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Images of Africa

Musical otherness in Danish public culture*

In the 1990s three major festivals dedicated to African music and culture took place in Denmark under the title *Images of Africa*. The festivals followed upon a report of the same name, which asked for a more nuanced and differentiated view of Africa – a counter picture to the endless reports on poverty, starvation and mistaken development plans. Instead a positive image should be highlighted.[1] A means for this redirection of images was found in culture, and accordingly a number of cultural agents, non-governmental-organisations (NGOs), and the Danish Foreign Ministry and its development agency DANIDA were involved, the latter strongly supporting the project financially.

The first countrywide festival took place in the summer of 1991 and lasted three weeks involving several cities throughout the country. The programme consisted of the arts – i.e. music, dance, theatre and art – of markets and fairs, and of seminars, dialogue programmes and discussion rooms. Participants in the latter events were artists, writers, politicians and intellectuals from Africa, and local Danish development and cultural workers. The reception of the festival was unprecedented: Audiences queued up for tickets, bought artefacts at the markets, and participated eagerly in the debates. It was estimated that more than 300.000 people participated, and that most of them had attended music or theatre productions.

Before, during and after the first festival, however, agitated public debates developed concerning the effects and repercussions of the way in which the events were organised and presented. I believe – and take as a point of departure for my examination – that this happened because the festivals brought very complex and relevant problems and ideas into focus. These included the merger of music and political agency, the meeting of activism and artistic expression and not least the dilemma of handling culture as art as well as education. From an ethnomusicological point of view the debate invoked several core questions concerning our exchange with fascinating and powerful cultures outside our own, and it has questioned the role of music in this cultural encounter.

The Festivals had the explicit aim of presenting to the Danish audience a culture, which was unknown, unfamiliar and 'other'. In doing so a strong emphasis was put on the diversity of cultural expression, and a very broad programme was set up. Neverthe-

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1 Hans-Henrik HOLM, *The Danish Image of Africa*, Århus 1987.

less a kind of systemic homogeneity was also invoked as the agenda introduced at the same time the idea of "Africa" as a somewhat stereotyped concept and a particular way of producing cultural and musical festival events at the end of the 20th century.

Homogeneity versus the representation of diverse voices therefore is a core theme for this paper. The paper aims at discussing the agency behind the festivals as well as the thoughts and plans, which led to their realisation. Accordingly theoretical issues such as authenticity, otherness and cultural encounter will come to the fore, as well as how they are imagined and negotiated.

My theoretical point of departure is in ethnomusicology and in a firm belief that cultures are complex and must be treated in open-ended analysis. The relation between individuals and groups and the music and culture they have and enjoy must be viewed as a negotiation of meanings and as such generalisations and master narratives about musical meanings or established canons must be challenged. However, I recognise the presence of the systemic forces of the music business and commodified world structures that thoroughly affect musical life.[2] One of the most important features of this situation is the continued struggle for visibility. An event like *The Images of Africa*, accordingly, must be studied from both angles.

It is impossible to address Western discourse on African musics without also recognising the negative impact of ethnomusicology. Christopher Waterman in 1991 in a critique of scholarly work on African music stated:

> Africanist ethnomusicology has, with a few notable exceptions, lagged behind other branches of African studies in critically examining its own ideological 'context'.[3]

Although Waterman mainly hints at studies of a certain age and recognises a certain improvement, I will argue that there is still much to do. Criticism is still very much needed, and activism and political consideration have become conspicuously important in contemporary ethnography. In representing the music and culture from other parts of the world, the responsibilities and considerations of the agents – whether scholars or fiery souls – must now be considered as 'music as advocacy'.[4]

2 Annemette KIRKEGAARD, 'Introduction', in Mai PALMBERG & Annemette KIRKEGAARD (eds.), *Playing with identities in Contemporary music in Africa*, Stockholm 2002.

3 Christopher WATERMAN, 'The uneven development of Africanist Ethnomusicology: Three issues and a critique', in Bruno NETTL & Philip V. BOHLMAN (eds.), *Comparative Musicology and Anthropology of Music: Essays on the History of Ethnomusicology*, Chicago 1991, p. 179.

4 This idea inaugurates a new responsibility on behalf of researchers and writers to apply ethic responsibility. It is the ultimate departure from the idea of objectivity, and it can even involve the researcher's active engagement in political and moral issues by, for instance, raising money for a cause by selling ethnographic recordings.

Prehistory, background: general themes

> The official European version of history has it that they [Europeans] sallied out into the world, discovered Africa and brought us the gift of civilisation. In our century Africans have been depicted as backward peoples, saved from primitive barbarism by European civilisators. And who after independence quickly returned to their natural barbarism, proved by an endless line of *coup d'etats,* civil wars, dictators, massacres, draught, famine, corruption, poverty and social chaos.
>
> Behind this image is a view of pre-colonial Africa as the dark continent of naked, primitive, spear throwing savages living in trees and having no culture, religion, science, literature, medicine or politics.[5]

The image of Africa in Denmark prior to the festivals was perhaps not as distorted as the above quote. Still, a lot of misconceptions and prejudices dominated public discourse. There was a poor understanding of African cultures and the general knowledge was very weak.

The festival programme of the first *Images of Africa* concluded on the basis of an interview inquiry that one could lay down four major assumptions concerning the background for the prejudices against Africa and Africans among Danes: 1) Danish people see Africans as primitive people. 2) Danish people see Africans as helpless, 3) Africans are poor, and almost 60% of the interviewees thought that "no matter what we do, they will never be able to get out of their poverty". 4) Africa is not only poor, but marked by political chaos and dictatorship.[6] Most of these prejudices were reinforced by the information given in the media and surprisingly also school materials and curricula generally supported this view.

The view of music on the other hand was very different. Based on stereotyped assumptions – also historically related to the reception of black American jazz and blues – African music was regarded as a field of remarkable skill and capacity. The African was believed to hold special and genetically inherited abilities, and the music was regarded as happy and rhythmic even if primitive and non-serious. South African *kwela* and *jive* had been known since the late 1950s and was heard, remembered and enjoyed for its assumed light-heartedness.[7] Especially the appreciation and insistence on

5 Translated from: "Den officielle europæiske version af historien er, at de drog ud i verden, opdagede Afrika og bragte os civilisationens gave. Op i vort århundrede er afrikanere blevet skildret som tilbagestående folk, der blev reddet fra primitivt barbari af de europæiske civilisatorer. Og som efter uafhængigheden hurtigt vendte tilbage til deres naturlige barbari, bevidnet af en endeløs række kup, borgerkrige, diktatorer, massakrer, tørke, hungersnød, korruption, fattigdom og socialt kaos.

Bag dette billede ligger synet på det prækoloniale Afrika som det mørke kontinent med nøgne, primitive, spydsvingende vilde, som boede i træerne uden kultur, religion, videnskab, teknologi, litteratur, medicin eller politiske systemer." CHINWEIZU: 'Afkoloniser den afrikanske sjæl', in *MS-revy* 4 (1991), http://www.ms.dk/msrevy/revy91/91_4/afkoloniser.htm.

6 Hans-Henrik HOLM, '»Africa, I presume«', in *Udkig* [*Images of Africa* programme], Copenhagen 1991, p. 7.

7 The LP *Something new from Africa* from 1958 with Specks Rampur, Lenny Special and Miriam Makeba (Decca 4292) was used in so-called jazz ballet classes and played on the radio with great success.

a different African conception of rhythm was and is strong, as it is very broadly believed to be *the* constituting factor in African musics. Kofi Agawu in his thought-provoking book *Representing African Music* talks back at many of these assumptions and even calls one of the chapters "The invention of 'African Rhythm'".[8] He strongly opposes these common generalisations and in order to demonstrate how deeply rooted these ideas are even among Africans, he quotes Kwabena Nketia, the grand old man of African musicology, for the following: "… for rhythmic interest often compensates for the absence of melody or the lack of melodic sophistication."[9] The overemphasising of rhythm has, as also Ronald Radano has shown, clear racial aspects.[10]

In short it can be argued that Denmark had a twofold and somewhat paradoxical image of Africa: at one side a depressing and negative impression of rising poverty and never ending misery, and at the other a seemingly disconnected admiration of a strong, healthy, undisturbed and authentic musical culture. It was into this gap the festivals on Africa entered.

Globalisation

The choice of the particular format of the festivals and the resulting very varied types of representation was made because a change of style in cultural events had brought about a new demand for a merger between enlightenment and entertainment. One claim is that a budding political awareness within the popular/rock music environment resulted in a new activism, and some would see this awareness as a direct result of the globalising processes, which escalated around 1980. Several cultural processes contributed to this development.

