ndadzuka bwino, kaya inu! (I’m fine, how are you?)” Came rapidly in return from the Master as he shook Jonas’s hand in the traditional long-lasting manner. “Ndadzuka bwino.” Jonas replied. The greetings always went all the way around, each person taking time to greet everyone properly. This complicated morning ritual always made me nervous, as I still never really got it quite right.

Master Duma proceeded to place the drums, laying down, in a circle, with the drum facing inwards. He put the cardboard together in a pile in the center of the drums and proceeded to light a fire. The drums were very close together

and my initial thoughts were that they could be damaged. Whatever was he up to? Still, he took one and one drum and tilted it even closer towards the fire and started to beat them softly. To my utter amazement the pitch of the drum went up as fast as if one slowly tightens a guitar string. It became apparent that he knew exactly what he was doing and what pitch and tightness he was going for. One and one the once slack skins sprung into sturdy stiffness as the master took tactile and audible controls of each of them and proceeded to carry them to the place where the chairs were set out for the drum class. This was a skill – an impressive craftsmanship that had been cultivated for countless generations. Being able to witness the maintaining of these, handmade goatskin drums first hand was quite an experience. Here we sat, the MOVERS who were here to teach western music, all of us a bit stricken by the strength of the culture.

We started to play the still warm drums. Master Duma had taken us through different drum beats before, and usually started the lessons in the same manner, initially going through what we already knew, and then proceeding to the new stuff after a while. The funny thing about Malawian drumming is that the rhythms are not metric in the same way that western rhythms are. One particular rhythm that the Norwegians struggled a lot with was a rhythm that closely, but not entirely resembled an offset triplet, where the triplet does not start at a downbeat, but rather an 8th after. Placing the rest of the triplet, especially the second one, as it does not correspond to the pulse in a logical manner, is very difficult. This logical glitch threw many of us off, as we tried to transcribe it in our heads to make sense of it. Master Duma was not really impressed of our introvert manner of trying to figure it out. “No No! The drums speak to each other.” He would say while raising his hand towards a fellow student “You have to listen to him!”. The master pointed to one of the other drummers, who were playing a different beat and proceeded to lay his hands, in turn, on top of ours, and drum out the beat he wanted us to play. I personally got nothing out from this, and was only more confused by the Master’s insistent drumming with my hands. His hands-on (no pun intended)

method of teaching was new to me. And while it probably works very well in the classes he teaches, it was to alien for me to let me concentrate on what he really was trying to convey.

Still we go the hang of it after a while. Personally, I had to focus on the auditive, and try to copy the beat as best as I could, but more than often Master Duma cut me off to remind me that “No No! The durms have to speak together.”. I understood it to be some kind of underlying personification to the different beats, and that they had to stand in relation to each other all the time. Whenever someone fell out of the beat, or changed it; if I did not adjust, I was wrong even if I was right. Subjectively I interpreted it as if I were adopting a character when I was handed a beat to play. This character came from a tradition far older than us, and whenever I did not “talk” together with the other ancient characters I was breaking the aura. This was authentic Malawian drumming, and I was very glad that I got to see a bit of it. Even if it probably is some kind of quasi-hippie cliché, it did something with the mood of the rest of the day, sitting outside in a drum circle and playing together in this manner.

Karol, One of the Brazilian MOVERS were often asked to do parts of the class, or even the entire class. She is a very proficient drummer and have been a youth instructor for several of the instruments in the Brazilian bateria – the drum section used in the Brazilian Carnivals. A few days earlier me and Karol sat down together, and she showed me some videos of her activities with the carnival. She told me how the different city districts had their own samba schools and how they practiced together towards the carnival. She brilliantly conveyed the culture with stories, supplied with films about the practicing, the different instructors - as if they were demigods, and the excitement they all shared when the costumes, and the parade carts came together. “Every year, the schools choose a theme. It can be whatever you want! It can be a celebration of life, or a historic representation”. She proceeded to show me a series of pictures of the different themes that the schools had created. “It can

also be modern, or even a social commentary of the world we live in. Look!” She pointed to a picture of a large number of dancers, all wearing very colourful costumes. The costumes had very striking designs and seemed to be as professional and high quality as you could imagine. “Everything is made from trash. In Brazil we have a problem with garbage – especially in the larger cities, and this one school decided to have trash as their theme this year to show how much waste is being produced. It’s so cool!” Being a participant, she was able to go behind the scenes to a big parking lot where huge animals and figures were placed on lorries, and dancing stages were erected on the long lorries. “The hardest job is for the ones on top of the lorries”. She told me. “They have to go up several hours before the carnival starts, because it takes so long to become ready in the huge costumes, and once there, they are not able to drink or go to the toilet. It’s very stressful, especially when it’s hot. Even though I have to get ready in advance, I don’t have to become ready that long before.”. She seemed incredibly proud of the Brazilian carnival tradition, and especially her school. Whenever it came up she said something like “Look how cool we are!” or “Our school is the best!”. It was somewhat reminiscent of the European football leagues, where everyone celebrated together but held their own affiliations. “It’s so sad” she said, with the expression on her face changing from pride and joy to bottomless sadness. “I will not be able to attend this year, since I’m here in Malawi. I will miss all my friends in my school so much...!”

The tradition Karol comes from is very special. The Brazilian samba tradition is colossal, and it seems like the entire country comes together when they celebrate carnival. She knows this tradition well and feels at home in several of the instrument groups. Still, the roles within the bateria is very standardized, and when you know the role, the differences lie mostly within the song. But the Malawian tradition is far older. The rhythms and patterns are not the same, and neither is the performative practice. We talked about music crossroads, and the drum classes for a while, and how she adjusted to it. “It’s very fun to learn this tradition, but even if I’m a percussionist, I don’t know this.

Sometimes they ask me to do the drum class, but I don't know all the same things that Master Duma does." I asked her about how she coped with this, with relation to her project here in Malawi. "I have held a few lessons in Brazilian drumming, and even if they don't have the equipment needed it's possible to learn the rhythms and play it on the drums they have here. But when they want me to do the Malawian drum class I think it's a bit difficult. They often ask in very short notice, sometimes even right before the class is supposed to start, but then there is no time to plan or arrange anything." I recalled the situation in Nkhotakota, where Jakob asked me to contribute, on the spot, to his bass lesson. They were even playing western music. The only noticeable thing that threw me off, besides the abruptness of the question, was the lack of my own bass – and that is a weak argument. Karol was put on the spot in a more intense way. "I have asked Master Duma for some private lessons, so that I can learn and better understand the Malawian drum tradition, and that would in turn make it easier for me to contribute to the drum classes at music crossroads, but it seems like he does not want to do it. He just quickly shows me a couple of new beats and walks away. Maybe he thinks that drums only should be thought in a group?"

Sitting there and talking with Karol I felt that I sympathized with her on this point. She is there to be an active resource, for sure, but she is not here to be an "on the spot" substitute teacher. The tradition here for doing thing on the spot is very much stronger than it is in the western world. Choir class is led by a very charismatic character indeed. Lackson Chazima has a powerful presence and an even more powerful voice. I noticed his influence immediately upon joining the Music Crossroads Choir. He mostly teaches Malawian songs, and he teaches them in a very Malawian way: Sheet music is never to rarely used, and the whiteboard is only used for lyrics. Joining him for a class we were greeted to a very thorough warm up. He took us through a wide array of different vocal exercises, whit him signing the modulating melody line. Very little does he care for finding the key of the song on the piano, if it was too high, he simply chooses a lower starting note out of his head, just like the

initial tone. This was reminiscent of the way the drum class was taught, as in when a problem arose, one simply fixed it. No key checking on the piano or anything like that, just... ..Fix it.

