

Hope and Recognition. A Music Project among Youth in a Palestinian Refugee Camp

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Abstract

The questions raised in this report concern to what extent a music project can strengthen a sense of self and identity, the experience of belonging to own traditions among Palestinian youth. Further, how it is possible to organize a music project that gives possibilities for musical learning and personal growth? And how can such a project afford new role models and responsibilities that may give hope for a better future?

The strongest belief shared by all Palestinians, employed or not, young or old, men or women, is the hope and insistence on their right to return to their beloved homeland.
Nahla Ghandour

Introduction

Hope and recognition are keywords that characterize the cultural and humanitarian aid The Norwegian Academy of Music together with *NORWAC*[\[1\]](#) and Forum for Culture and International Cooperation (*Forum for kultur og internasjonalt samarbeid*[\[2\]](#)) are doing in South-Lebanon. Since 2002, Norwegian music educator Vegar Storsve together with Petter Barg and Inger Anne Westby have conducted a music project in the Palestinian refugee camp Rashiedie and in a Lebanese special school in the city of Tyr. They have organized a community music project for health and cultural cooperation across different religious and political groups in Lebanon. This article will describe parts of this work and discuss how such a music project may have consequences for development and health promotion among children and young people in refugee camps. The authors have their background in music education and music therapy. However, this project was conceived as a music educational project. With the growth of community music and community music therapy, we find reasons to discuss this project as a prototypical community music project. The explicit health aspect and the influence from community music therapy also opens a discussion about the borders between these areas of practice. What creates a strong link between the two approaches is the underlying theory of “community of practice”, which will be discussed below (see Wenger, 1998; Ansdell, 2010).

After the establishment of the state of Israel in 1948 a great proportion of a total of 700 000 Palestinian refugees fled to Lebanon. Ghandour (2001) writes that Lebanon today hosts 368 000 Palestinian refugees. This group constitutes 10% of the total population of Lebanon and the refugees are placed together in 12 official camps, without any rights to health care, education or possibilities for work within a whole range of professions within the Lebanese society. The support from UNRWA^[3] (United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East) secures a minimum of schooling and health services within the refugee camp. The situation for the young who grow up in the camps can be described as follows:

The Palestinian children, as a consequence of their parents' and their own adverse experiences, acquire the most negative elements of the tasks of Adult Development. First mistrust, then shame, which moves on to guilt, inferiority and identity diffusion (that is sustained separation from social, residential, economic and ideological dependency on family of origin) (Ghandour, 2001, p. 157).

In other words, unemployment, social problems and mental health problems are usual. As a consequence of the negative experience that Palestinian children and their parents are exposed to, many develop a sense of mistrust, guilt, inferiority and a weakened sense of identity. Research also shows that 19.5% of Palestinian adolescents suffer from mental distress, and that 30,4 % of women in the same refugee camps reported the same (Sabatinelli, Pace-Shanklin, Riccardo & Shahin, 2009).

The young who grow up are met with great challenges in relation to hope for a better life as adult. The future is uncertain and their control of their own lives is endangered. Or, as Ghandour writes:

I believe that the two most critical aspects that affect the development of the Palestinian child in Lebanon are: the inevitable sense of a transitory and unstable life; theirs/ours is a future which is (as it has been) always unpredictable and we seem to have no control over it. The second is the impossibility for the parents to build a career or have a long-term job that minimizes their control of the future of their families, on both the economic and social fronts (Ghandour, 2001, p. 157).

When health becomes the focus of humanitarian aid, cultural activities are often not discussed.^[4] We know, however, that our health is dependent upon cultural factors related to human rights issues, social status, belonging, identity, recognition and experienced dignity. Such an understanding of important health issues will allow for the use of cultural means, in this case music, to promote health. Health is thus more than physical health. The subjective factors linked to how health and quality of life are perceived play an important role in the interpretation of our health.

