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# 'Culture in international development: The role of Concerts Norway in the India-Norway music cooperation (2002-2017)'

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## **Abstract**

The study assesses how Concerts Norway has interacted with the Norwegian Foreign Ministry and local musical actors in India to build infrastructure in the cultural field in India. Using ethnographic methods and document analysis, we found that CN successively shifted from *rational*, via *entrepreneurial* to *relational* brokerage, adapting the programme and the development communication to shifting MFA-policies as well as to the Indian partner's needs. We raise critical questions about arts development versus general views on development assistance and highlight a particular asymmetry between mainstream development models and the need to be strengthening the art sector, towards its sustainability.

**Keywords:** Music and development; cultural policy; brokerage; partnerships

## **'Culture in international development: The role of Concerts Norway in the India-Norway music cooperation (2002-2017)'**

The anthropological literature, as well as other disciplines ranging from business to political science have for a long time dealt with the concept of brokers and brokerage, yet the notion of what it is has changed over time (Lewis and Mosse 2006; Lindquist 2015; Hönke and Müller 2018; Koster and Leeynsele 2018). In this article, we use the broker as an analytical concept to assess how Concerts Norway (CN), a Norwegian governmental music organisation, has interacted with the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) and local musical actors in India under three distinct cultural policy eras to present concerts, educate music teachers and build infrastructure in the cultural field in India. We also link our findings and discussion to the larger field of development communication, notably how development<sup>3</sup> and its associated language have conditioned the Indo-Norwegian music cooperation and its partnerships. Our main objective is to assess what it has implied to have an intermediary stakeholder between the international donor (MFA) and local Indian partners under the various cultural policy eras, and we specifically seek to find out how the mainstreaming of the project into development post 2014 effected the content of the programme as well as the nature of its partnerships.

The music cooperation between India and Norway (hereafter the Music Cooperation) was officially launched in 2002. Through several successive project periods, the MFA has invested close to 30 million NOK, approximately 3.44 million USD<sup>4</sup>, in this programme, channelled through the Norwegian Embassy in New Delhi as the donor representative in India. The Embassy, in its turn, contracted CN as the implementing agency of the Music Cooperation, who again made sub-contracts with artists, music organizations and educational institutes. This cooperation and its organizational set-up constitute a rich laboratory to examine tendencies and tensions in policy and partnership models between 2002-2017<sup>5</sup>. Entering this laboratory, we have defined three distinct policy eras that will serve as a structure for our article: 2002-2004, 2005-2013 and 2014-2017. We hence present our findings in three sections, each subdivided in

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<sup>3</sup> When we talk about “development” in this article, we refer to the international aid sector and the deliberate actions of states and/or development agencies to promote equity between various localities and between social groups or classes (Allen and Thomas 2000). Development studies is an academic field of its own, yet its nature is inter-disciplinary due to heterogenous understandings of what it means and what it takes to create such equity.

<sup>4</sup> NOK at rate 8.5 to USD. The total MFA investment was 29 210 680 NOK from 2004-2017. The Norwegian Ministry of Culture's substantial financial contribution to activities with Indian musicians in Norway is not included in this sum.

<sup>5</sup> The contract expired in December 2017. Yet activities were conducted until February 2018 as a non-cost extension of the already signed agreement.

three, focussing on the following components: 1. *MFA policy*, including justification of the programme and critique; 2. *Implementation and partnerships*, including assessment of CN's intermediary role and communication between the stakeholders; 3. *Impact*, i.e. long-term changes and synergy effects created by the project.

The article deals with tensions that arise when the fields of art and development assistance are interwoven. We look at three different models of brokerage and analyse what each of these models offer and remove in relation to the frictions and dilemmas of the field. We raise questions about arts development versus general views on development assistance and discover a particular asymmetry between mainstream development models and the need to be strengthening (and therefore empowering) the art sector, towards its sustainability. This challenge has been dealt with in distinct ways during the three policy eras, where we observe shifting notions about the art sector's needs, how the cooperation has been justified and a variety of interests and actors involved. Notwithstanding the different phases and nuances of the cooperation and CN's broker-role, one can generally say that CN has played a vital role in establishing trust between the Norwegian Embassy and local partners in India, as well as functioning as a useful translator between competencies and networks in the art world and the world of development. The programme has generated much enthusiasm and yielded good formal results (Hauknes 2008, Larsen 2013, CN 2014a, CN 2018), yet as one goes deeper into the project, ethical challenges arise with this very model of partnership where a cultural organization from Europe, a "self-proclaimed world cultural leader" (Stupples 2011: 5), "helps" the global South to "get culture" (ibid.). Unless consciously and sensitively dealt with, there will always be an imminent danger of becoming yet another neo-colonial cultural practice.

### **Scope of the study and distinct design**

We have approached our topic primarily from an ethnographic point of view, where we rely on qualitative data, i.e. participatory observations, project descriptions and reports from the India-Norway Music Cooperation 2002-2017 (hereafter "the Music Cooperation"), qualitative interviews and the auto-ethnographic fieldworks of the two authors<sup>6</sup>: Author A previously held a position as CN manager of the Music Cooperation from 2008-2013 and Author B currently has a leading position in one of the four Indian partner organizations. Informal field

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<sup>6</sup> We also distributed a questionnaire to key partners in India, yet the response rate was so poor that we deemed it necessary to follow up by additional interviews/skype conversations.

conversations and semi-structured interviews were conducted live in India in February 2018 as well as via Skype from May to July 2018. Five in-depth interviews with Indian partners were recorded and transcribed. Each recording lasted between 50-90 minutes. Information gathering from CN took place over time in the form of focus group sessions, researcher's participation in internal and external meetings and one-to-one exchanges with three employees of CN's international department. Citations in this current paper hail from both recorded and non-recorded conversations with informants that have been cross checked and approved by the same.