The classroom was filled with students from the school. Everyone chose themselves what voice group they belonged to. Being a baritone myself I got in line with the basses – a safe place, I assumed. We sang, and the students danced – the mood and way of being was vastly different to what I was used to in the choirs I had been in previously. Lackson taught us a new song. It had a main theme, a repetitive refrain in which the choir sang in harmony and a humming part with no lyrics. “You...! Come forward and take the floor!”. Lackson was pointing to a girl in the soprano line. She was a singer and one of the older of the students. On top of the humming part she began to sing a solo. I had never heard this song and thought that she was supposed to be the soloist, but after just a few rounds she stepped back and the choir, never stopping to sing, gave her an applause. “Now, You!” Lackson shouted, while pointing to another girl in the soprano line. She stepped forth and started singing. After yet another well executed solo, and another round of applause, I started to get a growing sense of consternation. “You!” shouted Lackson, and the next person came forth and started her solo. This was all improvised, both lyrics and melody, and what was worse, Lackson seemed to be determined to give everyone in the choir their solo. Surely, he only meant to take the singers? Surely, only the students he knew very well, who would be able to handle it? With panic growing: Surely, he meant no harm?!

The rounds kept going, and the students, one after the other improvised their solos. With Malawi being a Christian country, and with charismatic congregations being spread all over, themes often dealt with religion on a personal basis. Many of the students improvised lyrics about thanking god for their lives and opportunities, and all the blessings they had with their friends, their family and their music. I felt very much out of my comfort zone and did not want to do this. How could I? Being neither a Christian, a singer, or any

type of lyrical improvisator – my main language was not even English. Was it too late for a bathroom break? I felt myself making up excuses for not doing this, but there was still hope. Maybe Lackson would let us westerners off easily? I tried to come up with something to sing about. Some theme, or some lyrics that could fit, or at least be acceptable, but I was blank. I felt very out of control of the situation. We were not schooled in this tradition.

Sunniva stood close to me. She had sent me a few worrying looks as our turn came menacingly closer. Would Lackson let us off easy? No... Sunniva's turn came, and nervously she delivered a totally acceptable (for an Azungo) performance. I knew the jig was up. My turn came, and with a few nervous shakes of the head, and a couple of "Yes! Come on!" from Lackson, that seemed to last for an eternity, I chickened out. I was in fact the only one who didn't deliver a performance. Even all the MOVERS did so, and I was older than most of them. "Well, they have had half a year more than me with this stuff, so maybe... ..Ugh... "Excuses again!" I thought to myself.

Walking out of the choir class, a class I usually really like, I did not feel especially cool. The students all took the challenge, and so did the MOVERS, yet I, alone faltered. I regretted not giving it a try. What was the worst that could happen? I really don't know, but now I had outed myself as a coward. It never feels good to be put on the spot. Well, only if you rise to the challenge and overcome it – that can feel pretty good. My thoughts went back to Karol, and the drum class, when she had been asked to do it on the spot. I don't envy her at all in that regard, but it is different here in Malawi. One is more often put on the spot, but the expectations are not that high. From my musical practice the closest resemblance is melodic improvisation. I remembered all the milestones I have had with this practice, the first time I did it alone, in a lesson with my teacher, in a rehearsal and in a concert. We feel best and safest when we are prepared, but in this country one does not always get that chance. I was impressed with the MOVERS. They had done something that I did not dare to do, and in the same time showed vulnerability with putting themselves

so far out of their comfort zone. The MOVERS are generally held in very high regard in Music Crossroad and one could say they wagered that position when they improvised in that manner and in that setting.

4.3.3 Analysis of “Classes in Music Crossroads”

The narrative starts with a discussion of who of the movers that are actually going to attend class. It suggests that not going to class is an option. In Norway it is generally assumed that you will attend class if you don't have an important appointment (e.g. doctors appointment). Class attendance is for the most part considered mandatory until university. The MOVERS look for the teacher that is supposed to hold the class to find out if even he is present. From this one can gather that the lessons are not as formal as one can expect in Norway, and one's absence is not noticed in the same manner. Malawi is a country with generally low school attendance³². This view on school, lesson and time is yet again confirmed when the MOVERS walk over to catch the start of the lesson only to find the teacher just starting to repair the drums that are going to be used in the lesson. It demonstrates that the teachers themselves are not strict in terms of the frame of the lecture. The teachers seemingly loose relationship to not only the lessons, but school, plans and appointments as well, says a lot about the (in)importance punctuality hold in this culture, and therefore a lot about *why* some of the MOVERS have had difficulty in establishing schedules with some of the locals. For instance, when Jakob had to turn to using WhatsApp to communicate with his students in Nkhotakota, just to get an answer if they were coming or not (From

³² According to the Education Policy and Data Center only 11% attended secondary school (age 14-17) in 2004 https://www.epdc.org/sites/default/files/documents/Malawi_coreusaid.pdf

“Nkhotakota” 4.1.2), and Jonas, as he stated in an interview:

“Last week there were a few things that came up that were not so cool. There were some concert dates that suddenly, and without forewarning got moved. We were going to play at Grittah’s Camp³³. We were supposed to have it (the concerts) in the end of February or early March, but when we were there this Friday, one of the arrangers came over to me and said “Ah! Yes, we talked about early May, right?” And I had to tell him “No, that was not the deal at all. You have to undo the changes in that schedule of yours.”

To clarify, Jonas had experienced that some people he met in Malawi, notably, one of the concert arrangers at Grittah’s Camp would change plans after what suited them best without talking to the others involved. It is impossible not to view this with western eyes, so it is important to note that this is not perceived as a problem to the same extent within Malawi. Here it is merely normal (Sunniva’s blog post, and the anecdote about her learning to perceive time by looking at the position of the sun is a useful analogy to have when thinking about this).

The drum class started with Master Duma maintaining the drums. For the students that was going to attend the class it seemed that the class was delayed. For me there is two main possibilities that could lead to this situation, with the first being that he was simply delayed. Master Duma (who by my subjective estimates is in his late 50s or early 60s) is of the old tradition in Malawi and have probably grown up without having to take any particular notice of the time³⁴. Another possible explanation of *why* this class started like it did is that Master Duma wanted to show this side of

³³ Grittah’s Camp is a local Live Music venue in Chilinde. As well as cooperating with some of the bands that play there, the MOVERs also play there themselves.

³⁴ The concept of “African Time”, which is a **western description** is notable here. It roughly means that you have an inadvertent relationship to time on a smaller scale. An appointment is for example set to a day, and not a time of day.

drumming. Maintaining drums is a craft as well as a part of the tradition itself. It could be that he decided to start of the lesson by showing us this.

It is clear from the description that Master Duma has taught for some years. For example, he starts with repeating previously played patterns. In didactics, repeating previously learned materials to activate the students' previous knowledge is commonly used³⁵. The narrative then paints the picture about the different rhythms that are used, and how the MOVERs perceived them. These, and the accents in particular are especially challenging for the western players, as they are not metric³⁶ in the same way as most western music. Here Master Duma suggest a method of learning/understanding the beats that are new to the MOVERs. He suggests to “speak” through the drums. In this situation it becomes apparent that the drums and different drum beats hold a cultural connotation. Speaking is a human endeavour and when Master Duma tells the MOVERs to speak through the drums there is some kind of animation or “life” implied. The different beats symbolize something from the Malawian culture, and it seems to be important to convey this. Master Duma teaches differently than a Norwegian teacher. Speaking as a music teacher, and I believe my practise institutes the norm in Norway, I teach music in a very fragmented way, by isolating one part, one measure or one rhythm, and then move on to the next. Master Duma has a much more holistic way of teaching in that he teaches one drum part, which can be a large part of a given song in one. He also teaches multiple parts more

³⁵ “Learning by repetition” is probably one of the best-known examples form western teacher training. It is especially used when teaching children to read by making them re-read the same text multiple times to familiarize themselves with a set of words.