For the Palestinian young, their health situation will be closely related to their personal identity and feeling of continuity and belonging in relation to Palestinian history and identity. But it is a threatened identity, and Ghandour raises the following questions:

How can a Palestinian child become a Palestinian? From where can he or she acquire a strong belief in continuity? What will he or she believe in – poverty, abuse, trauma, and insecurity? Who serves as his or her role model – an unemployed father, an exhausted mother, an unjust

rule, or a hostile neighbour? Barring such identification, shame and guilt seep easily into the formulation of Palestinian self-identity! (Ghandour, 2001, p. 157).

The questions raised in this article concern to what extent a music project can strengthen a sense of self and identity, as well as the experience of belonging to one's own traditions among Palestinian youth. Further, how is it possible to organize a music project that gives possibilities for musical learning and personal growth? And how can such a project afford new role models and responsibilities that may give hope for a better future?

The Music Project

In 2002, the Norwegian health organization NORWAC arranged an exchange among youth in which a dance group from the refugee camp Rashedie made a visit to Algarheim school in Norway. NORWAC saw this meeting and especially the cultural activities as an important part in their mental health program in Lebanon (Storsve, 2008, p. 61). In 2003 NORWAC sent the Norwegian music educators Petter Barg and Vegar Storsve to Rashedie where they conducted music classes with groups of children in cooperation with local musicians and social workers.

Through these activities, the local musicians gradually became more involved in the teaching, and the social workers and leaders in the organization *Beit Atfal Assumoud*[\[5\]](#) were inspired by these activities. The Norwegian music educators gained more experiences through repeated visits and they saw how the children became engaged, enjoyed the activities and showed a feeling of mastery through the activities (Storsve, 2008, p. 62-65). Music teaching then became a permanent activity within the centre and the local musicians adopted many of the methods that will be described further in this article. The local instructors now run these activities as a weekly activity throughout the whole year.



Figure1: Master, journeyman and apprentice. Photo by Even Ruud.

From 2005 about fifty students and teachers from the Norwegian Academy of music have participated in the project. The teachers have represented different subjects and have contributed knowledge both from music education and music therapy.

Such a music educational, or rather community music project, will be met with many challenges. One has to do with how some Muslims have an ambivalent or negative attitude towards music education. In the same way as we know from some Christian traditions, Muslims may regard music as “sinful” – haram – because it takes focus away from God. Music is associated with sexuality and alcohol that fuel arguments that will keep the young away from God. “Music” then is a theme to be negotiated, not only within Islam generally, but also locally within western Diasporas traditions where Muslims live. For example, in Great Britain 1.5 million Muslim children will have to confront British music education in any state supported school (Harris, 2006). Such a perspective actualizes the experiences from this project in a debate about multi cultural music education.

When such a music project, conducted by Norwegian music educators among Palestinian Muslims in South-Lebanon becomes a reality, further complications may arise. Questions concerning goals, educational attitudes, curriculum or choice of repertoire becomes important. At the same time cultural preconditions and traditions will be challenged in relation to the local historical context, the contemporary situation and the Nordic cultural input. “Music” cannot be regarded as something independent of culture, situation and intentions and Norwegian values have to be negotiated in this new local context. There are strong restrictions concerning what girls are allowed to do and the project leader has often felt the resistance for example, when girls are invited to play electric guitar and drums. This is, however, quite popular among the young Palestinians. They have a strong relation to the rhythmic element in the music as many have been dancing debka since early childhood.

The music project seeks to reach as many children and young Palestinians as possible through common musicking, instrumental activity and dancing. Although there is no formal music teaching within the schools in the refugee camp, there are strong dance traditions in the Palestinian culture, and the dance musicians play the derbeka (drums). The oud and different flutes and violins are also present within this musical culture, and lately instruments like electric guitar and synthesizers with oriental scales have been used. Since music is so unusual both in schools for the Palestinians as well as for the Lebanese children, this project is quite unique and well appreciated by the children (and their parents) who is given the chance to participate.

As we know, general music education requires instruments, song- and music traditions, localities and continuity in teaching. How is it possible to maintain such an activity from week to week? All the support for this project is channelled through *Beit Atfal Assumoud*, a religious and politically neutral organization that works among children with a difficult social situation. Throughout the years, the Norwegian participants have brought a lot of instruments from Norway. Today we find in the orchestra three synthesizers, microphones and sound systems, electric guitars, violins, guitars, saxophones, Orff-instruments, drum-sets, hand drums, accordion, melodicas. Of course, this blend of instruments creates a special challenge to any musical arrangements made for common performance.