Counter to the increasingly negative image of poverty in the third world ran a new musical trend: the emergent "world music", which made its way into the commercial music market during the 1980s. Being basically a construction of the joint forces of DJs and radio producers, who got together to create a new and useful label so that non-mainstream musics could be broadcasted on a chart of its own, world music was at the same time conspicuous in that the majority of the styles and artists in the circuit were almost entirely of Africa origin – i.e. the music in question was primarily the urban dance styles with electric guitars fusing local melodies and musical structures with Western popular musics.[11] The process was marked by a certain kind of exotism as Western consumers were on a general look-out for cultural inspiration to fight the alleged boredom of Western popular musics[12] and accordingly searching for new meanings.

8 Kofi AGAWU, *Representing African Music, Postcolonial notes, queries, positions,* New York and London 2003, p. 55 ff.

9 Kwabena NKETIA, *The Music of Africa,* New York 1974, quoted in Agawu, *Representing African Music,* p. 58.

10 Ronald RADANO, 'American Modernism and the Idea of Black Rhythm', in Ronald RADANO & Philip V. BOHLMAN (eds.), *Music and the Racial Imagination,* Chicago 2000.

11 Kirkegaard, 'Introduction', p. 12.

12 Veit ERLMANN, 'The Politics and Aesthetics of Transnational Musics', in *The World of Music* 35/2 (1993), p. 5 f.

Danish musician and cultural worker Hanne Tofte Jespersen expresses this in the following way: "Everybody is deeply affected by it [African music] – it is something we lack".[13] The emergence of the world music arena also opened for a discussion, to which I shall return, on appropriation and business benefits from musics of the so-called periphery.

Concurrently with the rise of world music, the 1980s had seen other important renewals of the style and use of popular music. As a side effect to the ever-growing impact of television and music video the 1980s became the decade of satellite broadcasted mega concerts and of the eager wish to devote the new platform to a cause. The huge stadium concerts of Live Aid in 1985 and the Nelson Mandela Birthday in Wembley Arena in 1988 were both directed at raising attention to problems in Africa. Although most events were primarily important showcases for Western mega stars and popular musicians, the concerts also brought focus to African music as artists like Sade, Zarafina Dancers and Miriam Makeba & Hugh Masekela were broadcasted globally via satellite TV coverage, achieving thus a hitherto unseen visibility.[14]

The South African cause and the struggle against apartheid were given even stronger emphasis through two major events radicalising this trend: One was the Sun City project launched by the Artists Against Apartheid in 1985; the second the *Graceland* album and later concert tour. The Sun City project featured like Live Aid many top stars of mainstream, global music culture, from Peter Gabriel, Bono and Steven van Zandt to hip hop stars Afrika Bambaata and Run DMC in cooperation with African drummer Sunny Okosuns. Also the legendary jazz trumpeter Miles Davis contributed to the line up, and from a musical point of view Sun City was highly innovative in fusing jazz, rock, pop and rap. Sun City, Nelson Mandela's birthday concert and Live Aid generated a new kind of international awareness, and brought to a broader audience a knowledge of Africa somewhat different from the prejudices mentioned above.[15]

Neal Ullestad has discussed the interchange between rock and rebellion, popular music and activism in his work on the two events.[16] He partly understands the phenomenon as a continuation of the agenda of the world music business' quest for otherness as addressed above: "The constant changes in artists and sounds perpetually subvert conventional meanings of desire and pleasure, and we 'can't be satisfied'."[17] In other words, Ullestad's interpretation is based on the general tendency in the West towards appropriating new sounds in order to fill the increasing desire for hearing something new and exotic.

But in discussing the similarities and differences between Live Aid and Sun City, both projects being issues of activism in popular music productions, Ullestad also finds im-

13 Interview Hanne Tofte Jespersen, Roskilde 19.8.03.

14 Dan LUNDBERG, Krister MALM and Owe RONSTRÖM, *Musik Medier Mångkultur, förändringar i svenska musiklandskap*, Stockholm 2000.

15 In Denmark and Scandinavia in particular the South African struggle had been highlighted through the concert tour by the ANC cultural group and the huge SAADC cultural show of the mid-eighties.

16 Neal ULLESTAD, 'Rock and rebellion: subversive effects of Live Aid and »Sun City«', in *Popular Music*, Vol. 6, no. 1 (1986).

17 *Ibid.*, p. 67.

portant divergences. One of the dividing lines is that Live Aid, like rock music generally, acts critically within the overall structures of the hegemony of the corporate system. Sun City, however, according to Ullestad, transgresses this border and is more outspoken and subversive. Even in the way that the musical format is fused thoroughly and differently between jazz, rock, and rap the author notice a special and perhaps revolutionary strategy.[18]

Live Aid is often evaluated in two very diverse ways: it is either seen as a renewal of the spirit of rock in that it reaches out across borders – saying "We are the World", or it is found to be just another cooperation with the media. This distinction reflects the general disagreement over popular music, which is most clearly found in the works of Adorno and Benjamin respectively. Adorno holding the view that popular music is enforcing consumerism, Benjamin being more positive and seeing popular music as a means of democratisation – as it breaks down "some of the mystery associated with art".[19]

Compassion and caring

While in some ways the discourse over mega events must be seen as a question of hegemony and power – of resistance and subversiveness – the events and the tendencies also embrace another trend, one of compassion and caring expressed through music events. This relates very closely to the stressing of a global *ecumene* within the world music circuit – which is claimed by both Veit Erlmann and Ulf Hannerz.[20]

Somewhat similarly, Lawrence Grossberg has stressed the importance of "affective alliances" within the rock community, by which meanings can be altered:

> Rock can remove 'signs, objects, sounds, styles … from their apparently meaningful existence within the dominant culture' and relocate them within the sensibility of the rock community, the 'affective alliance of differentiation and sensibility'.[21]

But, interestingly "Rock seldom rejects the dominant culture as such; rock offers an alternative choice within, not an oppositional pole without".[22] I will argue that this can easily be extended to cover most popular musics, and in particular world music must be understood in this way. Mega events are founded on this dialectics between apparently bridging very diverse audiences and still upholding status quo:

18 This is of course partly because the paper was written in 1986 before the onset of an even broader musical pluralism in the form of crossover and sampling.
19 Ullestad, 'Rock and rebellion', p. 68.
20 Erlmann, 'The Politics and Aesthetics', p. 7, and Ulf HANNERZ, *Cultural Complexity. Studies in the social organization of Meaning*, New York 1992, p. 267.
21 Lawrence GROSSBERG, 'Another boring day in paradise: rock and roll and the empowerment of everyday life' in *Popular Music* 4 (1984) p. 232.
22 Ullestad, 'Rock and rebellion', p. 70.

> Sociologically, these events [mega media shows and productions] gave the audience and performers a sense of belonging, belonging to the human family, as well as the rock community, in such a way that the people could feel good about themselves.[23]

The South African ethnomusicologist Louise Meintjes discusses "world music" from the point of political awareness and the role of music in this process. The principal argument in her work on Paul Simon's seminal album *Graceland* from 1986 is that it serves as a sign interpreted by means of the notion of collaboration. "The notion of collaboration is established in the music itself. The musical collaboration then comes to stand for social collaboration through a series of "interpretive moves" … on the part of the listener."[24]

It is of course a prerequisite for her paper that *Graceland* is understood differently by various interpreters, thereby creating diverse signs of collaboration in the minds of the audiences and agents.[25] The notion of collaboration in musical production is both self-evident and neglected in many inquiries, but in relation to the theme of this paper it is highly interesting as exchange and dialogue was at the heart of the *Images of Africa* format.

Graceland was a surprisingly huge success in its time, but it was also very much a contested cultural expression. It was an album, which agitated people because of its social and musical content and the row resulted in heated and contradictory interpretations. As it was recorded in the days of the rising struggle against apartheid in South Africa, and since it involved actions that clashed with the cultural boycott in which the world community was engaged,[26] it became a very controversial album. But it was also much loved, and it held a political ambiguity, which made diverse readings possible, primarily those addressing the connection between music and meaning making:

> … I will demonstrate that the political is not merely an adjunct to the sound but embedded in it through strings of connected signs. The embeddedness of the political in the sonic means that the political becomes entangled in and communicated through affective experience. This capacity of music to communicate through affect, to communicate feelingfully and intuitively, is a source of its potency.[27]

The collaboration was conspicuous by the fact that Paul Simon composed, arranged and recorded the music with South African musicians such as Ladysmith Black Mambaso, Stimela and Ray Phiri, but also drew on the fame and reputation of Youssou N'Dour and Linda Ronstadt. At the same time, it was up to the individual listeners to make

23 *Ibid.*, p. 73.
24 Louise MEINTJES, 'Paul Simon's Graceland, South Africa, and the Mediation of Musical Meaning', *Ethnomusicology*, Winter 1990, p. 37.
25 *Ibid.*, p. 38.
26 The cultural boycott made it illegal to work with musicians in South Africa.
27 Meintjes, 'Paul Simon's Graceland', p. 38.

sense of the collaboration, as the album held no direct semantic reference to apartheid or even to South Africa.[28]

However, when the music was launched on a world wide tour starting in 1988 the political ambiguity was partly suspended both because it now involved dedicated and well known anti-apartheid artists such as Miriam Makeba and Hugh Masekela, and because the concert premiered in Harare, Zimbabwe; the venue closest to the South African homeland. In Meintjes' analysis this move showed Simon as a philanthropist, a humanistic and a well-intentioned collaborator.