³⁶ Western music is metric in two ways that traditional African music is not. Firstly, rhythms are arranged within time signatures, and correspond to a predetermined pulse, and secondly, pitch is arranged by dividing the western octave (the doubling of a frequency is an octave) in 12 and also settle the tonal system to a standard pitch (A = 440). Modern African music often borrow from western music theory.

or less simultaneously. Implied in his teaching is also a cultural element, which is both the playing and maintaining of the drums, but more importantly the way one gets together to play the drums. The setting that the drum class has, with gathering people together in the way it does is a very important cultural element. I learned, during my field work, for example that the MOVERS, upon first arriving played a concert with mood-filled, and somewhat quiet music. They told me the crowd disappeared and only came back when they played more upbeat music. Music in Malawi is not a one-way street – one does not simply listen to music, one dances. Music is more interactive, with emphasis being on the interaction between audience and performers, whereas in Norway it is not uncommon that the audience simply stands still and watches a concert. Exposure to this way of teaching is one of the things that makes the MOVE exchange so vivid. It is an important thing that the MOVERS learn by experience and exposure. It is also a clear cut cultural element that differs from western practice.

Later Karol asks Master Duma to give her some lessons, but it is clear that this is not something he is overly interested in. Through attending several drum classes I know that Master Duma and Karol have a good relationship. She, being a prominent dancer, even dances during some of the lectures, while he plays. This leads me to conclude that it is the format of “one on one” lessons is not idiomatic to Malawian drumming, or that it is a way of teaching that he does not like. Drums are played collectively in Malawi, and therefore it has to be taught collectively.

Karol comes from a tradition where drumming is very important – also cultural, like in Malawi. Just as in Malawi, it is played collectively, and the bands are organized in “schools”. Karol talks about the “bateria” and how the different drums are organized by roles.³⁷ This arrangement is similar to Malawian drumming in that the different drums play different rhythms. Master Duma must have realized this and therefore

³⁷ In a course with one MOVER in Trondheim I learned that for instance the “Surdo” drum holds down the beat, while for instance, the repinique takes the role equal to the “tom tom” in a drum kit.

bestowed competency upon Karol with regards to Malawian drumming. Karol is openly afflicted when it comes Music Crossroads asking her to give lessons on very short notice. She says that they ask her to do *Malawian* drum class, when what she is trained in is the *Brazilian* tradition. This can be interpreted as an example of a colonial relation where the foreigners are bestowed with greater, or extended competency. Colonial relations is a term used to describe tendencies that remain from colonial periods. Malawi gained independence only in 1964. Relations between westerners and locals are influenced by this preceding period. Westerners were held in high regard, and this situation could be interpreted as if some of these colonial relations remain to this day, with the MOVERs being granted greater status, just for being westerners.

The previous semester, Karol held a Brazilian drum class, and now, by extension she is expected to be a teacher of Malawian drumming. The MOVERs are here to teach what they know, and learn what they don't, which makes the role of "on the spot-substitute teacher" one that is both hard to take and irrelevant. In an interview, with regards to this subject, Karol told me about something she looked forward to. "*Now, I am so happy for the Dedza³⁸ project. Because there, I can do the same as I did here – to teach Brazilian rhythms with my instruments (brought over from Brazil).*" In other words, she sought the control she had when she dictates her own lessons, instead of when Music Crossroads asks her to do things on the spot.

From my field work, I got the impression that doing things on the spot is more common here than what it is in many western countries. There emerges a form of dichotomy here in relation to this issue. On one side you have the MOVERs expectation and field of competency, and on the other side you have the different assignments that the MOVE projects offer, and the status bestowed upon the MOVERs by the locals.

³⁸ The Dedza project is a project where the MOVERs will teach children in the Dedza city district. It is in collaboration with a catholic school.

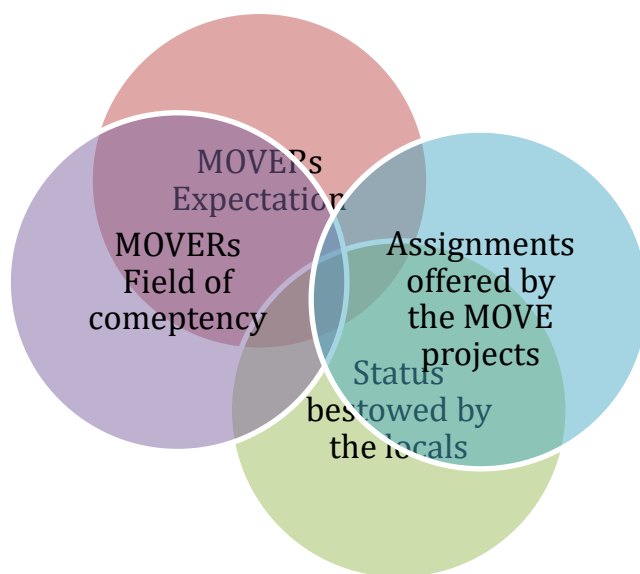


Figure 4.3.3.

These do not necessarily align perfectly. Figure 4.3.3. is meant to demonstrate and visualize what is meant by the dichotomy that occurs with regards to the assignments that the movers meet. The MOVERs expectations and field of competency corresponds to a somewhat high degree, in that the movers expect to be able to work with some of the things they know. On the other hand, the assignments that the MOVE project offers to the individual MOVER is determined by the status that is bestowed upon them, which leads these two to hold closer relations. A given project can land anywhere on this Venn diagram, but ideally is should land somewhere in the middle, where the expectations and competency of the MOVER meets the assignment and the bestowed status. What happens is that status is granted between the local's expectation (where colonial relations may be a factor) and the success of previous projects. With Karol, in this situation she had a successful Brazilian drum class during the first semester, and that probably lead to her being recognized as a drummer, which in turn lead her to be asked to do the Malawian drum class. It is plausible that many Malawians does not recognize the finer differences between Brazilian and Malawian

drumming as some Malawians are unexposed to conditions external to Malawi³⁹. This makes it easier to request something from a MOVER since some people are unaware of the different fields of knowledge. Level of education is low in this part of Africa, and there are also other factors, such as economics that results in Malawians often having travelled very little, and therefore not being exposed to different cultures to a high degree. Most of the people I had met had only visited Mozambique, or not even left Malawi.

Choir is described as being within the same didactic system as drum, with oral or practical tutoring being the primary method. There is little to no emphasis on sheet music and the same focus on collective practice and performance is here as well. A point is made, that clearly shows where focus lies: “...when a problem arose, one simply fixed it. No key checking on the piano or anything like that, just... ..Fix it.” Even the key signature is not deemed that important (it is important to keep in mind that that this is the teachers choice), which tells us that this is a community that is not to firmly rooted in western music theory. This is again underlined by the student’s apparent self-governance in relation to what voice group they belonged to. The focus is on singing, and enjoying singing, whereas a typical Norwegian choir often counts its members musical theory knowledge as more important. The choir is also a forum where self-expression is important, as becomes apparent with when the improvised lyrics take on a personal dimension. Singing is done together, but the relationship between the group and the individual is attended to by giving everyone a chance to perform solo, which lead to the song being somewhere around 15 minutes (subjective estimate). Music aesthetics, such as voice, melody and harmony, were second to expression. Some of the other students responded with exclamations such as “Mmm..!!” or “Sing it...!” whenever a student ended a phrase with something like

³⁹ For example, met a tuk-tuk driver who was amazed that we did not starve in Norway since we did not have the Nsima dish.

praise of god. It is reminiscent of Baptist musical tradition, with expressions being very subjective and the rest of the congregation being vocally supportive.