The authors have additionally recorded and transcribed relevant parts of their own discussions during the research process, as we both have a distinct relation to the Music Cooperation (see above). These double roles eventually display some ethical dilemmas; dilemmas that we will now briefly discuss and show how we have dealt with. Tønberg (2009: 268-283) highlights three challenges when doing research on your colleagues and/or using your own experience as research data. These are the (1) multiple roles and pre-understandings, the (2) critical function of the research versus the consideration of third parties and ourselves and the (3) fear of invading the colleagues' private sphere. The first two are of particular relevance for our study.

The notion of an “objective researcher within cultural analysis” (Lind 2009: 222) has for a long time been discarded and, as academics, we are often attracted to fields of personal interest (Adams, Holman Jones and Ellis 2015). This is largely accepted in the scientific community, as the exploration of subjects we are already familiar with has great potential to lead to increased understanding and also new perspectives worthy to share with a larger society. However, our understanding of this same subject is also coloured by previous experience, relations and prejudices, elements that requires identification and scientific tools to handle. In the preparations and throughout the writing of this paper, there has been a rich exchange between the two authors to map our own mental models and assumptions. Aided by Karl Weick's tools of sensemaking (Weick 1995), we have discussed these between us and jointly analysed how they risk biasing our approach to data collection and analysis. We acknowledge that our results can never be objective, yet we aim that they remain verifiable, transparent, accountable and not falsely favour any of the parties. Our main intention by choosing to study the development practises of this Music Cooperation is for future references and learning; we do not pretend to represent the Truth, only our well-founded (yet subjective) perspectives on it.

With regards to the Tønberg's point about the critical function of research versus the consideration of third parties (and ourselves), this needs to be considered in the light that the research is conducted in retrospect, on a programme that is no longer operational. The final

activities took place in February 2018. CN has also undergone a major organisational restructure due to changed political priorities in Norway. International activities are no longer prioritized. Hence, the effects on the MFA, CN and partners (and ourselves) are limited, except from the future-learning-aspects that we refer to above. In our view, none of the mentioned parties in this article will suffer reputational damage after the publication of the study. They – and we – might, on the other hand, become enriched with more nuances and references for such programmes in the future. We have nevertheless taken precautions to protect individual informants: Instead of using their names and initials, we refer to their function and affiliation only. The organizations they represent, however, are referred to by their real names.

### **Brokerage and development communication**

There are many categories of brokers, each having different functions. In our case, we find it useful to distinguish between the rationalist (Hönke and Müller 2018: 334), entrepreneurial (Bierschenk, Chauveau and de Sardan 2002, Lindquist 2015) and relational broker (Hönke and Müller 2018: 336). The (1) *rationalist* broker explicitly weights the costs and benefits of entering relations of brokerage. Relying on pragmatic evaluations of the return of its investment, it ties different interfaces together. However, in development, these interfaces are seldom well-defined. In fact, a stable set of relations appears as an unrealistic expectation for the dynamic nature of development projects, that rather “become real through the work of generating and translating interests, creating context by tying in supporters and so sustaining interpretations” (Lewis and Mosse 2006: 13). These creative dynamics are descriptive for the next broker-category, namely the (2) *entrepreneurial* broker; instrumental in the design and implementation of the development project itself. The third category pushes this perspective even further and is defined by a relational approach to brokerage, where translation and mediation of meaning between different actors are central. Hence, we speak about the (3) broker as *translator*. For this broker, defining relevant models and adapting them to new contexts constitutes the central focus.

Brokerage is closely linked to the larger field of development communication. Development communication is not innocent; it is not random, something that post-colonial academics such as Fanon ([1961] 2002), Freire ([1970] 1993), Said (1978) and Spivak (1990) have written extensively about. Binary notions produced by colonialism and Western categorization of the world such as self/other, centre/periphery, civilized/savage, developed/underdeveloped,

active/passive and so on have made their mark in the history of development and in the relationship between the *West and the Rest* (Ferguson 2011) more globally. Until the 1970s, the very idea of development relied on one of these binaries, namely on the contrast between modernized, technologically advanced societies and the countries that had not yet taken this leap. Later on, modernization perspectives were challenged by participatory concerns; it was argued that the main challenge for Third World countries was not (lack of) technology, but rather deeper structures of political, economic and military dependency (Quarry and Ramirez 2009: 19). Academics and practitioners demanded “another type of development” (Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation 1975), where the centre of the initiative had to be the people involved in its benefits. Even though development today has moved towards a participatory approach (Cornwall 2011) and the most outdated binaries and clichés have been scrapped, the field is still filled with imagined geographies, hierarchical models as well as buzzwords that potentially conceal ideological differences and divergent interests (Quarry and Ramirez 2009; Cornwall and Eade 2010; Cornwall 2011). Words still make worlds and the risk of “epistemic violence” (Spivak 1990), with its entailed material consequences, persists. Therefore, in the analytical part of this article, we will pay special attention to how specific development vocabulary has been employed in the Music Cooperation and coloured its partnerships.

It is with these notions in mind that we now move into the discussion of our case study and show how CN has shifted between broker-roles and cultivated different types of development communication over time.