It should also be added that since 2005, music students from the Norwegian Academy of Music are offered this project as part of the practicum, and every year a group of music students go to the refugee camp to teach the children and give concerts. Master students in

music education and music therapy have also been involved to gain new experiences and to write about the project in their master thesis. The project leaders visit the camp five-six times a year to teach, organize, and give new musical inputs. In sum, the Norwegian instructors and students, together with the Palestinian children and adult instructors create a unique community of practice.

The Community of Practice – From Peripheral to Full Participation

How is it possible to organize musical learning and instruction within such a large and heterogeneous group of children and adolescents when resources are limited? How do the children learn to play?

Continuity in instruction and learning is provided by the weekly rehearsals in the camp where the adult musical instructors are leading the group. In addition to this, since 2008 a group of assistant teachers selected among the older adolescents, those who have been with the project since it started in 2003, has been established. These young instructors have the responsibility to teach the different musical parts and instrumental skills to the younger participants.



Figure 2: Girl with guitar. Photo by Even Ruud.

Today, about forty children and adolescents participate in the project. Not all are strongly involved or committed to the project. Some may visit from time to time, others are permanent participants and there will always be someone quite new to the project. Of course, this situation creates a special challenge. Two of the adult local musicians have been granted functions as leaders. Especially Chadi Ibrahim on accordion keeps the rehearsals going from week to week. He knows all the participants; he has an overview of the musical material in such a way that he can organize groups and administer the older adolescents to take care of the younger. With the support from a group of 8-10 adolescents the structure of the inserted

rehearsals then becomes good. When the Norwegian music educators are present, they will suggest new pieces to be performed, and new riffs and ostinatos to be learned. All the material is orally transmitted, and melodies, voices and rhythmic patterns are repeated until it is mastered. The methodological principle behind the performances is developed by Storsve (1991) and conceptualized as the “multi-use arrangement”. This is an arrangement that makes use of everything from simple rhythmic figures, two-tone melodies, riffs or ostinatos with varying rhythmic complexity, as well as more challenging voices (see more below).

Throughout the years a musical community of practice has evolved and made musical learning and development possible. Etienne Wenger, who has developed theories about learning in a community of practice, relates such learning directly to the construction of identity (Wenger, 1998). The music project in the same way gives the participants possibilities to take different roles and positions within the community, to partake in a process toward increasing involvement, responsibility and possibilities to influence the interaction within the group. Wenger (ibid., p. 153-155) describes different forms of belonging through his concept of trajectories, which he divides into:

- Peripheral trajectories
- Inbound trajectories
- Insider trajectories
- Boundary trajectories
- Outbound trajectories

The forty children participating in the project have several possible trajectories. For instance, the *peripheral* trajectories may not lead to full participation, although it may become significant enough to influence the identity of the young. In the music project, the youngest children may exemplify this kind of participation. They do not always come every week, and the project is not dependant upon their participation. To the small children, this is an exciting activity that provides opportunities to participate from their own level of skills.

The inbound trajectories can be found in this project among those participants who are joining the community with the prospect of becoming full participants in its practice (ibid., p. 154). These children, from 8-14 years, identify with the project. They show an interest for a certain instrument or for some of the other participants. Such inbound trajectories are focussed upon their own learning and do not always involve creative input or negotiations about the common practice.



Figure 3: Group work. Photo by Even Ruud.

It is the insiders who bring the community of practice further. They contribute to change; they create “new events, new demands, new inventions; and new generations all create occasions for renegotiating one’s identity” (loc. cit.). In this project the adolescent group serving as assistant instructors are good examples of insiders, while the adult instructors and the Norwegian teachers and students are the main instructors and role models when it comes to responsibilities for other’s learning.

We find boundary trajectories when different communities of practice are linked and participants are sustaining identities across boundaries. The challenge here is to maintain the identity acquired in one community of practice faced with new challenges and expectations within other communities of practice. Some of the participants in this music project have met such challenges crossing boundaries between the musical community and the school, the family, the university, and other contexts.