Finally, the very wide reception and accept of *Graceland* as a musical work is interpreted by Meintjes as an issue of aesthetic distancing. This happens when music of potentially political and dangerous cultural character is enjoyed solely for its autonomous artistic value – thus disregarding the context from which the music emerged. In the case of *Graceland*, this attitude was mostly chosen by White South Africans, but it is also a well known way of positioning one self in Danish cultural life. Here people for instance enjoy protest songs of the 60s not because they approve of the messages as such, but because they like the sound or the performer is good:

> The process of abstracting musical expression from its context of creation is an essential component of the bourgeois aesthetic principle which values art as inherently transcendent and autonomous. … Furthermore, it is ideally a disposition of this class, he [Bourdieu] writes, to be able to take the aesthetic viewpoint even on objects that in the bourgeois value system/world are understood to be common, something other than (high) art.[29]

Sometimes an aesthetic distancing and consequent approval can have surprising results, as for instance – as Keil has claimed – when white appropriation of black music in the 1950s and 1960s apparently revitalized the music into soul,[30] and it is highly relevant to ask whether the interest in African musics and culture by the international community from the 1980s and onwards represents a similar move. This debate which often involves a discourse on the impact and role of the *Graceland* album, is paramount to the world music movement, and it is directly at hand in the planning and execution of the *Images of Africa* festivals in Denmark in the 1990s.

Above I have tried to sketch major trends in the cultural situation which lead to the unset of the cultural festivals of Africa, and I find that the theme of collaboration and the political importance of the projects are mirrored in the involvement of official Denmark – primarily DANIDA – in the planning of the festivals. In other words the interests and the demands of the development community in Denmark, which saw an opportunity to raise attention to Africa through this prominent cultural interest suddenly present, became the very reason for working together on an agenda, which was new to all parties involved.[31]

28 *Ibid.*, p. 39.
29 *Ibid.*, p. 59.
30 Charles KEIL, *Urban Blues,* Chicago 1966 [1991], pp. 185-86.

Smaller attempts in the same direction had been tried earlier, and it is often seen that meetings on very serious international topics are paired with a showcase of music and culture. The general idea behind this strategy seems to be twofold. One is to make people interested in the region, the area or the cause through performances and thus make the cultural programs appetisers for meetings on serious topics. The other is a more complicated one; It is a notion which has it that a different and almost intuitive understanding of the other can be achieved, if we listen to their music or witness their cultural ways. In other words a clear belief that culture – and music – can convey and make sense and meaning even across huge cultural and social borders![32]

I will argue that this latter notion was probably also the reason for the heavy involvement by the Danish Foreign Ministry and its development agency DANIDA. In the following I will demonstrate how a belief that culture and music mattered and that it could both enhance the understanding and probably also that it could be an economic asset for the developing countries, held a central place in the particular way in which activism, caring and compassion merged.

Just as the world music arena was dominated and started by the interest for African music and culture, so the cultural festivals in Denmark came to use Africa as the focus for the first attempt at cultural dialogue and encounter with the development issues. More were to follow and the structure developed first in a *Festival of the World* in 2000, dedicated to the impact of globalisation and culture around the world, and an *Images of Asia* which took place in August and September 2003. By now the *Images*-idea has almost become a brand, and the idea of mixing culture and enlightenment will continue in yet another event – the *Images of the Middle East* in the summer of 2006.

The festivals and Agency – Organization and Framework

> Africa is a continent of immense dimensions. Most people only know it through the media, which primarily focus on natural disasters, hunger and political unrest. But in spite of the extremely difficult conditions of life the continent and its many cultures hold a unique strength and richness … "Africa festival" is homage to the African soul. We hope that it will raise the interest for a big and exiting continent, and hereby give to our own cultural view a richer and broader perspective.[33]

31 The present CEO of the Danish development organisation, Mellemfolkeligt Samvirke, Lars Udsholt, who was at grass root level during the first festival, remembers this as a need for "something else" on Africa – and he tells how the rather naive idea of fusing culture and hard facts was the starting point for the involvement of many NGOs in the projects. Interview Lars Udsholt 26.8.2003.

32 This attitude was demonstrated for the first time in Denmark in March 1995, when the UN organized the *World Summit for Social Development* (and its alternative counterpart at Holmen). Both events had extensive cultural programmes celebrating the diverse parts of the world and their cultural artefacts, see http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/wssd/.

33 Opening statement in the *Images of Africa* programme of 1991, written by the organisers Lene Thiesen, K.I.T., Olaf Gerlach Hansen, FFU, and Klaus Slavensky, Mellemfolkeligt Samvirke. Translated from: "Afrika er et kontinent af umådelige dimensioner. De fleste kender kun Afrika gennem medierne,

Because of the special agency behind the events, of the double-sided goals, which were followed, and of the immense size of the project, the festivals brought together new partners. The development workers, politicians and civil servants from DANIDA teamed up with the professional culture agency K.I.T. (Copenhagen International Theatre) and the theatre organisation ARTE in order to meet with the task. In between was a large group of musicians, art journalists, dancers, theatre workers and anthropologists, who in different ways had specific knowledge of African culture. In this way *Images of Africa* was in many ways a clear illustration of the cultural division in 'doers', 'makers' and 'knowers' – as described by Lundberg, Malm & Ronstöm[34] – trying to collaborate in a cultural production.

Two of the key figures in the preliminary process leading to the realisation of the festivals were the British-born cultural entrepreneur, Trevor Davis, and chief of information of the Danish Foreign Ministry, Søren Dyssegård. In the 1980s Davis had been the 'fiery soul' behind the very successful *Festival of Fools*, which he arranged for K.I.T and which were dedicated to international, progressive dance, theatre and music theatre.[35] Søren Dyssegård had been a prominent and outspoken person in official development circles in Denmark, and had himself been working in Africa. Davis initially was most interested in the artistic aspects of a large scale cultural presentation, while Dyssegaard from the start emphasised that the festivals were not just going to be public parties, but that a major part of the schedule was to be dedicated to educational information.

The first conference called *Images of Africa* started in 1991 and set about to present Africa south of the Sahara. The programme therefore focussed solely on Black Africa, balancing between raising attention to social and political problems and features and at the same time satisfying a broad interest and curiosity towards African expressive culture among Danish spectators. Both modern and so-called traditional cultures and musics were presented and the thematic and ideological emphasis was focussing on hardship of colonization and its impact on postcolonial Africa. Not surprisingly Southern Africa being in the middle of the transgression from apartheid to independence took up a large part of the program both in words and sounds as *Mbaqanga* and *chimurenga* musics alternated with theatre performances of Amakhosi and the Market Theatre Company.

The second Festival in 1993 covered the continent geographically, including also the North African areas of the Maghrib. Subsequently it brought greater attention to the Arab influence on African cultures – both in music and arts and in more religious-cultural ways. It meant that scales, rhythms, and instruments which had not generally in public reception been associated with the *Images of Africa* were presented, and popular

som oftest fokuserer på naturkatastrofer, sult og politisk uro. Men på trods af Afrikas uhyre vanskelige livsvilkår rummer kontinentet og alle dets kulturer en enestående styrke og rigdom…."Afrika Festival" er en hyldest til den afrikanske sjæl. Vi håber det vil vække interessen for et stort og spændende kontinent, og dermed give vort eget kulturelle udsyn et rigere og bredere perspektiv", pp. 1-2.

34 Lundberg, Malm & Ronström, *Musik – Medier – Mångkultur,* see p. 8 for more on this issue.

35 http://www.kit.dk/.