## **Findings and discussion**

### ***Rational brokerage in bilateral cultural cooperation (2002-2004)***

#### *MFA policy 2002-2004*

The first cultural agreement between India and Norway was signed in 1961 (Lovdata 1961) and focused on bilateral cooperation in the fields of culture, education and research. Artistic communities in the two countries were occasionally invited by the MFA to take part in and be in charge of specific events and smaller programmes that could link the nations and lead to broader networks in cultural life and diplomacy. There was no overall MFA-policy guiding these initiatives apart from bilateral cultural agreements that were renewed every few years. In 2000, the MFA-commissioned Lending-report nevertheless outlined key recommendations for cultural cooperation at the turn of the new millennium and identified the value of such activities



as a) conflict prevention activities that promote peace and interpersonal understanding; b) door openers for intergovernmental dialogue and minimum contact when classical diplomacy proves insufficient; c) an industrial policy instrument that promotes Norway's economic interests; d) a part of the national self-presentation, promoting knowledge about Norway and positive attitudes towards the country in the world, e) part of the internationalization of domestic cultural life in Norway through meetings with and impulses from foreign cultures (Lending 2000). The Music Cooperation with India between 2002-2004 was seen as a strategic tool in this regard, even if this policy somehow appeared more romantic than operational. The specific role of culture and cultural expressions in foreign policy and in development was at an infant stage in the early 2000s.

#### *Implementation and partnerships 2002-2004*

In the 1990s, CN was commissioned by the MFA to promote Norwegian artists in India and Indian artists in Norway with funding from the MFA. The organization got paid per mission, before the first long-term agreement between CN and MFA in India was signed in 2002. CN was at that time the largest producer and presenter of live music in Norway and, with funding from the Ministry of Culture, it offered close to 10.000 concerts annually (Kultur & Kirke-departementet 2002). CN hired Indian musicians for public concerts and school concert activities in Norway<sup>7</sup>, and also sent some of Norway's foremost musicians to perform in India. Through three (main) Indian partners: (1) SPIC MACAY, a volunteer movement with the aim of promoting classical music to the youth in India; (2) Jazz Utsav, India's (then) biggest and most long-lived jazz festival, and (3) Rock Street Journal, RSJ, a recognized magazine and commercial event organiser in the independent music scene in India, CN got access to a wide range of high quality Indian musicians and music professionals, a network that was built upon in the subsequent periods of project implementation.

As a *rationalist* broker, CN made a pragmatic evaluation of the return on its investment in India's music scene, recognizing in particular the ways these networks could enhance CN's profile and reputation to its domestic audience in Norway. CN became a credible India-connoisseur in Norway, and this helped to justify its investments of its own organizational resources (human and financial) as well as the funding from the MFA. Additionally, the strong

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<sup>7</sup> CN presented more than 900 concerts with a so-called «world music profile» in Norway in 2001. Between 1989-2002, more than 4000 school concerts were given by non-ethnic Norwegian musicians, reaching 450.000 children in Norway. This included pedagogical material about the culture of each country represented, among which India was prominently represented (Kultur & Kirke-departmentet 2002: 2).

exchange component opened doors for Norwegian artists to visit India, some of whom also played concerts together with Indian artists. This gave credit to CN who could offer such opportunities.

### *Impact 2002-2004*

The term “impact” is often used in development as part of result-based management<sup>8</sup>. Since this word was not part of Music Cooperation-discourse between 2002-2004, it may seem a bit out of place to talk about impact already at this stage. Yet, looking at what the word actually signifies, i.e. long-term changes in society caused by the project (UN Habitat 2017), it is helpful to consider impact in a value-based, non-quantifiable sense here. From 2002-2004, the exchange-based Music Cooperation offered numerous participants – among them many agenda setters and high profiled artists – opportunities for intercultural exchange and learning. The musical milieus in the two countries got to know each other, they built mutual trust and shared common concerns in the art world. Informants who were part of the Music Cooperation throughout all its phases highlight that this stage of the programme, when there was no pressure to perform societal results outside the artistic production itself, was a very prosperous time. Cultural exchange and relationship-building (in both artistic and human dimensions) were the central concern for the artists involved, activities that also had positive repercussions outside the artistic realms, for example among the many pupils who received school concerts in India and Norway and the way that “common friends in musical networks opened new doors for Norwegian diplomats to political and business communities in India” (Head of International Projects, CN).

In-depth knowledge about each other’s musical expressions, artistic openness and a general good climate of cooperation can be summarized as the most important delivery of this first phase of the Music Cooperation. Building a project on such values corresponds to what Quarry and Ramirez (2009) describe as a crucial phase of *listening* in development. According to them, getting to know the local context and your partners in depth is a precondition for any successful development endeavour. This is done via two-way communication and deep listening to your partner’s voice, needs and aspirations. Only after these factors have been truly understood and incorporated, when complexity and nuances about the Other are baked into the development initiative, genuine projects with genuine results can take place. In other words,

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<sup>8</sup> A results-based management approach “aims to improve management effectiveness and accountability by defining realistic expected results, monitoring progress toward the achievement of expected results, integrating lessons learned into management decisions and reporting on performance” (UNDP, non-dated).

phase one of the Music Cooperation prepared the ground for the next step of the project, that from 2005 was conditioned by a “twin-track”-policy where the art sectors’ constitutive and instrumental aspects were combined, seeking to value “social utility as well as art itself” (Stupples 2011: 182).