Outbound trajectories lead out of a community and are replaced by others, as we can see when children change friends as they become involved in new interests. Some of the young participants, who have left the music project because of age, have returned to the community with new roles, for instance as social workers or activity leaders. They may serve as hosts for concerts or guides when teachers and students from Norway visit. In this way it becomes possible to perform their identity in several possible communities.

The theory about community of practice can be seen as a part of the tradition of learning through apprenticeship. According to Nielsen and Kvale (1999) we can understand this tradition both as a way to describe the institutional structures within traditional apprenticeship learning as well as a general metaphor to describe a relation where a newcomer is taught by a more experienced person (ibid., p. 20). Within the traditional apprenticeship learning, concepts such as master, journeyman and apprentice are more or less clear, to the extent that you will know which category you belong to and that you cannot yourself choose your own role. There is an asymmetric relation between the positions, and in order to move from one position to another, you are dependant upon the acceptance by the master.

There is also a split between person-centred and decentred master-apprenticeship learning. The person-centred is characterized through the master, who in practice reflects and makes the subject visible or apprehensible to the apprentice (ibid., p. 21). With the decentred approach, how the apprentice is part of a community of learning is the decisive factor for learning. Lave and Wenger (1991) describe the learning which happens through peripheral, legitimate participation in a community of practice as a major difference from the asymmetrical relation in the person-centred master-apprentice tradition. Or as Kvale and Nielsen write: "A decentred view upon the master-apprentice relation leads to an understanding of how mastery is not a quality within the master, but by the organization of the community of practice which the master takes part in" (p. 22).

The concept of "scaffolding" can be seen in relation to the person-centred master-apprenticeship tradition. This means that the master provides support in order to help the apprentice solve tasks he would not have managed on his own. And it is the master who has the ideas about what has to be provided in order for the apprentice to experience mastery and development (Nielsen & Kvale, 1999, p. 21).

So far we can see some particularities in this music project both in relation to theories concerning master learning, theories on scaffolding and the decentred community of practice. Through the use of adapted musical arrangements in the "multi-use arrangement" we demonstrate an extended use of scaffolding as witnessed in the organization of musical parts or voices, as well as in the different levels of difficulty. In this way, it is getting to know the possibilities inherent in the musical material that is decisive in the learning process, not the master alone. Both the masters and apprentices themselves can distribute these musical possibilities within the community of practice. Although there are several masters (represented by different instructors from Norway), parts of the master's tasks are practiced in the community both by advanced apprentices or journey folk (students and local adult instructors), and those apprentices represented by the adolescents who have been given responsibilities as assistant instructors. In our opinion, to distribute learning tasks without weakening authority and responsibilities attached to different roles and position is an important quality in this project.

To Lave and Wenger (1991, p. 56) the importance of a diversified field of relations among old-timers and newcomers is underscored, as they write: "For example, in situations where learning-in-practice takes the form of apprenticeship, succeeding generations of participants give rise to what in its simplest form is a triadic set of relations: The community of practice encompasses apprentices, young masters with apprentices, and masters some of whose apprentices have themselves become masters. But there are other inflection points as well, where journey folk, not yet masters, are *relative* old-timers with respect to newcomers (p. 56-57). Lave and Wenger see the importance of this blend of roles in the circulation of knowledgeable skills and recommend against assimilating dyadic forms of conventional learning.

In this community music project, the positioning within different roles does not follow a fixed timeline, i.e. the participants do not have to have completed their apprenticeship before they can perform tasks as a journeyman. During the rehearsal day, some of the older adolescents will shift between roles from an apprentice (when they practice with a master) to a "local journeyman" (when they work together with students in groups), or to perform a "mini-master" role when they take on responsibilities to lead rehearsals with the younger children. This variation in roles creates a generous and multi-dimensional community of learning which

also seems to function well in this encounter between different musical cultures, different educational traditions and between learners in different age groups and at different levels of skills.