Mediterranean styles like Algerian *Raï* and Egyptian *funk* – represented by Cheb Mami and Ali Hassan Kuban, who was launched as the "the James Brown of Nubia" – found new audiences. Traditional musics like Moroccan *Gnawa* and the remarkable vocal sound of the Master Musicians of the Nile added to the festival a new impression of the sound of Africa. All in all the second festival leaned more to the East and in this way challenged the stereotyped drum-and-dance oriented imagination of black African primitivism. It presented a new kind of spirituality and it placed the presence of Islam in the centre of understanding modern Africa.

At the third *Images of Africa* festival in 1996 the scope was further widened, this time going West to cover the relation between Africa and its *Diaspora* primarily in the New World and the Americas. It carried the subtitle *Africa in the World* thus giving emphasis to the importance of Africa as a factor in global culture – not least in music – and simultaneously rejecting the geographical isolation of the continent. This caused a new attention to historical questions and it consciously emphasised the impact of slave trade in general and in Denmark in particular. The theatrical production *MUSU – The Tale of the Slaves* – a cooperation between Ghanaian and Caribbean dance companies – was the pride of the festival. Further the music program was dominated by some of the biggest stars of the African popular music scene: Cesaria Evora, Youssou N'Dour, Salif Keita, Khaled and Manu Dibango. This obvious crossing over to the syncretic styles of the world music arena marked the musical interconnectedness between Africa and the World.

This is not here the place to give a full account of all events taking place during the many weeks of the three festivals, but I will give a short outline of the many diverse activities.[36] It was estimated that at the first festival more than a hundred events involving some 400 artists took place, and in 1996 500 artists participated in the more that 35 concerts and cultural productions.[37]

First, concerts of music, to which I shall return more thoroughly, dominated all the festivals. They took place in established concert halls, in minor clubs and venues, and in the streets and squares of Copenhagen and countrywide. The outdoor events were popular not least because they generally had free admission.

Next, a range of theatrical productions could be seen. These included highly stylised cultural shows like the Ballét Africains de Guinée, Koteba and Ki-yi M'bock of Ivory Coast, and The Market Theatre Company from South Africa. Added were various co-productions between European and African actors and producers, for example in Wole Soyinka's play *The Area boy*.

The dance scene was in all festivals prominent and covered the whole spectre from so-called authentic and traditional performances by Fourth Worlders, over revived and stylised community dance groups to highly professional and experimental dance companies and solo dancers like the Senegalese Isnel da Silveira and Tunesian Leila Haddad.

36 For information on the exact proceedings, go to the homepage of The Danish Centre for Culture and Development, where an online archive is accessible at http://www.dccd.dk/dccd/cku.nsf or at http://www.images.org.

37 Information from official Festival programmes 1991 and 1996.

Further, exhibitions of African art, painting and sculpture were popular, and theme exhibitions on daily life or ritual celebrations and photo productions drew large crowds. Also, the African markets, selling all kinds of goods and products from Africa, became a vibrant centre and meeting place for the participants in the festivals. Here music and dance could be enjoyed free, which brought unexpected and surprising experiences.

Finally, the extremely popular Dance Tent in the *Fælledparken* in Copenhagen filled a gap for improvisation and direct exchange between the Africans and the Danes. Every night after the closing of all the official events and performances the guest-musicians, stars as well as amateurs, dancers and audiences met, gave more or less improvised shows and concerts, and the dancing went on until dawn. The Dancing Tent was part of the annually returning summer entertainment by K.I.T., but during festivals it was augmented and hereby fulfilling wishes of African stars and audiences who normally make events last all night.[38]

To this overall official and professional program, a whole web of minor happenings and arrangements in towns and cities around the country was added. Often these were made by local NGOs or others who had some knowledge or special interest on Africa; mostly by people who had been to Africa as professionals, travellers and cultural workers, or by business interests or organizations who wanted in.

In order to fulfil the obligation on education and enlightenment, a special part of the Festivals was dedicated to the dialogue-programs and discussion forums. This feature increased through the festivals and was a very prominent part of the *Images of The World* festival of 2000 dedicated to globalisation and culture. It has not always been easy and I shall return to the problems of the first festivals later, not least because the trouble in many ways mirrors some of the general problems of the '*Images* Idea'. In all of the above-mentioned activities the concept of collaboration was prominent; it meant that focus was on cultural encounter, and exchange with visiting Africans held a high priority in the program.

The diversity and authenticity in the music and dance events of the Images of Africa

> Epigrammatic Arabic saying: "If a black were to fall down from heaven he would surely fall down to a beat."[39]

When major cultural festivals are dedicated to a specific geographical area, the risk of generalising, stereotyping and essentialising is readily at hand. In the case of Africa, music more than any other cultural expression is an easy prey to this process.

The African born but American based professor of musicology at Princeton University, Kofi Agawu has challenged the general assumptions in Western discourse on musics

38 In many popular African music events the show is much longer than in Western performances, and I have often seen the surprised reactions from Africans when a concert place in Copenhagen closes down at midnight due to official regulations.

39 Owen Hunwick quoted in Agawu, *Representing African Music*, p. 5. Several other slightly different translations of this statement are known in African historiography.

from Africa, and he has documented the subsequent shortcomings of general knowledge. His argument in many ways runs counter to the general trend of stressing the difference between music cultures in Africa and elsewhere, and he clearly opposes most of the work done by well meaning ethnomusicologists. Also his book strongly opposes the idea of a homogenous Africa. In this he follows influential African writers like Mudimbe and Appiah who from a general postcolonial theoretical point of view have emphasised the all-encompassing construction and invention of an African World on the part of the colonial powers.[40] Drawing on this insight, Agawu stresses that: "The first problem in these characterizations, then, is the putative claim that African music constitutes a homogeneous body."[41]

The critique is tied to an equally important understanding of the dynamic character of African culture and music. First Agawu states that many foreigners prefer to watch traditional music and the power of local or traditional art forms, and that they thus underestimate the influence of for instance Islam and even Christianity on contemporary musical life: "There are many African today whose affective investment in "What a friend we have in Jesus" [and a long list of other psalms] is far greater – deeper and more sincere – that anything might be awakened by a traditional funeral dirge or hunter's chant."[42]

Secondly, the stressing of diversity is in Agawu's analysis perceived as a misunderstanding among researchers and Western audiences of what 'outside' influences actually are, and he argues that there are no reasons for locating and placing a clear distinction between 'inside' and 'outside' elements in present day performances of cultural traditions – and there possibly never was:

> The very ground of their cultural being did not correspond to some pristine, uncontaminated African essence, one that might be said to be innocent of "outside" influences. No, their origins were irreducibly mixed, hybrid, syncretic, in-between, impure. And this is one of the enduring effects of colonialism.[43]

Some of these points were clearly avoided in the planning of the Danish Festivals, which can be seen in the obvious dedication to displaying the diversity of African musics and culture. Very broad aspects of musical life in Africa were presented and the discourse on unity or diversity in African cultures was thus highlighted. In music stereotyping and generalisation relate to an over all public belief that African music is 'one or same', while people who know or play African musics very often only know one or two kinds, or at least only play one kind.

The discourse on diversity or unity has been going on for several years and it is highly ideological. Sometimes African and African American intellectuals find a his-

40 See Valentin Y. MUDIMBE, *The Invention of Africa: Gnossis, Philisophy, and the order of Knowledge,* Bloomington 1988, and Kwame Anthony APPIAH, *In my Father's House: African in the Philosophy of Culture,* New York 1992.

41 Agawu, *Representing African Music,* p. 59.

42 *Ibid.*, p. 13.

43 *Ibid.*, p. 15.

torically based need for stressing the unity between African cultures. By not leaving out for instance Egypt and most of Maghrib, which during colonialism was held to be different and more civilised than 'Dark Africa' south of the Sahara, they stress a mutual heritage. And some thinkers even find this unity cross the Atlantic and propose a 'Black Modernity' based on the works of Louis Henry Gates and Paul Gilroy. Of course this is particularly interesting when it comes to the examination of culture and music in the Diaspora, and it is crucial to the continued scholarly dialogue on racism, ideology and music.[44]

However, common stereotypes and generalisations on African music and dance still flourish in the prejudices of popular culture, in the academy and even among Africans and was also internal to the planning of the music program of the Africa Festivals in Denmark. The discourse reflects the conflicts between traditional musical forms, the modernised musics of the cities and modern institutions like schools and churches, and the way many African cultural scholars now think of and select what they stress as traditional music.[45] Again Agawu's reflections based on a musical knowledge fed by a classical training in historical musicology and semiotics are central to a more critical analysis. The general Western ideas of African musical features "include the relative brevity of musical phrases, the extensive use of repetition as an organizing principle, and the various forms of vocal and instrumental polyphony."[46] Especially the stressing of rhythm as the dominant composing feature throughout African musics presents itself as a very stubborn stereotype. It is often used as the ultimate distinctive musical factor in describing the diversity, but it is according to Agawu a false knowledge. Rhythm is not all there is to African musics, it is treated very dissimilarly in different parts of Africa, and it does not stand alone as often believed. It is just as integrated in the complexity of a musical piece as it is in most other musics, and neither is it in local discourse singled out as 'typical' or 'representative' of the music as such. Rather, "'African Rhythm,' in short, is an invention, a construction, a fiction, a myth, ultimately a lie."[47]

This invention, however, is a very successful one and it has by now also made repercussions to Africa. Therefore, the descriptions of rhythm and musics represent both a clash between Western stereotyped impressions gradually changing and an increasing African generalisation on the particularities which becomes stronger due to globalisation and the importance of visibility. Thus it is not only a problem in Denmark and in the West but also in Africa: The Kenyan author Wahome Mutahi describes the problem – here in relation to dance – in this way:

> In my country the ministry of culture defines culture as dances, which stay out in the cold until they are danced in front of dignitaries at a national festival. These

44 See the theme issue of *Black Music Research Journal*, Vol. 11/2 (1991), which is dedicated to the study of African musics in the Americas.