### ***Twin-track policy and entrepreneurial brokerage (2005-2013)***

#### ***MFA policy 2005-2013***

At the end of the 1990s and early 2000s, development took a more holistic approach to human beings and societies and started to consider how culture conditions the success or failure of development interventions. This is often referred to as development’s cultural turn (Stupples 2014). It was only from the mid 2000s however that the role of artistic *expressions*, i.e. music, theatre and visual arts gained attention in the field (Radcliffe 2006, Clammer 2012 and 2015, De Beuklaer, Pyykkönen and Singh 2015, Stupples and Teiwa 2017). In 2005, Norway (alongside Denmark) took the lead among Western countries in spearheading the use of cultural expressions in development, releasing the visionary *Strategy for Norway’s culture and sports co-operation with countries in the South* (MFA 2005). The strategy aimed at taking a holistic and long-term approach to the field and listed “strengthening cultural infrastructure in the South” and “cultural exchange” as its two main priorities (ibid.).

The twin-track policy introduced a strict distinction between cultural *development* funds and *public diplomacy* funds. In MFA terms, these were referred to as “03“- and “02 funds” respectively, where 03 allocations had to qualify as Official Development Assistance, ODA<sup>9</sup>. However, even if this distinction seemed clear on paper, the actual use got confused in real operations. Many of the same actors who received funding for public diplomacy and branding of Norwegian music abroad also got 03 (development)-funds and few, if any, of those receiving 03-funds had fully-fledged expertise as development actors. CN’s Music Cooperation with India was one of the MFA-funded programmes where this distinction was decidedly blurred:

“We received development funds but were not really familiar with the concepts used by NORAD<sup>10</sup> and the MFA at that time (...) Neither Concerts Norway nor our partners in the South were ‘development actors’ as such. We wanted to present high-quality music and produce good frames for the creation and presentation of the arts. That’s all”. (Head of international projects, CN)

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<sup>9</sup> ODA is “administered with the promotion of the economic development and welfare of developing countries as its main objective (...) a distinction is drawn between building developing countries’ capacity (ODA-eligible) and one-off interventions (not ODA-eligible) (...) Cultural programmes in developing countries whose main purpose is to promote the culture or values of the donor are not reportable as ODA.” (OECD.org)

<sup>10</sup> Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation.

MFA seemed to look the other way with regards to the development aspect and competence: As long as CN and its partners proved competent and legitimate in the music field, they got the contract. This is confirmed by sources inside the MFA and an external evaluation of the above-mentioned strategy (NORAD 2011). To be in sync with the strategy, however, CN gradually entered a new type of broker-role, notably that of an *entrepreneurial broker*; one who spots and makes use of the blurry character of existing interphases (i.e. the combination of social utility and “art itself”) in order to design a development project out of something that was not rigged as such in the first place. From 2008, with increased awareness and competence in development (CN personnel was trained by the evaluation unit of the MFA in development-specific result-based management), recognizable phrases from the MFA strategy such as “improved access to cultural goods”, “improved possibilities for participation in cultural life” began to appear in CN’s project descriptions and reports (CN 2014b: 9). In addition to cultural exchange, the project now officially worked to improve access to cultural rights in India and infrastructural lacunas in Indian art management and event execution. CN became the largest grant recipient of Norwegian cultural development assistance: In 2012, the annual budget allocated by the MFA to CN was 23 million NOK, approximately 2.7 million USD<sup>11</sup>, funds that were further channelled to projects and partners in nine different countries (CN 2013: 8-11). Between 2008-2013, the Music Cooperation with India received 2.2 million USD, where the full amount came from ODA-reportable allocations. Even though ODA-allocations should not be used for cultural exchange, this exclusion was circumvented by labelling exchange a *method* towards development goals, something we shall return to in our next paragraph.

### *Implementation and partnerships 2005-2013*

Between 2005-2013, CN signed two main contracts with the MFA, one running from 2005-2007 and the second from 2008-2012(13)<sup>12</sup>. While the former of these agreements primarily emphasised cultural exchange, a few recognizable terms from the development world had been seeded into the agreement: Strengthening *marginalized* music genres in India and special attention to *unprivileged* groups among children and youth were core areas of activity, as well as establishment of arenas for artistic collaboration and musical workshops in India and Norway. The second contract (2008-2013) further introduced development language and emphasized *institutionalization* and *skill training* among participants, terms that CN had

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<sup>11</sup> NOK at rate 8.5 to USD.

<sup>12</sup> 2013 was an extension year on equal terms of contract as the five previous years.

“picked up from conversations with the MFA and inserted into a programme format that followed more or less the same lines as before” (Head of international projects, CN). These terms were understood and emphasized differently by the stakeholders: Was rock a *marginalized music genre*? The Embassy raised questions about the inclusion of this musical genre in the programme, while CN and the local partner, RSJ, claimed that even though rock – and more generally, rhythmic music – are big and market sustained world-wide, it was still marginalized in India. Norway’s support could be justified by its commitment to diversity and cultural rights. The Embassy agreed. As a result, many Norwegian high-profiled rock bands toured jam-packed stadiums in India, something that benefitted RSJ’s financial status, their professional capacities and touring networks as well as the public image of Norway in India. These activities responded well to the purpose of the twin track policy, yet, as a *development* programme, fully financed by earmarked ODA-funds, it was arguably a questionable choice of action and can be read as public diplomacy disguised as development<sup>13</sup>.

From 2008 onwards, in addition to CN, there were eleven key partners from both countries; eight Indian and three Norwegian. These included voluntary organizations, clubs and festivals, educational institutions and media networks<sup>14</sup>. Even though many new actors were added to the programme, all the “*listening and getting to know each other*” (CEO, RSJ) from the previous phase of the programme had borne valuable fruits. The partners were attuned to each other and whenever there were new parties added, they seemed to quickly attune to the same energy and mode of operation.

