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Restoring arts practices after armed conflict: The critical junctures that support collaborative arts-based interventions

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Abstract

Armed conflict has devastating effects on traditional and contemporary cultural practices, destroying infrastructure and social fabric, displacing people, dividing communities, and disrupting safe access to education opportunities. Increasingly, there is recognition among humanitarian and development actors of the benefits that access to creative arts opportunities and restoration of cultural practices can bring to communities. However, the fragility of cultural eco-systems post-conflict and the power dynamics associated with outside intervention mean such work needs to be undertaken with extreme care and forethought, if it is to be fit for purpose, sustainably resourced, and able to meaningfully engage its target community.

This chapter presents a model for critically engaging with music interventions in war-affected places. The model pinpoints six factors that work to shape the activities and their delivery, but are also potential flashpoints for tensions, contestations, and vulnerability. Labelled 'critical junctures', they represent important sites of negotiation, deliberation, and action for the actors involved in these projects that draw the worldviews and priorities of diverse stakeholders into active interface. They foreground the interactions of context, power inequities, and human qualities in restoring arts practices in war-affected settings, providing a framework for action, documentation, and critical reflection.

Introduction

Armed conflict has devastating effects on arts and cultural practices, destroying infrastructure, displacing people and knowledge, and dividing communities. Increasingly, there is recognition among development humanitarian actors of the benefits that access to creative arts opportunities and restoration of cultural practices can bring to communities. However, undertaking such work requires extreme care and forethought due to the fragility of the cultural ecosystem post-conflict and the power dynamics associated with outside intervention (Schippers and Howell 2023). How should this important work be approached?

My interest in this topic comes from my personal experience in community music education and development in post-war Bosnia-Herzegovina. In 1998, two years after the Bosnian wars had ended, I travelled there with my clarinet and guitar in hand to work at the newly-opened Pavarotti Music Centre (PMC) in Mostar. The PMC was a bold and unconventional humanitarian project for its time; it aimed to use music to help heal and reunite the ethnically divided and traumatised people of Mostar. I felt a strong desire to contribute to that social goal. As a community musician, I had the necessary skills to set up ensembles, facilitate music-making, lead improvisation workshops, and create participatory projects. I was confident these methods could build trust, relationships, and community, one song, one rhythm, one workshop at a time.

It took years of music work and study, including a Master of Education and a PhD in community music, for me to understand that nothing is that linear nor that predictable in music in war-affected places. My experiences in Mostar were formative, leading me to develop a creative practice that used participatory music as a tool for community strengthening, voice, and agency. Yet when I reflected critically on my Mostar experiences, I also recalled internal conflicts and destructive moments. I wondered how a socially transformative music-making project could simultaneously generate such intense organisational and interpersonal conflict?

This question was at the heart of my PhD research on music interventions in post-war contexts. In my study, I developed a theoretical framework for engaging with flashpoints of instability within such projects. I defined these as *critical junctures* that arise during the process of restoring opportunities for music participation and development in post-war settings. Rather than being turning points or project milestones, they represent complex and non-linear sites of intense negotiation,

decision-making, and action. At these junctures, different and often conflicting perspectives on music, change, and human organisation come into direct interface.

These perspectives on music function as *constructs*, carrying meaning and expectations that shape behaviour, and seem self-evident. In war-affected settings, constructs about music converge with a broader socio-political context characterised by power struggles and efforts to reorder society. In post-war contexts, such struggles are often fueled by the influence of international aid and the competition for political, social, and economic dominance among local actors (Bougarel 2007; Ní Aoláin, Haynes and Cahn 2011; Valters, Dewhurst and de Catheu 2015). Consequently, critical junctures in post-war music development projects represent complex decision-making points within a highly contested intercultural space. While these junctures can offer opportunities for growth and clarity, they can also create instability and vulnerability.

What are some examples of constructs about music? Engagement with music is a universal human activity (Schippers 2010; Turino 2008), but its embedded meanings and functions take 'as many forms as there are cultural or subcultural identities' (Cook 1998:6). Constructs about music include views of it as an innate human capacity—something we can all participate in—but also as a talent, bestowed upon only a minority. Musical value might be construed in terms of audience engagement (e.g., making people dance), or through criteria concerning its sonic construction and composition method. Norms in transmission of music knowledge span atomistic and holistic approaches, oral/aural learning and notation-based methods, and the formality of the learning process (Schippers 2010).

Hierarchies of value exist within music constructs, where certain forms of musical knowledge are deemed more valuable than others, perpetuating the dominance of colonisers over colonised peoples, for example, or drawing boundaries between social classes (Bull 2016). Performance practices also vary between presentational and participatory approaches, with different meanings and norms of consumption attached to each (Turino 2008). In many cultures, music is believed to be healing (Gouk 2000) and in others, particular music practices are seen as redemptive, introduced to civilise or regulate populations (McGuire 2009). The enduring appeal of constructs such as the transformative 'power' of music (Bergh 2010) and musical harmony as a source of social harmony (Howell 2018b) have led to external support for music interventions that align with these beliefs (Howell 2017: 275-277). Matarasso (2017:para. 15) aptly

states that ‘no-one believes in the transcendental power of art more than those who have felt it’.