Within all these roles and positions, the meaning of musical training is negotiated. Knowledge is possessed not only by the master and something that the others are missing. This perspective ensures that all the actions are integrated in the individual participant's everyday, culture and understanding. It is through this connectedness that this project may offer possibilities for hope and recognition.

Learning and Identity

Musical learning happens through the participation in a community of practice where the participants go through different trajectories of learning, from a peripheral participation to becoming an apprentice or journeyman – or full participation. In his theory, Wenger underlines how this participation leads to a process of learning where changes in identity happen simultaneously (Wenger, 1998).



Figure 4: Learning from the older. Photo by Even Ruud.

The music project is flexibly organized and adapted to the needs of the children in such a way that activities are recognized from week to week. There are also surprises in the form of new challenges. The children are given access to a community of learning where content, ways of working and the organization are constantly negotiated and under development, and where there is room for different trajectories. This may be exactly what the Palestinian refugees are missing in other arenas or communities of practices.

At the same time, what happens in the music room at the centre is affected by a broader context. The project aims at giving possibilities for alternative ways of understanding one's life. Or, as Wenger underscores – learning will change who we are, by changing our ways of participation, belonging and the way we negotiate meaning. It is within this perspective we may see how the music project affords a development of identity that has consequences for health.

The adult Palestinian leaders, who take responsibility for the continuity and progression in the musical work, work closely with the Norwegian instructors. In the performing community of practice, the Palestinian leaders are insiders, according to Wenger's categories of trajectories. They deliver new ideas and musical material, ways of working and ideas for new projects. Storsve, as project leader (and master), has a unique possibility to prepare the Norwegian students, both with respect to the special competencies of these students as well as the needs of the music group in the camp. Thus, a rich performing community of practice grows out of a day of rehearsal when all the children, adolescents and instructors come together.

We could ask what this opportunity and access to such a community would mean to the young Palestinian refugees, what characterizes their common history of learning that arises from the participation in the musical community of practice? One important element is how the social context surrounding the music project is significantly different from the social contexts the participants will meet outside the project. To meet with adults who encourage mastery and not only focus on achievement, is not usual in other cultures of learning the young will meet. From early on in the UNRWA school system they will meet clearly defined goals of achievement to be fulfilled in order to proceed to the next class.

In the music project, the Palestinian youth are offered a repertoire of roles which will partly challenge the limits they usually meet and which will open new possibilities and thus a hope about how to shape their own future: Girls are allowed to play the guitar, the adults can play and fool around, laughter and fun are important ingredients in the learning process. When the Palestinian youth meet in the music group, they also experience a free time with respect to the demands and responsibilities they have to deal with in everyday life: to take care of their younger siblings, relatives with ill-health and high demands on their contribution to the family. Feedback from the leaders of the cultural centre also confirms how the young participants over time will develop competencies of leadership and sense of responsibility through their engagement in the project. This competency is brought back into the family and larger community and the young become important carriers of the philosophy of leadership offered to newcomers. To the Palestinian, who is often deprived of many possibilities to take control of the development of their own life, this experience of meaning and hope for their own life may become a crucial factor determining their health status.

We may also see how the young Palestinian may experience many types of relations within this community of practice. They will meet with the Norwegian students, who are both music teachers and musicians, and thus imagine what it is like to become a performer. The Norwegian students are also role models as teachers, and we can see how the oldest Palestinian adolescents take over the same principles for instruction as they themselves have experienced as participants in the project.

The Multi-use Arrangement

Playing together is a great motivation for musical learning among children and adolescents. To present music that engages, to create musical arrangements that offers challenges and possibilities for everyone, music that is endurable throughout countless repetitions and even suitable for a concert performance, becomes the very glue of the project work. As we know, however, to meet the needs of the children within the context of performance where musical parts are adapted to the skills of the individual is a great challenge. In this work with musical learning among the young in Rashedie, the music educators have sought to develop musical material which is adapted to the level of skills among the participants and which is also felt as a meaningful musical part of the performance.



Figure 5: Three hands on a synth. Photo by Even Ruud.