With these two classes described in terms of didactic models one can make out facts about the teaching tradition that are common in Malawi: Knowledge and musical practice is taught orally/practically. Teaching in groups is common for subjects that deal with Malawian traditional music. All the classes that taught Malawian culture (E.g. dance, song and drums) were taught collectively, whereas the “western disciplines” were taught in western style (E.g. Guitar lesson was one on one, and music theory was standard classroom lectures). It’s worth mentioning again Master Duma’s apparent reluctance to give drum lessons to one person to further emphasise this point. And that music theory is not implemented in teaching to the same degree that we see in Norway. It is quite normal for lessons in the west to be planned with implementation of theory in mind. This is one of the reason why some of the MOVERs find it difficult to take lessons on the spot – lesson planning is simply more extensive for them if they are to follow western tradition. It is also important pull the thread back to the MOVERs own expectation with regards to being here. They are not here to be a purely supplemental work force, but rather they have their own projects and ideas that they want to do. In an interview Jonas gave me he told me that: *“A prerequisite for me coming here was that I was able to work with studio and production. I wanted to learn how I would handle to be in an important position within a market. The original plan was not to go, but to stay home and try to build a network and find out how I function as a producer outside an educational setting.”* Being able to carry out own projects is in other words a decisive motivational element for the MOVERs to use a year of their life for this project.

The narrative ends with a description of a rather special section of a choir practice. This story serves to sum up the setting of the Malawian cultural education and comment on the relationship between not only teacher and student, but education and expression of self. When suddenly, the choir broke in to what revealed itself to be an improvisational segment, the MOVERs felt uneasy. This feeling is tied to the feeling of being unprepared or put on the spot if you will. The situation that Lackson now

created was both unexpected and somewhat unwanted. It is also notable to comment on the content many of the improvisations were about. The subject of religion and personal relations (e.g. family, loved ones, and friends) in the way this was performed tells us that this session is more than practice, but it is their performance of the music. The way that improvisation is implemented in this segment also serve to strengthen another argument, namely the one that states that there is a higher acceptance for doing things on the spot, and also a lower threshold for mistakes than one often finds elsewhere.

4.4.1 About “Music Crossroads Studio”

This is a short story that makes a valuable point about foreign aid. The Important factors of this story is the implementation of foreign work, and the relation between the workers and the locals, and the equipment that is bestowed on the communities and how they are managed. The overlying theme, is still not value, but it is trust.

4.4.2 “Music Crossroads Studio”

Music Crossroads is depended on teachers more than on equipment, but the equipment is still of great importance. But when the two meets, a teacher who can utilize the equipment in an effective way, very good thing can happen. When I prepared to go to Malawi I read about aid organizations and the different countries in Africa. I also saw some documentaries and read online, so as to best prepare myself for the place I would visit and the culture I would partake in for the five weeks I would stay there. I remember one story especially well. An aid organization had gathered a lot of money to buy and send tractors over to rural Africa. They were very proud of what they had done and had gathered enough for a lot of tractors – This would surely speed up the agriculture! Roughly half a year later the organization returned to check up on the situation only to find the tractors being parked in the middle of the fields, with the locals ploughing the fields by hand. No one had ever thought to teach them how to drive and operate their brand-new machinery.⁴⁰ For me this was a good example on how to not do aid work, and one of the beautiful things about the MOVE project – experience, practice and knowledge is the primary exchange – and it goes both ways

Jonas is one of these people, who is here to assure that nothing like the tractor incident happens at Music Crossroads. His special project is never the less something that could get into that category, because his special project is the Music Crossroads studio. His role is to be the conducting element that conveys

⁴⁰ As stated, this is a story and I am not sure about its exact origin. There exists many of these archetypal stories of aid work gone wrong with various twists, with some of them being rooted in cultural misunderstandings (e.g. language) while others are related to economical misunderstandings (e.g. westerners deciding what equipment Africans need. Still, it serves as a good example on how vital the understanding of the culture one is conducting work in can be, and for this thesis, I use it rhetorically.

knowledge over to the students and make them autonomous. His job is successful when he finally is obsolete – and hopefully that corresponds with when he travels back to Norway. The studio is filled with stuff that might have in some way been dictated or suggested by some of Music Crossroads cooperative partners. It, is not uncommon I found out, whilst reading about foreign aid previously to traveling to Malawi.

What sometimes happens with foreign aid is that some people in the west gather money to give to some countries. At the same time as giving the money they also dictate what is it supposed to be used for, or even buy stuff and supplies in the west and ship it down to the country to which they were supposed to go. That means the money sometimes never gets to the country – only the stuff does. The money does not even stimulate the local economy, but the western, and sometimes, the expertise required to efficiently use the tools given, are not to be found within the local community. What is more, the equipment is often deemed valuable, so that the new owners, be it a farm, an office or a school, hesitates to lend it out for fear it should be stolen⁴¹.

When Jonas came to Music Crossroads there were few people who knew much about the studio, and even fewer who were let inside. From then on it was his project to run it. Music Crossroads have previously been lucky enough to have a few MOVERS with experience, but this year, I think they got very lucky. Jonas, besides being both very pleasant, and a proper yes-person, is also very handy in the studio. He likes to be there, and he likes to work together with people to achieve a common goal.

⁴¹ This knowledge comes from the five-week period I lived in Lilongwe, Malawi

But now I found myself outside the equipment room, involuntarily overhearing a conversation that seemingly have had some time coming. The voices were never raised, but there was a clearly detectable sternness present. Jonas was talking with one of the employees who were in charge of the gear, and it was not too pleasant to be outside, waiting for Jonas. From initially sitting just outside, in the shade on the steppes, I walked into the sun and proceeded to walk further away from the scene. I stood there alternating between walking in the sun and catching some of the shade one of the nearby busses cast.

“He kicked out my guy form the studio!” I suddenly heard as Jonas had changed the language over to Norwegian. Jonas was openly irritated as he walked over to me. “I have found a very interested, talented, and trustworthy student who really wants to learn the studio, and have been training him to take over my job at the studio when I leave – isn’t it that’s why I’m here? And now I learn that he kicked him out during the Christmas holidays when I was out of town!”

It became apparent that Jonas, who is the de-facto studio manager, had made arrangements for one particular student who had shown great interest and trustworthiness to continue working during Music Crossroads opening hours when Jonas was away on a trip, but that the employee had kicked him out and locked the studio. “They are very afraid to lose anything form the studio because everything is deemed so valuable, but nothing ever disappears when he is there. He fully understands that if something is lost on his watch he loses the opportunity to work there. In fact, he even reminds his fellow students of the importance of taking good care of the equipment.”. Jonas was frustrated because he saw it as his role to train people to be able to take over the studio, and without them being able to use the studio, his training was devalued. We walked across the lawn, amongst the people who were there. I felt glad that that session was over, but really sad of what had transpired. My thoughts travelled to MOVE’s primary contributor – Jeunesses musicales, and their

primary goals of “Making a difference through music”⁴² – something that really boils down to giving people a shot at it. Jonas was here to do just that, and he required simply that they were given access to the already readily available equipment.