45 The latter is primarily a revived – sometimes staged – neo-traditional music, which leads on to a more general discussion of the agency behind musical revival, which is not the point of focus for this paper.

46 Agawu, *Representing African Music*, p. 5.

47 *Ibid.*, pp. 61-62.

> dignitaries then loudly proclaims that "Culture is important to any society" and must be "preserved". They are serious because they think that the dances they saw should be put in a museum until the next national festivity. To them culture is something old without any contemporary value, which can be taken out of the museums, be dusted and displayed.[48]

The presence of the African musicians and artists in the global commodified arena, where they are world music stars or highly skilled ambassadors of traditional dance, is equally enhancing the discourse over authenticity as market rules and demands for authenticity in many ways set the agenda for successful appearances.

In some ways the *Images of Africa* festivals are very good examples of how outsiders can stimulate and emphasise cultural and musical traditions which have been forgotten or have been made irrelevant to actual social and cultural life in Africa. By bringing to the festivals African musicians who both represented modern and tradition-based repertories and performances, the organisers created an opportunity for the artist to show their creativity in a partly commercialised international environment as well as to strengthen their position at home. The latter can be an asset to local musics but foreign interests can also pose serious questions and sometimes even jeopardize the local development of a music. Exotic imaginations are frequently in demand among Western audiences, and tourist shows and stylized performances in Africa have become important economic factors. Put on festival stages in the West they often raise more problems than they offer solutions.

In Denmark, one such much contested factor was that each Africa Festival had its special presentation of authenticity in music and culture in the form of performances by peoples of the fourth world:[49] At the first *Images of Africa* in 1991 a group of il-Kisongo Maasais became a celebrated part of the festival, in 1993 the Algerian Tuareg group Allar presented as "the Blue People of the Sahara" was present, and lastly in 1996 a troupe of Wodaabe-dancers from Niger attracted large crowds. Some spectators felt that these events bordered on ethno-pornography, others that it was voyeurism. On the other hand the three groups in various ways became the emblems or even idols of the festivals. The members participated in workshops and their performances were sold out and sometimes had to be doubled. In many ways they became a counterweight to the many smooth and professional events, and they were so easy to like!

In this way their presence marked an end point in the continuum of the overall program and they more than any other act in the festivals fulfilled the romantic and even

48 Translated from "I mit land definerer kulturministeriet kultur som danse, der forbliver ude i kulden, indtil der afholdes en national festlighed, hvor de danses for honoratiorer. Disse honoratiorer kommer så med højlydte udtalelser om, at "kultur er vigtig for ethvert samfund" og må "bevares". Det er deres alvor, for de mener, at de danse, som de har set, bør anbringes i et museum indtil den næste nationale festlighed. For dem er kultur noget gammelt uden nutidig værdi, som kan tages frem fra museerne, støves af og forevises." Wahome Mutahi in *MS-revy* 5 (1993), http://www.ms.dk/msrevy/revy93/93_5/kulturogudv.htm.

49 These are generally characterised by being nomads and transgressing the borders of nation states. They are found worldwide and are facing a double yoke of uninhibited interest and repression.

exotic expectations of many audiences. There were at all times stories – some of them true, others not – of the peculiar behaviour and lifestyles of these people, and the attribution of authenticity ran as a red line through both the presentation of the performances and in the introductory program. The liner notes of the Maasai performance preliminarily advertised the expected happenings:

> For every performance a special soundscape will be made from original recordings of Maasai daily life … The audience will get an opportunity to participate in a circle around the stage by singing the basic rhythm of the first song. … Into this set piece traditionally dressed men and girls will enter and show us a very different image of African culture. … The Maasai will show the party dance, the lion hunter dance and the cattle robber dance … but on their own conditions.[50]

The Maasai performers were non-professionals, and their appearance was marked by the fact that they were dressed in the same clothes on and off stage, i.e. the conspicuous red gowns and scotch blankets. It was repeatedly stressed that they came straight out of the Serengeti Plains, and they were somewhat scared of the meeting and had problems with many of the commodities and modern apparatus of Danish everyday life. This caused much uproar, and stories about their doings and the cultural encounter they engaged in, were readily spread in the public and in the press.[51]

From a musical point of view their performance was also marked by their non-professionalism. Maasai music is basically a cappella singing as accompaniment to dance, which is famed for its very high jumping, and the sound changes from solo parts to heterophone multi-voicedness often spurred on and intensified by shrill ululation and shouts. The sound in the staged performances in Denmark, however, was small and somewhat timid possibly due to the awkwardness of the situation, but the intensity of the event only increased.

The reception was divided. Audiences in the theatre were clearly moved and surprised at the particularity of the music presented, but the critics and the commentators of the festivals were more reserved. The reaction is reasonably covered by the following statement:

> But one event differed markedly from the others – that of the Senegalese dancer Isnell da Silveira and the Kisongo-Maasai. As artistic performance the much-debated Maasai-visit became an experience, which in authenticity was beyond the theatrical-wild miming of original culture of other groups. In its exclusively own way – imported, disembedded and exotic – but also with a strangely vulnerable strength and beauty, which the Danish audience gave a good reception.[52]

50 Translated from: "Til hver optræden vil der blive skabt et særligt lydrum med originaloptagelser fra maasaiernes dagligliv….Publikum vil have mulighed for at deltage i en kreds omkring scenen og være med til at synge grundrytmen I den første sang..Ind i denne kulisse vil de traditionalt klædte mænd og piger så træde og vise os et ganske anderledes billede af afrikansk kultur … Maasaierne viser os fornøjelsesdansen, løvedræberdansen og kvægrøverdansen…på deres egne præmisser." (from the booklet *Tillæg til festivalprogram*, 1991).

51 At one time there was a rumour that one Maasai warrior had smashed a TV set in the hotel lounge, because he got scared of the 'half' man in the picture.

The African guests, primarily intellectuals, writers and government officials, were, however, not that enthusiastic over the on-goings. The Nigerian writer Buchi Emecheta made a harsh critique of the Maasai visit: "Maasais on the stage is OK, but it is wrong to drag them around like animals and exhibit them naked, torn out of their natural context. Next time you come to Africa you should wear a Viking helmet with horns!"[53] The statement also gives a notion of the somewhat agitated and highly ideological conflicts which impacted the discussion forum and the dialogue meetings.