The situation in this project, however, is not radically different from what we will find in a Norwegian classroom. When musical learning is an objective for everyone, music teachers and instructors in Norway have to teach many students at the same time. Characteristically groups with varying presuppositions and frames and conditions for teaching challenge the teachers. It is quite seldom instructors will meet with standard ensembles and can use prearranged music; more often they have to use those instruments available. If one wants to initiate a band or an orchestra in such groups, one has to think alternatively. Our experiences from Lebanon have raised our understanding of this. Often there is a need to systematize the organization of the musical material in the arrangements. With reference to the Orff method, translated to another set of instruments and type of music (Storsve, 1991), the project leaders have gained many experiences during the years.

The idea behind the multi-use arrangement is to give everyone an opportunity to take part in the performance and thus it is composed by many voices. The arrangement makes use of everything from simple rhythmic figures, two-tone melodies, riffs or ostinatos with varying rhythmic complexity as well as more challenging voices. Repetitions and variations may

create a good flow and a changing musical texture. It also must be possible to perform the different voices on different instruments. This because, sometimes in a group, we may find a highly skilled trumpet player, while in another group we may find a good percussion player, or violinist. If we should meet with a group with many inexperienced players, the sum of what the individual can contribute musically may create a good supporting harmony.

Sometimes it is also an advantage to have many tasks for the percussion instruments. We may do this in a simple way, but of course it is possible if necessary to create a complex and challenging rhythmic input. Many simple rhythmic tasks may also transform into a refined arrangement when put together into a musical whole. Another important point is that when we have many voices with different degrees of difficulties we can offer the players new challenges as they develop. When the students have learned to master a simple two-tone melody, it could easily become boring. In this case, we need to offer more challenges, either more tones in the melody, an extended rhythmic pattern or sometimes a totally new part.

The challenges, however, should not become so great that the player loses the overview or the idea of the music. This means offering the possibility to communicate, listen and respond to fellow musicians during the performance. This is one of the main reasons that playing by ear or without a score is preferred.

The possibilities for variations are endless, and often we could even increase the number of students in the group. At the same time we must caution against making the arrangements too complex. It is important to make room for the individual part through variations such as promoting a sense of achievement among the players. They all have to feel that they make an important contribution to the performance.

In order to illustrate this multi-use arrangement, we can use the melody from the movie *Flåklypa*, a melody that Chadi Ibrahim, one of the local musicians and leaders heard when he was in Norway. Storsve subsequently arranged the piece for the group.^[6] *Flåklypa*, or Norwegian Sunset has been performed by the group at concerts and is one of the favourite arrangements.

The melody consists of eight bars, where the fifth and sixth bars are a repetition of bar one and two. This means you have done half of the job when you have learned two bars. A few simple voices based upon the harmony were added in different instruments, while the guitar players mastered a minor and E-major from before. The base played the root tone in the chord and the guitars doubled these on the chords F, G and C major. The percussions added rhythmic figures. Everyone played the first two bars, and the leaders played the next two together with the rhythm section. Then everybody joined in bars five and six, before the leaders and the rhythm group played the last two bars. This was repeated many times, which created a sense of familiarity with the melody. It also created a good sense of periodicity.

In the further process, the accompanying voices were given new challenges, for instance the guitar players learned the C-major chord. Storsve also arranged new voices for the four newcomers on saxophone, who could only play four tones. He adapted the voices after the fingering the players had learned and gave the saxophones their own melody based upon these notes. One of the girls, who had played the Orff-xylophone for many years, also got a new challenge through an arrangement where she had to use both hands at the same time. By adapting each voice to the skills of the individual, everyone could have some new challenge.

In this way the participants could build a repertoire of musical formulas, fingerings, ostinatos, rhythmic figures and so on, which they later could apply in new musical contexts.

The Land Day Concert and Beyond

During the years we have seen the development of a large repertoire of voices to be used in arrangements for many participants on different instruments and with varying degrees of performance abilities. Some of the children have learned only one part or voice, while others have learned more and thus may create variations from round to round. It is the responsibility of the leader to keep track of all the possibilities and to compose and carry out a good performance.