We walked over to the studio where Jonas coincidentally had scheduled a meeting with the student in question. He was already there when we arrived. Jonas greeted him in Chichewa and placed a hand on his shoulder and told him that he had talked to the staff member about the incident. He suddenly seemed very relieved, like if he had feared for being unable to work there anymore. The two of them sat down in front of the studio computer, with me taking a seat further back in the room. The student seemed very happy and anxious to get going again. “Well now” Jonas said with a smile. “Why don’t you show me what you have been working on lately?”

4.4.3 Analysis of “Music Crossroads Studio”

The story starts with a story about a mislead aid project. The project has its heart in the right place but lack the necessary cultural knowledge to properly set their ideas into effect. The story ends with the indented aid not really having the wanted effect, because it was not implemented correctly. It sets the stage for what the narrative recounts.

⁴² Albeit that the employee is only indirectly working with JMN, the MOVERs expect to be able to work for certain values when they are attending MOVE. Those can be read about here.

<https://www.jmn.no/om-oss/>

The narrative picks up in medias res, with Jonas, one of the MOVERS, in the middle of a somewhat heated discussion with an employee at Music Crossroads. When it becomes apparent that one of Jonas's students has been kicked out of the studio by the employer, some very important questions arose around why he was kicked out. The person who kicked him out oversaw the equipment at Music Crossroads. There is no doubt that the equipment that they hold there are deemed very valuable⁴³. Most every organisation that possesses equipment deals with loss, be it through wear and tear, or theft, and therefore have to protect it in some way or another. This is true for Africa, just as it is true for the western world. A plausible factor can therefore be that the employee, when we discovered that the student was working without supervision, wanted to protect the assets, and therefore terminated the arrangement by kicking the student out. If this were the case it raises some questions: What importance does trust hold within an educational programme and an exchange programme. There obviously a lack of trust between the employee and the student, with the employee not being willing to let the student work unsupervised.⁴⁴ Jonas tells us that he has worked with this person for some time and have established a trusting work relationship. Trust often generates trust, and one can argue that Music Crossroads missed an opportunity to let a student lead by example. Here, equipment value was put above the student's chance to work and learn.

The value of the equipment could actually be the catalyst that started this entire debate. The value of the equipment in the studio surpasses that of the other rooms in Music Crossroads. This disproportionate value of the room to the rest of the school

⁴³ Music recording equipment runs high all over the world. Even in Norway a fully operating studio is considered an investment. It is also important to note that the recording equipment, even with funding is hard to obtain, and in most instances must be imported from South Africa.

⁴⁴ It is worth mentioning the contrast to the Norwegian educational system. From personal experience I have been able to use the school's equipment, alone, all the way from college to university – in most cases whenever I wanted – including night-time.

(with an obvious exception of the instrument storage room, where the discussion took place), could in this instance be seen as a reason to lock students out of there. If that was the case, this is an example of a western investment that became a source of conflict.

It is also important to note the incident where the MOVER and the staff member had a confrontation. There is little insight into the conversation itself, besides the duration and theme, but one can draw some conclusions nevertheless. From what I experienced in the field work, authority in Malawi is significant. I do not believe that any of the normal students, even if they are the same age as the MOVERs could take a discussion with the staff. This is further underlined by the fact that the student not being able to speak for himself when he initially got thrown out of the studio, whereas the MOVER was. The MOVERs appear therefore to have a greater say in things around Music Crossroads than the students have. This is obviously because they are here in a teaching capacity, but there could also be some remnants of a colonial relation here, with him, with western background being deemed more important and therefore being able to discuss with the staff member whereas the student was simply told to leave the studio. There is a notable difference between the way the staff member deals with Jonas and the student, even though they are very close in age. With western influence is not as prominent in Malawi as in other, more accessible countries, one could argue that race still is a factor, and that there is a colonial relation that affects this particular dispute. *“Since meanings of ‘race’ emerge out of specific historical conditions, it is pertinent to explore how ideological and discursive conceptualizations of ‘race’ continue and change over time”* (Kothari, 2006, p. 2)

“I look at it this way” Jonas told me in an interview. *“If there is still sitting someone in the studio when I leave for home, then I have done my job. It also seems like there is a good chance of that happening.”* Regarding the student in question he said *“I’m going to work for him* (implied that he would work for his access to the studio) *and even though he has finishing exams I will talk to the leadership and tell them that they cannot let go of him. He is already thinking – even though he was locked out from there – about how this studio can be further promoted.”* For Jonas, this was an

unforeseen challenge – to have to fight for ones’ students right to use the equipment. Nevertheless, it says something about being on a cultural exchange, and Jonas himself, in the interview, sums it up perfectly: *“After all I came here to see how it is – to see it for myself, and I do not get to do that by just sitting around. And it’s especially fun when you achieve something good (referring to the student activity in the studio).”*

4.5.1 Blogposts

One of the assignments that the MOVERS are obliged to do is to work with social media. This is done in a few different ways both locally through advertisement for various concerts and events, and from JMN centrally. For instance, they have a shared Instagram account⁴⁵ that travels between the different MOVE countries. They change on a weekly basis so that the followers get an impression of the entirety of the project while being able to get an impression of progression in the different MOVE camps. The other main social media assignment the MOVERS have is to write one blog post each⁴⁶. The form this blog post takes is largely up to the individual MOVER to decide upon, and the theme is chosen on the MOVERs own discretion. They are given a few guidelines in terms of length and some encouragement as to write about something they experienced, or something they want to talk about. A lot of the blog posts take a narrative shape and is seen from the MOVER’s point of view. Given that the narratives that are presented in this thesis is written out by me, it is favourable to use the blog posts as supplementing empery to gain a broader and more varied view on the situations and scenarios that are portrayed. It’s is also advantageous that the narratives

⁴⁵ The Instagram account can be found on: <https://www.instagram.com/jmnorway/?hl=en>

⁴⁶ The Blog post can be found in its entirety here: <https://jmnmove.wordpress.com>

come from different sources, and not only myself. I have chosen three relatively short blog posts to supplement the narratives.

“You are most welcome”

Posted 11.1 – 2018 by Jonas

When you are azungu, you’re bound to get a lot of questions about where you’re from. However, where ever you might be, if you’re saying hello to your neighbour for the first time, or four months in, traveling in a small fishing village talking to a local man about his boat, you can be sure to meet a big smile, a long, proper handshake, and the phrase “You are most welcome here in Malawi! Feel like home!”

I find this little word very powerful. You’re not just welcome, you are most welcome. For me it adds a genuine touch to an otherwise standard polite phrase, and I find it reflects the Malawian people very well. They don’t have much trust in the system and their government (with good reason). Instead they put their trust in the people. They take great care of their local communities, and find joy in each other’s company and what they have, instead of complaining about things that aren’t working.

A Norwegian in Malawi. The world doesn’t get much more different. And of course it is vastly different; the beliefs, the culture, counting 27 grown men getting out of a minibus, and getting in that same “bus” together with 17 kids all dressed up in beautiful chitenje-uniforms for a show. It’s truly a completely different world. To get to experience this world is both challenging and amazing. You go through a lot of phases, but amongst all the big changes I find it’s the little moments in your daily life that really sticks with you.

December 6, 2017

...I'm walking down from the local shop with a keg of water in each hand as the electricity comes back on. As I walk on through the open field where the kids play, they flock around me as always. They hold out their fists, "azungu! kagunde!" (hit it!) but with my hands full I can't play today. Have to get home anyways, it'll be dark soon.