A similar exchange of words took place over the 1993 Tuareg event, and in 1996 the Woodabe presented their rather daring (in Western eyes) show. The highly remarkable and made-up male dancers of the group rocked their heads, tip-toed and displayed their white teeth in order to attract the attention of their female co-dancers in seemingly accordance with customs reaching back through time. The critique continued:

> Finally, also this festival had its "authentic", anthropological element like the Maasais of 1991 and the Tuaregs of 1993. That was this year represented in the strange Wodaabe-nomads from the desert country Niger, who turn gender upside down as it is the men who beauty-painted with big smiles and blinking eyes and monotonous singing offers themselves to the women. Their dances were so unaffectedly different, that they in some ways completely escape any kind of assessment by our standards – one critic felt that it was bordering on "cultural pornography". Pornography or not, what actually happened was that you as a spectator became embarrassingly conscious of your own voyeurism. At one and the same time the show became a mirror – who was watching who? – and a thought provoking view into a different universe.[54]

Especially the development organizations were worried over this tribute to authenticity. The present-day CEO of Mellemfolkeligt Samvirke, Lars Udsholt, in a recent conversation expressed how a concern over this kind of presentation and the conspicuous exhibition of particular ethnic groups had made many fear that it would be considered as going too far. That it in other words would be interpreted as ethno-kitsch and that it

52 Translated from "Men et arrangement skilte sig markant ud – den senegalesiske danserinde Isnael da Silveira og Kisongo-masaierne. Som kunstnerisk optræden blev det omdiskuterede masai-besøg en oplevelse, der i autencitet lå hinsides andre gruppers "teater-vilde" miminger af oprindelig kultur. På sit helt eget plan – importeret, løsrevet og eksotisk – men også med en sær sårbar styrke og skønhed, som det danske publikum tog imod." Peter BISCHOFF, 'Dansende Afrika billeder', *MS-revy* 4 (1991), http://www.ms.dk/msrevy/revy91/91_4/dansende.htm

53 *Ibid.*

54 Translated from "Endelig havde denne festival–runde også sit "autentiske" antropologiske indslag som *maasaierne* i 1991 og tuaregerne i 1993. Nemlig de i år mærkelige Wodaabe-nomader fra ørkenlandet Niger, som vender kønsrollerne på hovedet ved, at det er mændene, der skønmalede med store smil og plirrende øjne og monoton sang byder sig til for kvinderne. Deres danse var *så* uformidlet anderledes, at de på en måde pure unddrog sig enhver vurdering efter vores målestok – en anden anmelder mente, at det var på vippen til "kulturpornografi". Pornografi eller ej, så skete der faktisk det, at man som tilskuer blev pinligt bevidst om sin *egen voyerisme*. Det blev på en gang et spejl – hvem kigger mest på hvem? – og et tankevækkende blik ind i et helt andet univers." Peter BISCHOFF, 'Mali Magi', in *MS-revy* 5 (1996), http://www.ms.dk/msrevy/revy96/96_5/malimagi.htm.

would resemble too much the human caravans displayed in amusement parks in the early part of the 20th century.[55]

In relation to the interpretation of the music as such, it is interesting that the singing generally was heard as monotonous and very strange. Following Kofi Agawu this is in many ways a proof that stereotyping leaves out many musics, but it is also a demonstration of how diversity is embedded in sound – and that not every African music is "rhythm'n'drum".

A final peculiarity of expressive culture is the presence of a particular aesthetical difference between a so-called high-low distinction of acts and events. The Africa festivals were affected by this distinction as well as by that between a presented authenticity and commercialism. The Western idea of art is presented by K.I.T. and expressed by Trevor Davis in the following statement:

> Real art speaks for itself. It does not represent society, but is the essence, an anarchistic nerve. We will present it "without a filter" by transplanting points of reference directly as kaleidoscopic images. … Cultural events were not solutions, but they could ease the pain.[56]

The aesthetic choice and the selection of what could qualify for the definition of real art, is not guided by stylistic, generic or socio-cultural values. There are sometimes indications that very expensive and professionally handled acts are to be evaluated as art, but definitions remain blurred. Anyway both in theatre, dance and music the festivals in fact included many very different attitudes towards expressive culture. As Meintjes pointed out in the South African context, also large groups of the Danish audience attended primarily because of the skill of the musicians and aesthetic quality of the performances. Many events fulfilled this need: Because of a strong economic funding and the diligent and impassioned work of the people in charge, the festivals succeeded in bringing to Denmark even some of the absolute top artist including Youssou N'dour, Salif Keita and Manu Dibango, Zap Mama, Mahotella Queens, Sam Mangwana, Cesaria Evora, Cheb Mami and Khaled.

The professionalism of these top events highlights the split between the huge and versatile performances and the more popular level: And between the arrangers. It is remarkable that anthropologists were in charge of the so-called authentic shows and some of the more humble events, while the professionals were handled by music business people, who paid more attention to the standard of gear or producer issues than to the ethnographic meaning and significance of the culture presented. It even involved different sorts of housing and handling, as non-professionals were billeted privately

55 Interview Lars Udsholt, 26.8.03. This refers to the fact that ethnographic exhibitions of primitives were a common activity and the zoological gardens in Copenhagen – in fact, there had been shows for around a decade in the 1900s.

56 Translated from "Virkelig kunst taler for sig selv. Den *repræsenterer* ikke samfundet, men den er essensen, en anarkistisk nerve. Vi vil præsentere den "uden filter" ved at transplantere referencepunkter direkte som kalejdoskopiske billeder. … Kulturbegivenheder var ikke løsninger, men de kunne lette smerten." Peter BISCHOFF: 'Nytter festivaler?', in *MS-revy* 5 (1993), http://www.ms.dk/msrevy/revy93/93_5/nytterfest.htm.

among people who cared for visitors unfamiliar with Scandinavian life, while top stars of course were in regular hotels, perfectly capable of taking care of themselves.[57]

The way in which local Danes got involved and connected to the visiting Africans[58] is representative of the kind of international collaboration which was the interest of the Danish NGOs but also the theme for the analysis of the role of music in global exchange presented earlier in this paper by Louise Meintjes. Following the role of this segment of the festivals will be discussed.

The Dialogue in the Images of Africa

A presentation of the *Images of Africa* festivals – be it otherwise focussed on music – would not be complete without the inclusion of a short reference to the Dialogue programme. It became an important experience to most of the Danes who attended, as it related both to the reactions and understandings of the cultural encounter, but it also affected the Africans present be they guests at the festivals or residents in Denmark. In this way the dialogue program came to emphasise and question the somewhat dubious differentiation between the 'dancing' and the 'thinking' Africa, which was a dichotomy often launched during debates.[59]

As stated above the involvement of both the development community and the Foreign Ministry and its aid agency, DANIDA, was conditioned by the dedication to enlightenment, education and information, and this was performed in meetings, conferences and dialogues. Each festival had an opening conference in which the main issues of the programme was presented. Following this a number of different topics of very broad socio-cultural content were addressed in more specialised meetings, which could either represent the agendas of the involved NGOs or it could be a presentation of the points of views of the visitors – primarily writers, journalists and other cultural workers from Africa.

Not all programs were successful and not every intention on the part of the organisers were understood and fulfilled. For instance a trade conference at the festival in 1996 tried to address the difficulties and possibilities of the African music business. The conference took place at *Børsen*, the old stock exchange in the heart of Copenhagen, and featured among others superstar Youssou N'Dour, who has strong ideas on the role of musicians in Africa. But the attendance was poor and the most obvious target-persons – i.e. economic journalists and business people – just did not show up.[60] Other meetings were dedicated to more informative aspects of the encounter giving

57 Interview Ole Reitov, 21.8.03

58 The Danish Cultural Worker Hanne Tofte Jespersen, who has been part of several music and culture exchange programs with Africa and Ghana in particular, especially values and emphasises the semi-local/regional events rather than the top shows, precisely because she attributes more lasting effects to the former. Interview august 2003.

59 See for instance BISCHOFF, 'Dansende Afrika billeder', http://www.ms.dk/msrevy/revy91/91_4/dansende.htm.

60 Interview Ole Reitov, 21.8.03.

space to African speakers and intellectuals – and topics covered many areas of the African World such as politics, tradition, the role of culture, gender, family and religion.

There was, however, an inherent problem in the dialogue, which sought to bridge the cultural and sociological gap between Africans and Danes. This was particularly visible and outspoken at the first festival in 1991 and as one commentator stated: The debate in 91 almost became a kind of cultural flagellation on the part of the present Danes. Mostly this had to do with the fact that the people taking part in the dialogue programme were well-meaning Danes and attacking Africans. In the words of Vincent Chikwari: "African academics/intellectuals came [to IOA] to discuss the fate of African art and they cursed the whites for robbing our wealth".[61]

The dialogue programme was perhaps the most unique aspect of the Danish festivals, but it was also a very clear demonstration of the problems of collaboration and political correctness, with was touched upon by both Neal Ullestad and Louise Meintjes as previously mentioned. The general attitude of cultural flagellation and bad conscience due to colonization and globalisation seconded by an almost unquestioning embracement of the aesthetic and artistic values of African culture and music thus became an unavoidable result of the dedication to collaboration within expressive culture and aesthetic representation.

The present-day estimation of this situation by Lars Udsholt is that the development environment was neither prepared to nor geared at tackling the academic and intellectual level and sophistication of the African guests – especially at the first festival in 1991.[62] In some ways the later festivals improved, and the institutionalisation of the events offered a platform for dealing with the unavoidable ruptures so that direct confrontation was avoided, but the problem mostly went underground. This is not due to the festivals or their organization, but rather an immanent condition for late 20th century social and cultural exchange.