This high degree of compatibility and ‘in tune’ operational approach can be attributed to the Music Cooperation’s organizational culture, i.e. the sum of artefacts, behaviour, mindset, emotional ground and motivational roots built over time (Hawkins 1997: 425-27). The artefacts of the Music Cooperation were the policy documents and the goals that the project had set out to achieve. Even if the Indian partners were active in the project and expressed ownership to this, the project structure was such that the main responsibility for financial and narrative reporting laid with CN. This was a hierarchical operational model that *a priori* gave much power to the broker, an unbalance also pointed out in an external evaluation from Hauknes (2008). However, if we move further down the list, to behaviour, mindset, emotional ground

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<sup>13</sup> The same argument is valid for the cooperation between CN and Jazz Utsav, where the cooperation basically boiled down to providing jazz musicians for the Jazz Utsav annual festival.

<sup>14</sup> SPIC MACAY, RSJ, Jazz Utsav Delhi, Jazz Utsav Mumbai, Blue Frog, KRUNK, The Media Tribe, Strings of the World (all Indian) and Blå, Inferno and Rogaland County Council (all Norwegian).

and motivation, we observe that the unequal power relations and hierarchy with CN on top diluted little by little. There was a move towards more equal, horizontal relationships informed, firstly, by the ethical impulses that no music is superior to any other music<sup>15</sup>, even though there might be notions of hierarchy within classical and popular cultures *within* the Indian scene. Secondly, the quality notions of what it takes to be a true professional in music and music-related activities were conceived as international, albeit work is happening in very different contexts. Thirdly, we observe a shared sentiment of passion, voluntarism and ideas of music as a joint “*higher cause*” (CEO, RSJ). Even if statements from our informants possibly express a somewhat overly romantic idea about what music can achieve (Bergh 2010) – and also seem to ignore the tensions between different music genres – the notion of music as transnational human and professional value shall not be underestimated. Being and working in the art world thus depends less on actual place, the physical setting of social activity as situated geographically (Giddens, in Stokes 1997: 3), and more on space; what your interests and competencies are. It relates more to music itself and what surrounds music (craft skills, mastery of relevant technology, exchanges between professionals and their broader networks) than to the social productivity demanded by development. Through joint work with music and common experiences from the art world, CN and the partners came to treat each other as equals, with respect for each other’s competencies and cultural traits. Informants have shared that they truly recognized themselves in the Other, an observation that seem very different to the paternalistic models more commonly associated with North-to-South development (Baaz 2005)<sup>16</sup>.

It is however reasonable to question which perceptions of equality that really form the basis of these statements. While it is true that CN was seen by the partners as an equal art producing organization, it is also true that CN operated as an entrepreneurial broker and agent for the Norwegian Embassy as well as superior project manager to the Indian partners. CN’s chain of accountability went all the way up to the Norwegian parliament and the Norwegian taxpayers, who financed the programme through their taxes, while the accountability of the Indian partners was limited to CN and to the local artists, audiences and educational institutions. It is therefore tempting to ask, in line with Kowalski (2011), if offering an “equal” partnership in this setting actually can be read as a strategy for CN to buy influence for themselves and

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<sup>15</sup> This is specified in the project document: “*The basic assumption for the Programme is that both the Norwegian and Indian musical cultures are versatile (...) and that the collaboration in principle should be open to every genre and style*” (CN 2008: 1).

<sup>16</sup> Within the academic literature on development, the practice of paternalism has been critiqued for more than two decades now, including famous cases like William Easterly’s *The White Man’s Burden: Why the West’s Efforts to Aid the Rest Have Done So Much Ill and So Little Good* (2007) and Arturo Escobar’s work from the 1990s and 2000s. Yet, aid practitioners themselves do not always exhibit the same critical sense or self-awareness.

assure that their activity base and legitimacy were assured all the way from the Indian artist-grassroots to the decisionmakers in Norway. Our interview data indicate that this is most likely *not* the case in this Music Cooperation, yet it is an intriguing angle to explore. Gift theory (Mauss 1966, Kowalski 2011) would claim that genuine equality is impossible here because development assistance (a gift) is inherently unequal. We will return to this.

### *Impact 2005-2013*

Simon Frith talks about the aesthetic experience of music as “*a way of being in the world*” (in Hesmondhalgh 2014: 141), a way of making sense of it. Shared aesthetic experiences as well as knowledge exchange in the art world gave the Music Cooperation between India and Norway its special character. The parties’ combined dreaming, professional efforts and cross-national productions in the art world offered a challenge to the very notion of how development was (or probably *is*) understood and seen<sup>17</sup>. Nevertheless, in the project description from 2008, it was quite opaque what the project was expected to finally deliver. The contract contained no clear goal hierarchy and or measurable objectives:

“The main objective for the musical collaboration between India and Norway is to contribute to creating mutual insight into and respect for the two countries’ musical traditions, contribute to a mutual corroboration of competence, add to the infrastructure and provide an increased exposure of both countries’ music and culture” (CN 2008: 2).

