We start bright eyed
With strong belief
That we can do some good
Our hearts are pure
But far too sure
That what we have
Is what they need

We do our best
Convince ourselves
We are oppressed
By donors, structures, and the rest
Fail to see we’re not the solution
Not experts,
But part of the problem

There is no doubt
Having someone
On the inside’s great
It helps so much to smooth the way
Enjoy the ride, no guilt, okay
But how often and when
Do we cede to their say?

We start bright eyed
Convince ourselves
We’ll hold the line.
Search for our place,
Compromise.
The line gets blurry
Vale accountability.

_This poem was prompted by Anna Gibert’s post ‘Useful outsiders – how can external actors support authentic locally led development?’_

**About the author/s**

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