Another and rather practical aspect of the issue of collaboration which took up a lot of time and energy was the debate on the involvement of the African "Danes" in the planning of the festivals. Resident Africans felt that they were not given proper responsibility and room in the planning and execution of the festivals. The dispute is very interesting, because it raises serious questions concerning whose kind of Image should be brought to the fore and what kinds of music should be performed. Generally Africa-based groups and performers were preferred, again bearing evidence to the importance of an imagined authenticity. One of the organizers even put forward as his point of view that "the Africans in Denmark do not represent Africa – they are living here".[63] Eventually there were more Africans involved in the latest festival, both in the organisation groups and in the dialogues taking place.

61 Vincent CHIKWARI, 'I Front', in *MS-revy* 5/96, http://www.ms.dk/msrevy/revy96/96_5/ioaenspildt.htm.
62 Interview Lars Udsholt, 26.8.03.
63 Olaf Gerlach HANSEN, 'En kulturel impuls fra Afrika', in *Ms-Revy* 96, http://www.ms.dk/msrevy/revy96/96_3/enkulturel.htm.

Generally I find that the problem inherent in the dialogue was caused by the very clear dichotomy of wanting both to stress a new and merry picture of Africa and to include serious debates over tough problems. It was obvious that the press rather wanted to write about the colourful music and cultural events and not very much about the dialogue programme. The frustrations accordingly were plenty and sometimes the discussion was shortcut, as when an African journalist present at the 3rd *Images of Africa* felt that the money would be better spent by sending 500 Danes to Africa – to see for themselves and present a truer image on their return.[64]

Concluding festivals and large scale events …

> *Graceland* illustrates that the meanings of transcultural musical styles are located at the conjunction between the multileveled global economic and political system and the local lived experience of specific creators and interpreters.[65]

At the *Images of Asia* festival in 2003 the Indian art critic Geeta Kapur made a general observation, which is of relevance even in hindsight and which raises a general objection to the *Images*-idea. Geeta Kapor found that the notion of imagination was a very good tool but that the concept of *Images* in relation to cultural presentations and events had been high-jacked by commercialism and accordingly turned into a commodity. She said that "Commodifying presents itself as images".[66] The statement confirms the resuscitation from within the format of the festivals of a stereotyping of cultures and the re-emergence of generalisations which was believed by many to be avoided by the *Images of Africa* enterprise. The message is in good standing with the findings of the previously mentioned Swedish *Musik – medier – mångkultur* project,[67] as it invokes the importance of visibility and the general struggle of cultural workers and artists alike to be seen and heard in a globalised and asymmetrical world culture.[68] In this way also the *Images* festivals are still a problematic and contested space between anthropology and mass media and even between ethnomusicology and commercial strategies for music making.

Louise Meintjes pointed to "the dialectic between the value of musical 'indigenization', i.e. of localizing sounds and their meaning, and of musical 'internationalization'",[69] and she found that collaborative projects held a pivotal position politically, professionally and stylistically in the structuring of present day cultural encounters:

64 Chiwari, 'I Front'.
65 Meintjes, 'Paul Simon's Graceland', p. 69.
66 Geeta Kapur at the opening conference "Our Future – Asia and The World" of *Images of Asia*, Copenhagen, august 9th, 2003.
67 An English version of the book, titled *Music, media, multiculture; Swedich Musicscapes,* is now available online at http://www.visarkiv.se/mmm/book/index.htm.
68 The concept asymmetrical is used to describe the present conditions for the flow of cultures by Swedish socio-anthropologist Ulf Hannerz in *Cultural Complexity. Studies in the social organization of Meaning*, New York 1992.
69 Meintjes, 'Paul Simon's Graceland', p. 63.

> Expressive culture from this angle is part of a gigantic complex system of trafficking of sounds and signs that are presentations to the outside world of the collectivity's identity in the form of commodities.[70]

This situation is caused mainly by globalisation and its impact has increased during the last ten years. But the dilemma inherent in popular music's repercussions as either leading to fascism (Adorno) or democracy (Benjamin), prudently discussed by Neil Ullestad, accordingly is still at stake.[71]

Commodification – even if modest and reluctantly applied – definitely played a part in the *Images of Africa* festivals. It was in the interest of the artists, of the promoters and of the record companies to find a place in the market. Even if some performers – primarily children's music groups, women's dancing associations and performers from political organizations – were not directly professionals, they too contributed to the demonstration of late 20th century conditions for cultural encounter in that they made use of the festivals as a showcase for whatever mission they tried to accomplish.[72] In representing a culture from afar and one that is explicitly presented because of its otherness, the most conspicuous commodity becomes authenticity. The images of Otherness, which have generally become the brand of the *Images* festivals, are in various ways representations of authenticity whether they appear as old-fashioned re-enactments of cultural forms relating to tradition, revival and even folklore, or as modern images of what 'real' life is believed to be in the particular foreign culture.

Generally this authenticity is imagined and constructed and in Geeta Kapoor's understanding the very pivotal point of the discourse over cultural representation and commodification. The imagined authenticity – and the generally prejudiced image of otherness – can be challenged through contradictions, fissures and reflections in the (re)presentation, and no doubt the organisers behind the *Images* festivals in many ways wanted precisely that. Nevertheless, many misunderstandings arose, and for instance the performances by the spectacular fourth worlders were balancing a thin line in this respect.

In a cautious evaluation of the events it is important to include that the global devotion to 'festival-mentality', to huge celebrations and satellite transmitted mega-concerts, and to cultural shows has grown steadily both abroad and in Denmark since the start of the 1990s. The *Images*-format was in 2003 presenting Asia, it will in 2006 turn to the Middle East, and one can only suspect that it will continue locating new areas for celebration. As such it has been an unprecedented success. Acknowledging, however, the presence of commodification there is a major risk that the big festivals will be centred on generalisations, imaginations and stereotyping. The focus has changed, and the pioneering spirit has partly been replaced by professional organizing and the incorporation of business and authorities. Since the first *Images* the numbers of representatives of 'official Denmark' taking part in the celebrations, giving opening speeches,

70 *Ibid.*, p. 64.
71 Ullestad, 'Rock and rebellion', p. 68.
72 Interview with Ole Reitov, 21.08.03.

and surveying mega events have increased, and the high priority of these events to ministers, royalties and private business people testifies yet again to the increasing importance of visibility also in this kind of culture.

Concluding music …

Since the *Images of Africa* festivals ended, the general view of Africa in Danish media has deteriorated. Yes, African music is more known, it is still the only asset ascribed to possibly improving African economy,[73] and audiences to some extend still like the joy and fun of African culture. But a more thorough and reflected understanding of the way of life in Africa and of the conditions of culture – also in a wider anthropological sense – has not been achieved. Africa in the news has returned to stories of disasters and calamities, unfortunately helped along by the hard facts of reality such as the devastating consequences of aids, the cruel civil wars in Sudan and Liberia, the seemingly uninhibited population growth and the subsequent alarming increase of poverty. The disappointment in the donor communities over the hardships in the countries especially favoured by the aid organizations and the NGOs – i.e. Tanzania and recently Zimbabwe – has led to a general exhaustion of enthusiasm and investment: A situation also affecting culture and media support and seriously setting back the possibilities for developing music training and production inside Africa.

The musical impact of the festivals is difficult to evaluate as such, but on the other hand there is no doubt that the presence of African culture and music in major cities all over Denmark for a relatively long time raised the awareness of Africa in the minds of Danes, and made a strong and sometimes personal impression. That it happened simultaneously with a worldwide interest in the newly coined "world music" – dominated as it was by African music – must not be overlooked. And the fact that it came about as a response to the frustrations in the Northern hemisphere over the unattended and unsolved problems in Africa such as starvation and human sufferings definitely carries an element of guilt. As Ullestad wrote, Live Aid and Sun City also "tended to subvert conventional meanings of pleasure".[74] *Images of Africa* continued this trend no doubt. Whether the festivals also changed the images of African musics and succeeded in giving broader knowledge of its musical characteristics is still very much the question.

In the 1990s the musicologist John Collins proclaimed that African music was going to be the music of the 21th century and that the African slaves had installed in our white culture a cultural time bomb, which was now about to explode.[75] This was a well-meant and positive statement, which in a rather naive sense acknowledged the quality

73 African music production has recently gained attention from the World Bank, as is it an industry believed able to raise money for poverty threatened countries both for export and as a commodity within the local tourist economy.