The project document was further lightly seasoned with development terms, terms that seemed more empty than operational in this context, as none of them were properly defined. This makes it hard to make a clear statement about impact from a development point of view. Seeing a *general* impact is however not difficult: Informant accounts, project reports and also an external evaluation (Larsen 2013) emphasize high numbers, broad outreach and inspirational effects of the programme. The Music Cooperation covered all nineteen counties in Norway and organized musical activities in 24 out of 28 states in India. It reached 179.000 school children in both countries and more than 130.000 people among the general audiences. CN and partners organized 72 workshops involving almost 800 participants, and 88 music professionals were supported to attend festivals and/or professional branch meetings in the two countries (CN 2014a). On a qualitative level, informants state that the programme enabled them to heighten their artistic ambitions and increase the quality of their musical productions. The performance “Questionings” by the Indian classical choreographer Rukmini Chatterjee and the Norwegian

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<sup>17</sup> This is also reflected in the title of an external evaluation of the project: “Collaboration Beyond Competition” (Larsen 2013).

black metal band Vreid is highlighted as a particularly innovative example (Kaur 2012) where Indian Bharatanatyam (North-Indian classical dance) and Norwegian metal-music were merged together on stage and presented in highly respected venues in both countries, including the Norwegian Opera house in Oslo. In the audience, one could observe women in their mid-fifties, tapping their fingers to the *taal*<sup>18</sup>, alongside young metal fans headbanging to the same. This definitely challenged and eventually broke down certain stereotypes, but was it *development*? At the end of the twin-track era and project period 2008-2013, the stakeholders still had very broad notions about what constituted ‘development’ in this Music Cooperation.



An image from “Questionings” was selected by the MFA for the front cover of a new policy-paper for culture and development that was launched in 2013. This document will be at the centre of our next paragraph, where we will assess the Music Cooperation between 2014-2017.

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### ***Relational brokerage in mainstream development (2014-2017)***

#### *MFA policy 2014-2017*

In 2013, the Norwegian position on culture in Norway’s foreign policy shifted again. The Norwegian Foreign Minister, the Minister of Development and the Cultural Minister jointly presented White Paper 19 (MFA 2013) to the Parliament. This document laid foundations for an even more instrumentalised policy for culture in development and a more clear-cut distinction between 02 and 03-types of funding. Increased commitment to the art sector as a driver of human- and cultural rights was emphasized as well as the role of artists and arts organizations in the global South as agents of change. All activity in the field should henceforth be change-oriented and framed by result-based management. Exchange activities with

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<sup>18</sup> A term used in Indian classical music to refer to musical meter.



Norwegian partners were progressively reduced from 2014, so that in the current era they have almost totally disappeared. To justify this policy, which is still valid in Norwegian state support to this field, the MFA relied on arguments of cost-effectiveness (i.e. allocating funds directly to cultural actors in the global South is more cost-effective than going via Norwegian partners) and power transfer (i.e. the power to define needs and aspirations shall lay with the cultural actors in the South, not with their Northern connections). The policy addressed the slippage between ODA funding and public diplomacy programming that we have critiqued in previous paragraphs and sought to ensure funding for artistic development projects with a clear agenda of change. This was surely a well-intended effort to empower weaker groups in the global South, yet the harsh distinctions at the interface between different types of activity have been criticized by cultural actors in the North and the South alike:

Post 2014, the actors in the South found that their mobility opportunities have been dramatically reduced. They were labelled *target groups* or *beneficiaries* whose musical endeavours were seen as something *local* instead of something that deserved to be presented on a global arena (see also Stupples 2011: 212-223). They critiqued the development system that “*appeared way too rigid, instrumental and irrelevant*” (CEO, RSJ) for them, something that eventually made RSJ leave the Music Cooperation in 2016<sup>19</sup>. In addition to the requirements to “translate” the musical activities into a result-based framework, the stakeholders were also asked to report on other development parameters such as climate impact and how the “*UN Security Council resolution 1325 on women, peace and security are [were] taken into account*” (CN 2018). The shift from artistic exchange to more overall societal issues and cultural rights in development was also met by critique from the artistic community that accused the MFA of no longer valuing the ground work of the art world (emphasize in original):

“They [the Norwegian Foreign Ministry] wants to fund art activities for *transformation* and *change*, for all kind of societal issues, but they do not value cultural *production* in itself. Yet, what they do not seem to understand is the simple fact that *artistic production* constitutes the heart of the art world. The knowledge base for artistic production is built when people with creative and organizational skills move across borders, when they meet to share their music and ideas. It is from this exchange that change will happen” (Head of international projects, CN).<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> In 2016, after several demands from the MFA and CN to deliver on the development parameters of the new programme, and several times failing to do so, the parties took a joint decision that it was best if RSJ left the project. RSJ has however continued to nurture relations with CN and Norwegian artistic milieus. In 2017, they organized tours in India with several Norwegian bands, musicians they brought down with funding from Indian corporate sponsors; sources of finance that did not require detailed reporting on development parameters.

<sup>20</sup> Another critique from both the South and the North has been about drastic cuts in the budget allocation for the field as such: The total budget for Norwegian development assistance to culture was cut from 89 million to 42 million NOK per year between 2014 and 2017, yet this reduction did not directly affect the Music Cooperation with India since the contract had already been signed and budgets agreed in 2014. Between 2014 and 2017, the Music Cooperation received a total of 8.5 million NOK (1 million USD).

Hence, in spite of its good ambitions of clarity, the current policy was by several of our informants interpreted as a step back to the old binaries of global/local, North/South. The instrumental approach and the management tools also seemed quite contrary to what Quarry and Ramirez (2009: 2) prescribe when talking about good development: “*Development should be more about exploring and enabling, less about prescribing*”.