Meanwhile, constructs about transformation concern beliefs about the nature and conditions of change, while constructs about organisation dictate preferences around program design, linearity, time management, and hierarchical relationships between roles. These all have a cultural basis (Hofstede 1998). In post-conflict settings receiving international aid, these multi-dimensional constructs interact with the sociopolitical struggles for power and dominance mentioned above, and are super-imposed upon an often fragile cultural eco-system (Schippers and Howell 2023). This creates an environment in which many aspects of cultural identity and daily life are contested, and therefore in a state of flux. This is the challenging landscape in which music restoration initiatives will be implemented.

Case studies

In the remainder of the chapter, I present an overview of each critical juncture and its associated dilemmas and tensions, drawing on two case studies for illustration. The first case study is the aforementioned PMC which opened in December 1997 as an initiative of the INGO War Child UK. The famed Italian operatic tenor Luciano Pavarotti was a major donor, and the building was named in his honour. The PMC was built in Mostar, a town that had been ethnically and spatially divided following wartime ethnic cleansing. The project aimed to support the town’s reintegration and promote healing from wartime traumas among young people. Despite facing significant challenges, the PMC remains operational to this day.

The second case study is the Hadahur Music School, a community music school that opened in Dili, capital of Timor-Leste, in 2009. The school was established by a congregation of religious sisters as part of their East Timor Mission (Sisters’ East Timor Mission, or SETM) and was predominantly funded through private and philanthropic donations. It opened ten years after the country’s referendum on independence, which brought an end to Indonesia’s brutal 24-year occupation. Operating with only a modest budget and scope, Hadahur’s small team of Australian music teachers taught their students online, with biannual visits to Dili. Internal conflicts led SETM to close the school in 2010, just one year after it opened.

Methodology

The model that this chapter presents was developed as part of doctoral research into participant experiences within three post-war music development and music education projects, in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Timor-Leste, and Afghanistan. The study sought to answer two questions: What factors and forces shape and sustain music interventions in conflict-affected settings? What is the influence of the wider context, in particular the large-scale presence of aid and the recent history of war? It followed an ethnographic, multi-case study design, with semi-structured interviews and document review comprising the principal data sources.

The three projects were instigated through markedly different funding, socio-political, and cultural environments, yet grounded theory analysis showed that all featured common flashpoints for conflict around six aspects of project implementation and delivery. The prevalence of these six flashpoints led me to think of them as critical junctures in the design, development, and sustainability of these kinds of projects. Analysis of the contextual factors and patterns of discord led to development of the critical junctures model presented in the remainder of this chapter.

Critical junctures

In this section, I present the six critical junctures identified in my research (Figure 1). Illustrative negotiations from both the PMC and Hadahur are shared to demonstrate how these can pose challenges to program stability.

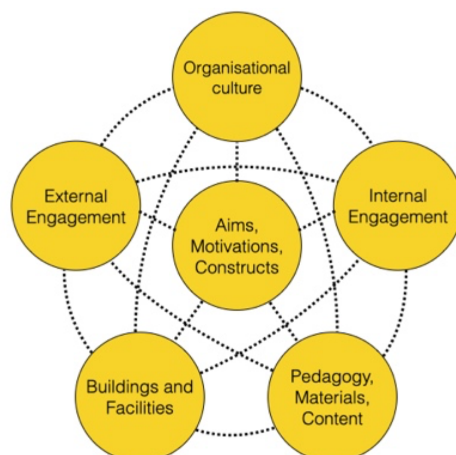

Figure 1: Model of critical junctures for music restoration and development © author

Aims, motivations and constructs

The aims attached to music activities in war-affected contexts typically fall into or across four broad categories: Music education (and the objective of restarting or initiating music-specific education opportunities); cultural regeneration (and the objective of restoring and revitalising music practices that the recent war has damaged); social development (which can encompass a wide array of social transformation and psychosocial goals); and healing, health and wellbeing, addressing the complex health and wellbeing needs of war-affected populations (Howell 2018a). Music activities may aim to deliver outcomes related to one or more of these; indeed, projects may intend to deliver on all four in varying degrees or at different project stages.

Much of the initial momentum for a music intervention is found in its stated aims, that is, the words its initiators use to communicate the project. Statements of aims and vision for the future evoke a picture of what the actors want to create and what they hope it will deliver. These statements are a key step in building legitimacy, authority, and trust, and establishing a support base for the endeavour (DeMars 2005).

But stated aims are only one dimension of this critical juncture. There are also more personal rationales and ideological constructs that drive decisions and action among

organisational actors. These *motivational roots* have a critical influence on the internal coherence of a project, in particular the extent to which they align with the stated aims (Lewis et al. 2003). While the motivational roots may be explicitly referenced in documents and interviews, they are also found in subtext, gleaned through close reading of organisational documents, and analysis of people's personal histories and rationales for action.