The project has also led to many concerts. For instance, in 2008, a concert was arranged in Tyr in connection with the manifestation of what the Palestinians call *The Land Day*. Present were groups from several Palestinian refugee camps both as audiences and as performers. In addition to our musicians from the project and contribution from students from the Norwegian Academy of Music, several dance groups, a scout band, a bagpipe orchestra and many speakers took part in the manifestation. Diplomas and awards were handed out for different types of activities, and fifteen of the musicians in Rashedie project were granted a diploma and a small present for five years of participation in the project.

The concert given by the Rashedie orchestra was met with a lot of attention; it seemed to be quite different from what the audience had heard before. A noticeable silence arose in the otherwise quite noisy room and a great applause followed. *Norwegian Sunset* was performed by the Norwegian music students together with the journeymen Chadi Ibrahim and Nabil Alashkar and about fifteen apprentices and twenty newcomers. The music started with a bourdon on synth and chime bells. A soloist presented the theme on the melodica. This was followed by a tutti round where everyone played or accompanied. Then a solo round followed with the four saxophones playing their melody before a new tutti. Then the xylophone and piano had the lead and after the next tutti the guitars and glockenspiel had their solos. A final tutti created a marked ritardando finale.

The story about the *Norwegian Sunset* arrangement did not end with this concert in Tyr. We found that this tune also had a B-theme (Bjørnov, 2005, p. 60), which we could elaborate when ten of the young musicians visited Norway. These adolescents also were members of a traditional dance group and were invited to teach Norwegian children Palestinian folk dance. They were given a workshop at the Academy of Music and we then used the B-theme. A simple arrangement was produced, now for the ten musicians. It should be added that in Norway, the young dancers and musicians had many performances, workshops, they met with the Norwegian school, went bicycling, bathing and visited a famous sculpture park in Oslo. Their performance at a multi-cultural festival in Oslo, the Mela-festival, however, became a major event in the visit to Norway. For this occasion, the Rashedie-orchestra became *Palestinian Roots*.

Cultural Work as Health Promotion

This music educational or community music project at Rashedie has not only resulted in musical learning. As we have argued, learning and development of identity are closely connected. There are reasons to claim that the adolescents who participate in the project have gained experiences that have given positive effects upon their sense of mastery. They have

gained new social experiences with many different roles, as for instance when they lead groups and teach the younger children. They have acquired new knowledge about and skills in musical traditions and they have felt a basic sense of recognition in their surroundings. Recent interviews (November 2009) with six of the participants, three girls and three boys (age 12-20) confirm in many ways our suppositions that taking part in this musical community of practice will give a sense of belonging, create pride in their own skills and mastery of instruments, give hope and ideas about the future, promote motivation for school, prevent boredom and meaningless leisure time, provide aesthetic experiences of flow and happiness, as well as install pride in bringing knowledge and skills to a younger generation and thus maintaining Palestinian values in a marginal situation. Thus we can support what the leader of the cultural centre Beit Atfal Assumoud, Mariam Sleiman claimed in an interview in January 2009 how “the young who take part in this music project are friendlier, more social and more curious than other youngsters in the camp.” Many of these youngsters are chosen to participate in leadership programs to become the new leaders in the local community, she also added.

As we stated in the introduction, many of the health challenges and problems young Palestinian refugees are faced with are connected with their political and social situation. A life in oppression and poverty, with a lack of health care, adequate housing, sanitary conditions and other determinants will in itself create health problems that are beyond the reach of a music project. The marginalization and lack of social recognition which stem from a life outside of the Lebanese society, without permission to own land, to buy a house, to have access to higher education or a lot of professions, will in itself have stigmatizing effects which may potentially lead to ill-health. Amnesty International states that even the Palestinian refugee problem has resulted from and only can be solved from a situation outside of Lebanon; it is to be recommended that all Lebanese laws, which discriminate against Palestinian refugees, must be avoided.[\[7\]](#)

From a perspective of community psychology it is obvious how psychosocial problems, which may arise under such conditions, cannot be solved through initiatives aimed towards the individual (Nelson & Prilleltensky, 2005). A philosophy of recognition (Honneth, 2003) seems more adequate as a political and value-based frame for health promoting intervention. According to Honneth, recognition is not only fundamental to the primary relationship between the infant and the caretaker, but can be included in a critical perspective, where social inclusion and human rights play an important role. In order to fully accept and value ourselves, we also need to have our human rights recognized as citizens. If such needs are denied, we will not be able to experience the social solidarity and thus the common norms and values, which have to be shared in order to reach full recognition.