I continue through a number of back yards, thinking how normal it all seems now. The dirt roads, the kids, the heat, bargaining at the markets. Even this, just strolling through people's back yards without a care.

"Iwe! Tabwera" (you! Come here/we have come together) someone says. I sit down with him for a while, the father of the house, who is enjoying the chill evening outside on a bench. We chat for a bit, I point to my house right down the road. We talk about Christmas coming up. I show him some pictures my mother sent me from home, and he laughs a lot and shakes his head at the snow and cold weather. I tell him I'll go traveling for Christmas. "No! You should stay here at home, you'll enjoy the holidays in Malawi!" he answers...

«The Warm Heart of Africa»

Posted 16.12.17 by Jakob

Coming to a completely new country, a new culture and meet new people can be a challenge. But you get a lot of new experiences as well. You meet unforgettable people, and see another part of the earth.

Facing Malawi was very interesting. The first person I met in this country was a man at the airport. He had the most welcoming smile, and started a conversation. I don't know how people do that. How can you meet a complete

stranger and start talking about their life with no hesitation at all? You don't find that welcoming strangers any other place in the world. For me, who comes from the cold north, it was a warm welcome to the warm heart of Africa. When you meet someone for the first time they immediately ask you about how you woke up, and how has your day been. You don't get that in the cold north. It has truly opened my eyes on how to interact with strangers. The handshakes are the best. They last all the way until you have said how you are and how you have been this day, and usually you have to fight to end it.

Malawians always tells me that this is the place to try new stuff, and by that they are completely right. They don't judge you at all for anything. You can be as shameless as you want. A good example on that is when I grew my moustache, something that is not fitting on my face. They don't care; they just like you for who you are. What more can you expect from the warm heart of Africa?

Nkhotakota is one of the poorest regions in Malawi. That happens to be the place I live and work. People live from farming, or from selling goods. The beauty of this is that people are still happy. If they get by, they are happy. They appreciate what they have. I miss that in the cold north. The stars are the brightest I have ever seen, and the people are even warmer. People still shout "Azungu" (white person) after me, but when I reply "Akuda" (black person) they burst into laughter. I'm going to miss that when I go north again.

The people we meet here are very interesting. Most have a passion or a dream they want to achieve. Everybody have interesting stories they want to share. That makes me think about how many opportunities I have compared to many in this country. I don't even know what to do with my life, and I have all doors open.

My work here can be challenging. To not know if we have power for our amps, to not having any equipment to work with. Kids wanting to learn keyboard but

don't talk any English. The "If and when" syndrome that everybody seems to have. Its quite challenging to deal with those problems, but you just have to work around them. Someone told me the first week to bring a good book because it's going to be a lot of waiting. I didn't believe them, and I said that I didn't read. I think I could have read a couple of books by now if I took that advice.

If you told me one year ago that I would be in Malawi at this time playing music, I would not believe you. That I would spend time with really interesting people, teach music to kids and produce and record videos for local artists in Malawi, I would think I'm under qualified for that. I would not cease the opportunity and roll into whatever challenges that comes to me. Yes, it's hard to face a new culture, and work with almost no recourses but that's part of the job. That's what I think is so great about this exchange.

"Wow, I'm in Africa"

Posted 8.10.17 by Sunniva

Already a month has past and we have slowly begun to settle into our new home, and environment. Although time has gone so quickly, it feels as if we have been here for several months.

It's difficult writing about one subject only on the first blogpost, as this month has been a big ball of impressions, experience and thoughts!

The first time the "wow, shit I'm in Africa" hit me, was while driving from the airport to our new home. Sitting in the car with 6 other, rather new people, (Mozambique's arrived later that evening) I knew I was going to live 9 months

together with. Looking out through the window at an orange and dry landscape, scanning the fields trying to see any “african animals” I have seen on animal planet. The driver just laughed allot, when I asked where all the animals where at. It honestly felt like I was part of a scene in some kind of adventure film.

After the most bumpy car ride I have ever experienced in my life, we arrived at our new home. All limping out of the car, because of butt-ache. Around us were several of curious eyes looking out of small peak holes, through fences and walls, to watch the new azungo’s arrive.

“The azungo house,” as the locals call it, meaning white people house. It is situated in the poorest part of Lilongwe, so as imagined there are not many white people in the area, but always a new bunch living in this house each year. So people are not shy to introduce themselves to you, and its not a problem feeling welcome in the area.

Its overwhelming how much attention and love we have received from the people around us. I remember my granny reading to me from a book, saying that the malawians are supposedly the kindest of people. So far, this seems to be very true.

Its hard to describe how different the culture, scenery and atmosphere is here from home. Imagining Africa as a child, a place I always was confused to call a country or a continent (very bad and embarrassing, but true), I imagined drawings from books I had. Full of amazing colours, patterns, and people carrying massive amounts of weight on their heads. First scene outside of the house, was exactly this. I woke up before 7am, not from an alarm clock on a smart phone, but a rooster waking the neighbourhood, to start the morning. Then the second “wow, shit I’m in Africa,” hit me. The very moment we stepped outside of the gate, a hurdle of children running towards us, tiny little

kids dancing and shouting “azungo, azungo bo,” and giving us a fist bump. Just a normal morning in Chillinde.

I have realised and learned many small things during these first weeks. Like for instance greeting people is very important. And it takes time to get the handshake right. When you think you’ve finally nailed the: first handshake, bro shake, back and forth a few times until the other person gives a cue to go on, to then snapping the thumbs together, followed by a fist bump, someone else comes to greet you and does it in a whole different order, and you feel as foreign as you did the first time you tried. Also the moon. The moon here is always lying down. In Norway a half moon is standing. Looking at the moon in the evening is when I really feel the distance between here and my home in Norway.

Another daily “wow, shit I’m in Africa” realisation (this is something that still hits me daily) is the names of the shops! For me, going out of the house every morning, seeing “Please teacher shop” or “One missed call food shop” or driving past the “Flex appeal” training centre, puts a big smile on my face. Not to mention “TheTrump tower” bar, or “Good life America.”

We have also experienced the saying “African time,” it is very real. When the bus leaves at 8, it could leave at 9, 10 or even 11! This is something that has had a positive impact on me though. I realise that here, I am not a slave of time, like at home. I can estimate the time by looking at the sun, as it gets dark at 6pm! And I read a lot more than before, as most of my reading is while waiting for something that is delayed. If you have an appointment with someone, always bring a book!

I think this has a lot of impact on why the culture is like it is. There is so little stress on a daily basis, compared to in Norway. If the electricity goes, people don’t get agitated or irritable, but just “okay, then we will do something else.” Or if the water goes, we always have some buckets in storage, and it will be even better to take a shower when the water is back. It’s an attitude that is

difficult to adopt in a few weeks, coming from a country where it's completely different, but it is something I really hope to learn from and take with me home.

The past week we are slightly back on track with our real purpose here, music. We have finally begun to work on our workshop ideas, solo projects, teaching and planning for what music projects we want to fill the year with. Still I am learning new things everyday, and still coming to ease with realising that this is my new home. I can imagine that it is probably something I won't get used to until, a few weeks before leaving, typically. Amongst all the impressions, and experiences, you sometimes forget the reason why you are here in the first place, as there is so much more to learn from this experience, than just the music itself. You really do learn to appreciate the values you have at home. Being far away from your usual society and really getting to know the feeling of missing friends, boy-/girlfriend, and family. At times I think we all realise how used to the commercialised and western way of living, we are, and that maybe we are more fond of this society than we want to be. This experience is something I really feel trains and challenges you as a person, and your attitude to things in general. The exchange isn't all about the music, music is kind of the safe spot of this project; the one way we all can communicate, but its an experience that changes you, and will therefore have an impact on your music.