74 Ullestad, 'Rock and rebellion', p. 71.

75 'Fattigdom på Vrangen', editorial in *Ms-Revy* 1996, http://www.ms.dk/msrevy/revy96/96_4/leder.htm.

and power of African music, but which seemed to fall short of addressing the complexities of exchange and to simplify the understanding of music of the others.[76]

Unfortunately, it seems that John Collins was not right, and it is noteworthy that the situation for African music and the possibility for African musicians to get jobs and sell records in Denmark has not improved. Most of the people I have interviewed for this paper were very tough on this matter, and claimed that Africans were losing out in the competition with other 'new' musics. Hardly any African concerts have been given – except for a couple of top rank shows with Youssou N'Dour and Salif Keita, who probably would have visited Denmark anyway in their own right as popular world stars. And it is also remarkable that these stars had their greatest following and success in the rock music festivals of Roskilde and Midtfyn where they are not primarily launched as African acts but rather as top professional musicians.[77] Other people tell of the difficulties of arranging even minor events covering African music, and stress that audiences and 'customers' often ask for *real* Africans – i.e. blacks – in the set up of the groups involved, thus confirming the latent racial imagination.[78] In some ways it seems as if the *Images of Africa* was never there!

The core question of course is whether the festivals are to blame for this situation, whether they have actually lessened the damage by having been there or whether it does not really matter at all? There is probably no single answer to such questions, but the dilemma opens several dialogues on quality and representation. Meintjes reported that White South Africans listened to *Graceland* as a solely musical experience and because of its artistic quality. They did not relate at all to the inherent political question and were in fact non-collaborative in the process. This kind of attitude is examined by Pierre Bourdieu as an example of what he calls an aesthetic distinction and it is used predominantly by the wealthier layers of society.[79] A similar tendency was seen in the *Images of Africa*, where a wish to separate the music performances from the social and political agendas were – much to the distress of the NGOs and the Ministry – often applied by members of the audiences, the press and the critics alike.

Seen in this light, aesthetic distinction reinvokes the question of what precisely it is that music conveys to its listeners, and of how and whether it can transcend cultural borders. What kind of sense can in fact be made of musics from other contexts – of musics of otherness?

Steven Feld's analysis of how people make sense of different and unfamiliar musics through the application of interpretive moves is highly relevant in this respect. The sound of otherness is experienced very differently by listeners, and when they decode the music they enter into a series of interpretive moves which "– regardless of complexity, variety,

76 I realise that John Collins is not generally naive on these matters, and I see this statement just as much as a deeply felt admiration.

77 Interview with Ole Reitov. They all appeared on the ballroom scene, which in spite of the programme never was called the world music scene.

78 Interview with Hanne Tofte Jespersen, 19.8.03.

79 Pierre BOURDIEU, *Distinction. A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste.* Cambridge 1984, p. 34.

intensity, involvement – emerges dialectically from the human social encounter with a sound object or event."[80]

> As Feld writes, it is through "interpretive moves" such as these that the listener links formal stylistic components of music to his or her unique sense of accumulated musical and social experiences.[81]

This juxtaposing of experience and meaning making on a very individual level challenges the general understanding of how African music is supposed to sound in order to represent the culture as such. And it explains why interpretations can actually differ very much. This was for instance at stake in the second *Images of Africa* festival, when some of the expectations and stereotypes were shaken by the inclusion of Arab musics.

On the augmentation of the festival scope Lars Udsholt remembers how this move worried the NGOs and the development community, who felt that even in a musical context the inclusion of for instance Rai music of Algeria blurred the message.[82] And – I must add – broke the expectations of what African music should sound like.

Further, it was embedded in the *Images* idea that Danish audiences – especially the majority at which the festivals after all were addressed – did not possess sufficient qualifications for distinguishing good music performances from bad ones. In relation to Feld's point of view this is not of relevance, but not being able to distinguish readily creates a demand for – be it imagined – authenticity in appearance, instrumentation and superficial signifiers and it adds to the construction of emblematic essentialising.

As the *Images* were dominated by a strong political correctness and due to the double yoke of accept and ignorance of African cultures, an almost uncritical enthusiasm for all things happening during the events was present.[83] This can be suspected to be typical of audiences which were not equipped to evaluate the actual artistic performance, being at the same time extremely cautious not to seem degrading or perhaps even racist in their evaluation.[84]

Even if the festivals were primarily geared towards the Danish audiences with a relatively small knowledge of African musics, the presentation of diversity in the music programme was given very high priority. The organisers did not – as I have emphasised – stop at the homogenised view of African music as 'one', which was the fear and concern of Kofi Agawu, rather the display of differences became a goal. From a classical

80 Steven FELD, 'Communication, Music, and Speech about Music', in Charles KEIL & Steven FELD, *Music Grooves; Essays and Dialogues,* Chicago 1994, p. 86.

81 Meintjes, 'Paul Simon's Graceland', p. 49.

82 Interview with Lars Udsholt, 26.8.03. Cheb Mami of Algeria and Ali Hassan Kuban were some of these stars.

83 I remember that the Zimbabwean musician and singer Thomas Mapfumo on stage in Copenhagen in 1993 was so high on pot that he was rolling on the floor, and barely managed to sing his songs. This was very much to the embarrassment of the other Zimbabweans present, and one of the women, who I knew from the workshop, kept saying "And this is our very famous compatriot." In the written critique it was, however, only stated that Mapfumo was extrovert!!

84 This process of reversed racism involves the long time racial imagination on African musics which has been addressed by both Agawu, *Representing African Music,* and Ronald Radano in his brilliant analysis of African American musics as a racial construct. See Radano, 'American Modernism'.

definition of style as different musical elements creating unique structures, the variety of the music performed was indeed very broad.

Nevertheless the difference is in some ways perhaps a new kind of systemic sameness as put forward by Veit Erlmann:

> … a system which constitutively produces difference, is a system all the same. Difference, in this interpretation, is no longer an antithesis to the system, it is drawn back inside the system.[85]

Founded in the theories of Fredric Jameson, Erlmann regards the world music arena as an expression of uninhibited cultural consumerism. Taken at face value, this estimation would consider the increasing musical diversity of the *Images of Africa* festivals as an affirmation of sameness. Still it is hard to think that it could have been done differently. Ole Reitov claims that the festivals represented just a pinprick, Hanne Tofte Jespersen stresses the importance of the event for 'ordinary' people and their experiences with music and culture, and Lars Udsholt finds that it was an absolute necessity in its time. Be that so, the situation overwhelmingly exposes the actual situation: "We are the World" was the theme song of the first-ever cultural mega event on Africa – the Live Aid presented in the start – and WE still means citizens of the Northern hemisphere. Steven Feld who is very much aware of the process of appropriation in world music, argues that it is precisely because of the homogenisation and the shrinking of human musical diversity, that demands of musical otherness increases. The situation has tough repercussions:

> Musical appropriation sings a double line with one voice …. Yet this voice is harmonized by a countermelody of power, even control and domination, a fundamental source of asymmetry in ownership and commodification of musical works.[86]

Erlmann and Feld might be arguing from dissimilar points of view, but they both address the dynamics of the centre-periphery exchange, and with Hannerz they demonstrate how the flow of cultures is fundamentally asymmetrical.

So festivals dedicated to the celebration of otherness also in the music area, otherwise always understood to be able to break barriers and build bridges, remain "Images" as described by Geeta Kapur. They do neither present culture as a reflection of real happenings and real people, nor do they achieve at presenting culture as art. It is a show – and in this case the Africans are left with a desperate trying to make their way yet again into the Western and globalised market. But focus has shifted – fashion is elsewhere – and unfortunately this situation also halts local development in many African popular musics, which left with poor economic conditions can even find it hard to get instruments, let alone studio gear.

85 Erlmann, 'The Politics and Aesthetics', p. 6.
86 Steven FELD, 'Notes on World Beat', in Keil & Feld, *Music Grooves,* p. 238.

It is not that African music or the festivals for that matter has failed. It was and is still a necessity to try to fight cultural self-sufficiency through information and aesthetic experiences. It is simply that the events have fallen prey to the globalised and systemic forces of world culture.

The *Images of Africa* festivals were divided and troubled by a spilt between on the one side a wish for caring and compassion, giving thoughts to the political and ideological importance of considering the 'African Question'. In this it was a clear act of activism. On the other side, however, the institutionalisation of the events and the increased involvement of artistic agents and professional musicians and artists displayed a consumer-oriented diversity.

In this way the events show very clearly how musics at the end of the 20th century are interacting with social and systemic forces. It leaves musicians, cultural workers and researchers with the need to realise and engage in the concept of 'Music as Advocacy'. One consequence of this new attitude is that presenters, researchers and musicians must take a stand – it is no longer possible to uphold objectivism. In academic discourse this has for a long time been a theoretical pillar of work. Now it must also be acted upon. This in perhaps the most important outcome of the *Images of* …