It is in such a context we may claim how such a music project gives experiences of change in learning and identity that may promote mental health. Such a claim is based upon a certain understanding of “health” (Ruud, 2006; 2010) which holds that our state of health encompasses more than just an absence of somatic and mental illness. From a salutogenetic perspective (Antonovsky, 1987), or as a subjectively experienced phenomenon, health has to do with our experience of meaning and continuity in life. In such an interpretative perspective, health refers to how we experience control and mastery, belongingness and a supportive relation to others, a sense of vitality and emotional flexibility with possibilities for emotional expression (Ruud, 2001). We should also add in this context that health includes political rights and possibilities to engage in social and political processes. At a societal level, we must also include rights to education and the acquisition of basic skills, rights to employment, income and housing (see also Nelson & Prilleltensky, 2005, p. 28).

The goals behind the development of this community of music practice are to be found in the ambition to develop musical resources, to create a network and supporting relations and to provide channels and arenas where the participants can become visible. By cultivating positive emotions and the belief in one's own skills, the project may contribute to a development of identities where participants feel a sense of empowerment. Recent theories on hope also point to interconnections between the sense of one's own mastery, of increased self-esteem and the ability to plan for and find solutions as core experiences in the development and maintenance of hope. To hope is in itself a health promoting process, which has to do with the belief to be able to reach our own goals and that there are routes to the realization of these goals. Or, as stated by Snyder, Rand and Sigmon 2002, p. 257): "(...) hopeful thought reflects the belief that one can find pathways to desired goals and become motivated to use those pathways." To be able to create goals, short- or long term, to formulate possible strategies or routes to reach the goals, as well as to involve a motivational component, i.e. the belief in own agency, become central components in the process of hoping. In this complex psychological picture, aspects of meaning become crucial, especially that the experience of what we do makes a difference and creates continuity in life.

Finally, we want to conclude that this is probably a community music project rather than a strict music educational work, although the borders between disciplines are becoming blurred. Or we might say, our project is a cultural work with health promoting consequences. Such a project may also have been carried out as a music therapeutical (or rather a community music therapy) project (cf. Stige, Ansdell, Elefant, & Pavlicevic, 2010). It is reason to underscore, however, that this project first of all is centred on musical learning and performance, and thus will have possible consequences for health and quality of life. This insistence upon the project as a community music project or cultural work will prevent us from falling into a "treatment" trap which may arise when we seek individualistic explanations and solutions to collective problems, which in reality are resulting from oppression through the maintenance of asymmetrical relations of power. Through the development of a musical community of practice and building on the participants resources and through cooperation toward a common goal, we may avoid individualizing actions, which may lead to what community psychologists call "blaming the victim," i.e. giving the victims the responsibility for the situation they have been forced upon. However, looking at what is called community music therapy, as well as community psychology, we may find examples of musical work, as well as theoretical models that show the value of this work. This community music project, in other words, is an example to explore if we want to demonstrate how cultural work and mental health promotion are linked.

Notes

[1] <http://www.norwac.no>

[2] <http://www.interculture.no>

[3] <http://www.un.org/unrwa/refugees/lebanon.html>

[4] Medical journal The Lancet has in a series of articles documented the health situation among Palestinians – both in the occupied areas and among those living in refugee camps in neighbouring countries. See for example The Lancet Vol 373, March 5, 2009, s. 837 – 49, The Lancet Vol 373, March 28, 2009. Also, Zabaneh, Watt og O'Donnell 2008 and United

Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA). Annual Report of the Department of Health 2007.

[5] <http://www.socialcare.org/>

[6] Also called Norwegian Sunset (Reodors ballade) in Bjørnov 2005, p. 60.

[7] Palestinian refugees in Lebanon. Six decades of exile and suffering.
<http://www.amnestyusa.org/document.php?lang=e&id=ENGMDE180062007>

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