I am so excited for what is to come ahead!

-Sunny

4.5.2 Analysis of the blogposts

All of the blog posts contain depictions of the MOVERs initial reaction to living in Africa. There are some great sequences here. For example, the handshakes and the fist bumps, which are mentioned in all the blog posts. The repetition of this theme in three wholly independent blog posts tells us how notable it is. It shows how important these are to the MOVERs interaction with the locals. Upon arriving in Malawi and getting to know the locals, they will teach you their handshakes which is a fantastic ice breaker. One can easily feel like the outsider when one visits a part of the world with as little western influence as Malawi has. To know the handshakes and the Chichewaen greetings says that you are more than just a tourist, but someone that takes part in the community and makes an effort to meet the locals on their own terms. This ritual is so much talked about in the blog post because of the significance that it has in the way the MOVERs interact with the locals, and therefore begets their sense of belonging. By the repetition in the blogs, their eagerness to teach me these greetings and the pride one took in being able to execute the handshakes perfectly one can say something about how the MOVERs *experience their own participation in another culture while attending an exchange program*. There was a notable difference between me and them (at least the first couple of weeks). They were more in tune with the locals and gained recognition when they were able to interact with the locals on their own terms. This is also related to *motivation in relation to their participation in an exchange program*. Feeling excluded from the community could demotivate a person, and successfully interacting and gaining the locals approval could be a significant motivational factor when the programme extends over such a long time.

The strangeness or unfamiliarity⁴⁷ (seen with western eyes) of the country is also yet again mentioned in the blog post. Both the Busses – here mentioned by Jonas, when he saw 27 people in a single mini bus. Seen with western eyes this puts us in mind of the proverbial clown car, but in Malawi, the drivers get paid by the passenger, so there is no reason not to fill up.⁴⁸ Strange as Jonas’s observation of the bus situation is, it is just an example, just as Sunniva’s mention of the Business signs. Throughout the field work there have been a lot of examples that fit into this category.

The blog posts also talk about how the MOVERs settle in, and how they are welcomed by the community. There is a general consensus in the blog posts that the Malawians are very friendly and welcoming indeed, which again relates to the interaction with the locals, with regards to the MOVERs *participation* and *motivation*. Jakob’s blog post is called “The Warm Heart of Africa” and Sunniva is reminiscing about her grandmother reading to her and telling her that the Malawians are among the friendlies people in Africa. Jonas also talks about this, both with the title of his blog post “You are most welcome” and the stories dated December 6th 2017. These are all hints of successful interactions with locals, and this being a motivational factor with regards to their exchange. The Blog posts are very unlike, and it is clear that they are both written individually and by different people. Still, the themes that are discussed and the way they are presented, mainly interacting with locals are exceedingly similar. They also talk about settling down. Notable here is Sunniva’s change in mind from when she arrived, and looked around thinking “Wow, I’m in Africa”, and “Where are all the

⁴⁷ This term is meant to depict how the MOVERs, through their western preconception view and experience certain things. It is important to keep in mind that these observations are western views on Malawian culture, and is therefore obviously not necessarily strange to the Malawians.

⁴⁸ Malawi has been clamping down on this recently. With traffic incidents being the most dangerous element in Malawi, they have been trying to enforce safety regulations with regards to the amount of people allowed in busses. While traveling I frequently got stopped by the police so that they could check the passenger number.

animals? (speaking to the driver that took her from the airport)”, to how she describes settling down in the rhythm of Africa, both in regard to the likes of dealing with electricity cuts - “*Okay, then we will do something else*”, and African time. “*I am not a slave of time, like at home.*” Is a powerful statement about how western culture is governed by time, and how it affects people differently in Malawi to what it does in the west.

Chapter 5. Conclusions

5.1 Conclusions

I set out to gain insights about young musicians/students that were undergoing a large challenge in their musical careers. I wanted to see *«How do young musicians experience their own participation in another culture while attending an exchange program?»*, *“What motivates young musicians in relation to their participation in an exchange program?”* and *“What does musical experiences and academic capital do with the way young musicians participate in an exchange program?”*

I think I have made some valuable observations with regards to these work questions. And for, perhaps the last time of my life, I have been able to do these observations from a vantage point I might not be able to enjoy to the same degree in the future – namely as a participant and student, and not a teacher. Although the analyses in chapter four are the primary feature of this thesis, I will here summarize some of the primary points, and draw threads between the analyses to give a more holistic apprehension.

The initial outlook of the MOVE participants, as depicted in their blog posts are mirrored by the style and thematics found in the “Arriving in Malawi” and “Nkhotakota” story. It tells us how it is to be a student/young adult arriving in this part of the world. This initial outlook is very important to note as it not only sets the tone for my field work, but also the entirety of the MOVE project. It is why the two narratives both take the shape they do, both with regards to content and naive outlook, and also why it is mirrored in the blog posts. When I showed the narratives to the MOVERS, I got the immediate response that they wanted to show it to friends and family at home, so as not to leave anything out. This legitimizes the narratives and tells me that the narratives sum up to a good extent how the MOVERS actually experience their participation in the MOVE program.

The MOVERS also see themselves in relation to the locals. This is true in many ways. For instance, the MOVERS mention the handshakes and greetings in their blog post.

They also mention the fist-bumps from the small children in the streets, that, even if they do not know much English at all, run up to interact with them, as well as the pride they emit when executing a perfect greeting in Chichewa.

The safety and well-being the MOVERs feel are further underlined in the walking section of “A visit to the church” where, for example Sunniva walks without a worry, while carrying her most prized possession – her cello. Nevertheless, there is examples of difficulties within the “Warm Heart of Africa” (which Jakob calls it). In “Music Crossroads Studio” there is an uncomfortable scene about a clash between a MOVER and an employee at Music Crossroads. It does show that the relations between westerner/MOVER and employee/Malawian, is not entirely trouble free. Nevertheless, Jonas mentions in the interview (as mention in 4.4.3.) that he would work for the students access to the studio, which in turn tells us that one of the prime motivations of the MOVERs is actually the students they work for. The same is true for Karol, when she says she looks forward to the Dedza project, where she can teach students stuff she knows – Brazilian drumming. She, just as Jonas, is motivated by the students themselves. This motivation of the MOVERs, by the students can be seen with Jakob as well. His students, their life and their work influence him to the extent that he is willing to leave behind his bass, to give them a better shot at becoming better musicians. Speaking of Jakob and his motivations, it becomes apparent that he is very motivated by his surroundings in Nkhotakota through his inspired narration of the area he lives in.

With regard to valuable equipment, it is difficult to cut through what the locals in this case perceive as a necessity – to protect their valuable assets, to gain access, on students’ behalf, to do musical progress. This is not the only difficult thing thought. There was also another incident where Jonas had made arrangements with Grittahs Camp for concerts when all of the sudden the contact person perceivably acted like the original agreement never happened. In these cases, it is very difficult to firmly state who is right and with the cultural implications lurking in the background, even what “right” means. Nevertheless, one can observe and note that there is a certain mismatch in the dialogue. *Experience and academic capital* is elements that are vital to being

able to take the kind of leadership role that the Grittah's Camp concert, and the discussions with the arrangers necessitates.