### *Implementation and partnerships 2014-2017*

Prior to the era shift introduced by White Paper 19, we have argued that CN first held a rational, then entrepreneurial broker-role. Post 2014, however, these modes of operation were no longer viable. The development profile became absolute, something we argue forged CN into a third broker-position, namely that of a *relational broker* or translator. Moving from an invited broker space to a negotiated one (Koster and Leeynsele 2018: 809), CN had to carefully listen to Indian partners and come up with a project proposal better informed by local needs. CN had since early 2000s operated as the MFA's trusted partner, as its “*extended musical arm*” (senior advisor, MFA central cultural section) but was now placed in the same line as any grant seeker of the field. CN could no longer use its position as a cultural heavyweight in Norway, nor its extensive operations and experience abroad to justify its presence in India; it had to redesign a proper *development* programme that responded to the new policy and voiced the needs and aspirations of its local partners in India. The organization's presence in India was now justified by the development impact on Indian music life and defined target groups; it was all about defining a “problem” in India that CN seemingly had a model, competence and networks to “fix”. Four intervention areas were singled out as focal points of the new programme:

- 1) Increase access to music and music education among young audiences in India;
- 2) Improve communication skills of Indian musicians in front of young audiences;
- 3) Strengthen the independent music industry/ the live music scene in India;
- 4) Skill training/ technical training of music-related professionals in India (CN 2014b).

These four goals were also framed by a broader development goal, namely to “*strengthen the independent music sector and music education in India*” more widely (CN 2014b). The vastness of this task implied an even closer cooperation between CN and the Indian music organizations and a more intimate partner involvement than before. Prior to the MFA-approval of the project in 2014, CN employees multiplied their visits to India, had repeated meetings with the four selected partners of the new programme: SPIC MACAY, RSJ, Flying Carpet Productions (FCP) and Subramaniam Academy of Performing Arts (SaPa). They met with Indian cultural officials and invited Indian partners to Norway to finalize the documents. CN

also focused on building collaborations between these four Indian partners and other Norwegian cultural actors who had competence needed in the project. The Norwegian Academy of Music, for example, got heavily involved in this last project period, in an educational leg of a SaPa-project in Bangalore. Even though CN did not – nor did its partners – consider themselves full-fledged “development actors”, they had learned to master the language (Cornwall and Eade 2010) and taken a pragmatic approach to placing music in this context. The partners have expressed gratitude for having CN between them and the Embassy to handle for example goal monitoring, standardised reporting on cross-cutting issues and financials of the total project. The fact that CN provided this buffer between the Indian partners and the donor’s reporting demands bought them a time and space for their music activities that is in some ways – in the broader art world context – a gift:

“I am sure [Head of Int. Cooperation CN] had his arguments with the Embassy, but we as an Indian partner never had to deal with any of that. We could focus on our musical activities, on our movement” (CEO, SPIC MACAY)

Another informant stated: “*CN spoke the language of the Ministry and successfully translated between them and us*” (assistant director, SaPa). CN’s intermediary position gave the Indian partners occasion to maximize the benefits of the cooperation and pass it on to a third party, namely local musicians, school children, sound technicians and music lovers/general audiences who could enjoy artistic training or concerts. In this way, in line with Kowalski (2011: 194), equality or “the circle of the gift” could be completed without notions of inferiority or submissive behaviour.

However, in spite of many positive effects, good intentions and attempts to include the Indian partners in the programme-making process and subsequent implementation, the structure of the Music Cooperation remained traditional to development projects and hierarchical in its functions. Even though CN employees seemingly engaged in the programme with a deep wish of dialogue and reciprocal learning, we argue that the option of the Indian partners to take full charge and ownership of the Music Cooperation was reduced by the sheer framing and structure of the project once it became ‘development’. As an intermediary, CN was in charge of all the core decisions and had a straight line to the desk officer at the Embassy. CN defined and phrased the final versions of the contract, reports and other documents of importance. “*They gave us options of what, within the range of our activities, that could possibly fit into the new MFA development programme (...) and which projects could and could not be supported*”, said one informant (assistant director, SaPa). With the exception of SPIC MACAY, the Indian partners

never discussed central matters directly with the Embassy, a mode of organization that suggests power imbalance. Even though CN tried not to impose anything on the partners, they had to follow MFA guidelines in order to release funding and MFA support. Sometimes their understanding of these guidelines lead to misinterpretation of how the needs of the partners could best be met:

“CN project managers often talked about the ‘CN model’ and what they had achieved in other countries like China and Palestine. Even though this was interesting, and they [CN managers] showed will to listen and adapt the model to our context, they did not really seem to ‘get it’ when we pointed out that certain of these things would not work for us and why” (assistant director, SaPa).

In this sense, one could be tempted to conclude that there was a reduction in freedom for the Indian partners to define and fully lead the evolution of the project based on their own premises, something Stupples (2011) terms “diminution of agency”. In her doctoral thesis, she highlights how Western models and expectations to meet pre-determined targets hinder such projects from reaching their true potential in a Southern context. It nevertheless derives from our data that most of the Indian partners did *not* see themselves as limited or handicapped by CNs recommendations that did not entirely fit the Indian context. They rather found dynamic ways to *get around* them; to take the inspiration and models they needed in order to create a project that was meaningful to them. After all, in spite of extensive international experience and knowledge about India, CN remained based in Oslo and had only Norwegian nationals employed in their international department. When you are not born and based in the local context, it is hard to become a true champion of development (Quarry and Ramirez 2009:70-87). CN seemed to recognize this by mainly suggesting, not ordering how the project should be conducted.