This difficulty carries over to another major theme, namely teaching. To stay on the previous point, the fight for studio access is prominent. To be able to reach the goals set forth by the MOVE project one has to gain access to equipment to some degree. Just like the water bottle incident Jonas encountered in Nkhotakota, equipment holds an immense value in Malawi, so it is no wonder that actions were taken to protect the assets in the studio. For the most part I have the impression that the MOVERs see and understands this better than most westerners – the example being Jakob leaving behind his bass. But it is hard to accept it when the campaign to protect equipment hampers one ability to do the job one travelled here to do.

Teaching is also difficult with regards to the different teaching styles Malawi has compared to other countries. Academic capital is again a determining success factor in the implementation of this. If the MOVERs were not proficient in their respected fields, they would not be able to follow through on their teaching assignments. One can conclude that previous experience with music, concerts, arranging and even interpersonal capabilities is important for the successful participation of the MOVERs in this exchange program.

The story "Classes at Music Crossroads" paints this picture about teaching in Malawi, and how the MOVERs relate to this. Notable are Karol and the Schools dichotomy with regards to Drum lesson. Karol would like to teach, and when given the opportunity, she is proficient, but she knows Brazilian drums, whereas Music Crossroads wants her to lead the Malawian drum class. Teachers with knowledge of culture external to Malawi sometimes do come in demand. Both Gabriel's knowledge of music theory, which leads to new choir arrangements, and Sunniva's competency within bowed string instruments, particularly the cello, leads to some great instances of teaching.

Language as a phenomenon is quite self-explanatory, but I will briefly touch on it because it had such a peculiar relation to the MOVE project. From a very early part of

my fieldwork (First or second day of the Trøndertun stay) I noticed that language skill and development was a formidable part of the exchange experience for some of the MOVERS. The participating countries are speaking Portuguese (Brazil and Mozambique) English (Malawi, and Norway, even though the latter does not operate with English as an official language) and Norwegian (Norway). While English, spoken in Malawi, is a de facto international language, the Portuguese speaking countries are at a disadvantage from not using English in everyday life. I quickly learned that many of the participants from Mozambique and Brazil had requested to go to the other Portuguese-speaking country, because they found themselves lacking with regards to their level of English. But at the time I visited Trøndertun, the Brazilians were already at a remarkable level of English, and it had only been two months. The same was true for the Brazilians and Mozambicans residing in Malawi. They had become incredibly proficient in English during this time.

With regards to the MOVERS role at music crossroads one can use selective coding to make a point about how this could be perceived. The initial preconception (A) is that the local system, culture and music itself is complex to the extent that one almost has to have grown up with it to fully understand it. It is an independent tradition. (B) The MOVERS are granted a very high status within this system, as is shown by for example them being asked to lead classes and be in charge of the studio, arranging Nkhotakota music festival and the likes. (C) There is some discontent within the relation between A and B. The most logical thing to do would probably be to have the expertise come from within, e.g. having locals to teach the classes when the teachers were gone, and having locals make the appointment with for example Grittah's camp (Obviously this is also done). It could be that colonial relations affect this and leads to the MOVERS being put into these situations.⁴⁹ The fact that entities such as JM

⁴⁹ I talked with a medicine student that was going down to Africa for two months. She said that in Africa, a lot of the students got immense surgical responsibilities that they never would get in Norway before finishing their degree. It is apparent that colonial relations could be found in several fields.

Norway and Fredskorpset is involved could also affect this, because their funding could be seen as vital to institutions such as Music Crossroads. What all this leads to (D) is a kind of devaluation of the local culture, as it is not the locals themselves that are regarded as the experts on their own culture. It results in hiding, or not letting for example prominent students at Music Crossroads lead these sessions.

Even though I did not know the MOVERs previously to the field study, there has, through discussions throughout my stay, came up numerous conversations about how this experience can change the participants. My stay was merely five weeks, and still it has profoundly changed me. The change that a year in Africa naturally brings along a break from the every-day life one has had in Norway. In an interview, Sunniva makes some very sobering, but yet valuable comments on this:

“Fuck... I’m heading three years back in my career. I don’t get to practice like I did back home, and for the last couple of years, I have been very good at practicing, going to my studio every day, because I have realized that it’s the only way you can make it. But now I realize, even though there has not been a lot of playing with bands recently, that it (referring to the stay in Africa) influences me as a person. You go through numerous stages and meet a lot of new people. You experience life in a radically different way. Another thing is that I have been on my own – it is a long time since I have gotten to know new people all by myself, and not through a boyfriend, a friend or some band mates. But here in Malawi, I have gotten to build all these relations by myself. And that reminds me of who I was before the band⁵⁰ and all the stuff in Oslo. People treat you different based on who you are as a musician, and who you play with, but here in Malawi, you are nobody, in a way. Just your personality. That changes the music you play. Getting here, I got out of the “Oslo bubble” I found myself in. Everything was about who you knew and how you could “climb the ladder”I started to make music based on what I thought people would like, and what would give

⁵⁰ Sunniva is referring to a particular band, but for the sake of anonymity it is not included in this thesis.

me more attention and work, but here I am so far away from all that. I have all but forgotten that I cared about what kind of beats I was using and stuff like that. Here it is all about the music that I have inside me and need to get out.”

This citation speaks volumes of the values the MOVERs put on their exchange year and how they perceive themselves within it. Sunniva talks about how her musical freedom is shaped by being in Malawi, in contrast to Oslo. It is very interesting to note how a musician both can be and lets herself be influenced by the cultural setting she partakes in. Through numerous conversations I have gained an insight into what this journey could do to one, if one lets it, and it is very inspiring to see how the MOVERs rise to the challenge to do this. Both with sharing from their own experiences and skills, and learning from the new culture, they allow themselves to grow.

5.2 Perspectives

I set out writing this thesis with the goal of getting to further know and understand a particular student demographic. This is mainly to strengthen my teacher training with aims of better preparing myself for working with older students, and particularly those who undergo bigger projects, like boarding schools sometimes do, but also those who write bigger academic papers, such as for instance bachelors. My goal is to become a proficient teacher in with these students, and as I perceive this group, they are already quite autonomous with regards to their musical abilities and day-to-day work within this field. As a teacher's students grow in age, so does the time perspective one works within. One commonly sets out some overlying goals during the start of the educational period, be it a one-year boarding school, like Trøndertun, or a bachelor's degree in music, before then working towards it through the year(s). The role of a teacher in higher education is to facilitate this and be the proverbial scaffolding that helps the student work towards this goal. I believe that this thesis helps me to

understand more about the process and motivation that students go through, not only in exchange programs, but through all major endeavours in their academic careers.

Writing in English has also been a tremendous challenge, but one that bore fruit. I have seen my capability with the English language rapidly expand along with the page count, and it has left me feeling more at home in this language. Writing academically is a craft, and it needs to be honed if one is to become proficient. Getting this training will no doubt serve me if I should advance with my academic career.

There are also other valuable side effects with this thesis. Having both written my bachelor about the didactics around the mediatization of Islam, and its effect on a classroom setting, as well as having worked with refugees for several years, this thesis, and particularly the field work that I undertook has served to further deepen my multicultural understanding. This is very valuable in Norway with the cultural diversity within the school system flourishing. Working with language barriers and cultural understanding is of vital importance for the next generation of teachers.

I therefore regard this as a metadidactical thesis, one that primarily serve me as a teacher within the field of music with a particular, international perspective. With more and more students partaking in exchange programs, which in turn makes for a more international student community, I think this thesis will give me important insight that leads me to better tackle the future as a teacher.

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