### *Impact 2014-2017*

Faced with the new requirements to define clear development goals and quantifying them into numbers in project documents and reports, CN and the Indian partners all expressed frustration that this did not really reflect the nature of their work. Coming from what the parties described as an inspirational and warm cooperation, the project in this third policy era became more mechanical and ordained by the principles of result-based management. For case officers in the MFA and outsiders trying to quickly access the key components and results of the project, this appears as an efficient move. The project description as well as progress reports were more structured and easier to read than in the previous two eras. The technicalities of development were met, and the goals of the project were largely achieved (CN 2018). However, in spite of

the outputs not necessarily being stymied by the policy change, informants state that people's experience of themselves as artists and organizers was transformed. The project appeared more as a technical exercise towards a social goal, rather than music to be celebrated. Several informants shared that this left a bitter taste in their mouth: They were grateful for the support, and acknowledged it, but something was lost, nevertheless. Upon closure of the project in 2017, the Dean of SaPa wrote to CN about the importance of inspiration; of consciously working to maintain the artistic spirit of the project in spite of all technical and bureaucratic requirements:

“Had we been focused only on developmental impact, and not inspiration, without this individual focus and mentorship, this combined dreaming, we would have achieved our target of teaching 1,000 children and hiring four teachers, nothing more, nothing less”.

In her correspondence, she compares the original target with the final outcome of the project: 35 music teachers [compared to four] now have jobs, over 20,000 children [compared to one thousand] learn music in SaPa-schools and two school concerts per year are given in all the partner schools. Furthermore, the Music Cooperation has contributed to the establishment of the first BA-degree in Performance and Music Education in India, it continues with the production of a series of textbooks, teaching training books, and even an internationally broadcast television show. Some of the other partners can show equally impressive results (CN 2018), something they say is very much thanks to CN and the long-standing *relationship* as an artistic partner and organizational friend. According to several informants, it is not the technical intermediary or the project consultant that CN eventually became in this last phase of the programme that have yielded these results, but more an overall notion of authentic relationships and trust built over time.

## **Conclusion**

This paper has engaged with culture in development-policy, in addition to partnership models and communication in the India-Norway Music Cooperation (2002-2017). Prior to 2005, bilateral relations put intercultural understanding high on the agenda. Within this frame, CN was contracted by the MFA as a professional music organization to facilitate exchanges of artists between the two countries. In this period, as a rational broker, CN gained substantial knowledge about the Indian music field and built good relations to central players in the sector. This knowledge and networks came handy in the next phase of the cooperation, when a twin-track exchange *and* development policy prevailed. In this period (2005-2013), CN was required to draw both on its art world competencies as well as new knowledge about the development world, its language and mode of functioning. The pragmatist approach of combining goals in

the art world and development world, each following very different logics, required the skills of an entrepreneurial broker. From 2014 onwards, the Music Cooperation got fully mainstreamed into development and CN became more of a relational broker; someone who proposed a model to solve a “development problem”.

The three policy eras and their associated models of brokerage created and removed different tensions, yet the asymmetry of development models (and other society- and diplomacy goals) versus the need to strengthen the Indian art sector towards its sustainability, has remained present throughout the programme. It seems like the success of the cooperation in handling this tension lays in the galvanising effect of external support and interest, the relationships formed, and the trust that developed over a decade of positive and supportive interactions. The deep listening of the first phase, combined with joint artistic productions and exchange of the second phase laid a solid foundation for success in the third, purely development-g geared phase. It is however important to question whether the development achievements between 2014-2017 would have been so successful if it had not been for the two previous stages. According to informants, the rigid form that the Music Cooperation took in its final phase was experienced as more restraining than inspiring.

Inspiration and impact are not incompatible in their nature: The goals attached to development do not preclude inspiration among artists and in the sector more broadly. Yet, in order to open up (and not restrain) the vital agency of music activities and international art collaborations in the global South, our study shows that there is an urgent need to find congruence between *“two opposing professional paradigms: the largely intuitive, practice-led world of the arts and the increasingly evidence-based, bureaucratically-driven approaches of international development”* (Dunphy 2013, in Howell 2017: 193). It seems essential to locate *that space in between*, where musical activities are not reduced to neither development as economic growth, nor human-centred development geared towards material needs and rights. By facilitation of contact and establishment of arenas for interaction and musical exchange between India and Norway, CN has contributed to highlighting a number of opportunities that lie in “that space in between”. Yet the very structures and language of the current development system (built on the logic of new public management) seem to have a limiting rather than motivating effect on what such programmes can achieve.

## **Notes on the contributors**

Author A has been the main researcher and responsible for drafting the research questions and leading the process of research. Author B has responded and made minor adjustments. Author A conducted and transcribed the field interviews and discussed the emergent findings with Author B. The two authors spent considerable time – over Skype and in two physical meetings - to debate and classify the findings and also discuss how their respective auto-ethnographic fieldnotes could/should be used alongside data from other sources. Author A drafted the final article. Author B made finishing adjustments. Author A presented the findings at the World Conference of the International Society of Music Education (ISME) in July 2018.

All in all, work division has been 85-15 between the two authors, which might give reason to debate whether this is really a collective work or not. We nevertheless ended up with the former, since one central aspect of the overall endeavour has been to explore the broker aspect from a (global) Northern academic perspective as well as a (global) Southern one. Our points of departure, hence our approaches to the research questions, offered fundamentally diverse perspectives that could enrich and complete each other, something that we believe is reflected in the end result. We also consider our joint efforts as a contribution to the ongoing quest for a decolonized and more diverse academy.

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