A third aspect that is useful to consider are the *participant motivations and aspirations*, as these can reveal how participants reframe the stated aims to reflect their lived reality and their own aspirations and concerns. For example, stated aims may connect music activities with participant health and wellbeing, while participants may be motivated by the opportunity to further their own goals, e.g., of learning to play an instrument, or having interactions with native English speakers.

Analysing these three dimensions of aims and motivations can bring any supporting ideological constructs to the fore. For example, analysis of the stated aims and foundational documents of Hadahur revealed significant differences in the motivational drivers and long-term aims of the two co-founders. These differences, underpinned by divergent constructs of music, concerned what kind of music the school should teach, the preferred pedagogical approaches, the future teacher cohort and the training they would need, and the anticipated student community. These differences were not evident in the school's public statement of aims; rather, they were revealed through close reading of internal documents and in-depth interviews with the co-founders four years after the school's demise (Howell 2017). Ultimately, despite a shared love of music and commitment to the Timorese people, the co-founders' ideological and practical differences planted the first seeds of the school's later demise.

This critical juncture reveals that stated aims are only one dimension of the aims and motivations embedded in music restoration projects. Understanding the ideological constructs and motivations that drive the actors involved can reveal deeper tensions. Any misalignments may be laying the foundations for future conflicts; thus, it is valuable to identify the different expressions of aims and motivations and subject them to early critical discussion.

Buildings and Facilities

This critical juncture is concerned with how music activities are housed and resourced in terms of material infrastructure. We could expect any music project to benefit from having a dedicated space in which to base its activities. But in war-affected environments there is often limited availability of building stock and therefore great competition for any existing resources. Music is likely to be a low priority in a context where the population's basic survival needs are still to be met.

For those with financial means, building a new, purpose-built facility or repurposing and reconstructing an existing one may be desirable. However, there are ethical implications of building construction in humanitarian contexts—not particular to the arts—which need to be considered. Reconstruction is a major, multinational, and—for some—lucrative undertaking, and the financial resources associated with this critical juncture represent a sizeable injection of wealth and resources into a high-needs setting, creating fertile grounds for bribes and other forms of corruption. Moreover, while powerful donors may be eager to place their funds into a building project to leave a tangible legacy of their support, project organisers must question if this is the best way for them to deliver on their mission. Land tenure may be a further source of conflict and corruption; wars and post-war settlements are often characterised by unjust processes of land procurement and rights, so that land procured for a building construction project may be contested or become a symbol of continued injustice for the local community (Goddard and Lempke 2013).

The PMC is an example of a building project initiated as part of broader music activities. Its founding body (War Child UK) worked with local government to renovate an existing, destroyed building (a former primary school) to create their proposed community arts centre in Mostar. The building project received accolades, commended for creating a desired community amenity while restoring a building of historic value in sympathy with its surroundings. It also built local capacity and generated local employment (Calame and Pasić 2009), and its purpose-built spaces amplified cultural production in Mostar. However, its successes were marred by corrupt practices. Key figures in War Child UK received financial inducements from the winning construction team during the tendering process (Hencke 2001; Wilson 2016). When an insider leaked this story to the press in 2001, the revelations took the charity to the brink of closure. The PMC lost a great deal of public trust in Bosnia, emerging with lasting

damage to its credibility and ability to attract funds. These events precipitated a grave financial crisis.

Having its own dedicated home has given the PMC an enviable degree of continuity. But some onlookers still questioned the construction values. 'There was too much marble,' said Willemijn Verloop, former Director, War Child Holland. 'I would personally not have built something this grand. The building process and the management of such a process is such a large amount of time and effort, and for me that is not the most effective way to support children in war, which was our mission' (interview, 15 July 2016).

Buildings and locations will also communicate values and priorities in their wider context. Is the proposed location for the activities one that is accessible (physically but also politically, culturally and socially) to all in the target cohort? The PMC was built in a town that was ethnically divided; as such, any location would be on the 'other side' for some of its would-be participants. The only site offered by the municipal authorities was on the eastern side of the divided city, some distance from the former frontline. This location represented a considerable psychological barrier for anyone from the western side. Many felt (and some continue to feel) unsafe crossing into potentially hostile territory (Howell 2015).

The complexity surrounding buildings and material resourcing in post-war environments is not particular to music or the arts. It does, however, demonstrate that an ecological orientation to planning and analysis of the role of buildings and facilities in music development projects is essential. Questions to ask must go beyond provision (what kind of space and facilities do we need?) to include questions of *benefit* (who is it for? Who benefits? How?), *purpose* (why are we locating here? Is this the best/right way to achieve our goals?), and *community* (who are our cohorts? How have we involved them? Will this space address their needs?). Centering end-users and remaining context-sensitive will help to ensure the relationship between music activities and their location(s) remain grounded in local realities and fit for local purpose.

Pedagogy and Materials

In music development activities that involve education, decisions on pedagogy and materials are crucial (i.e., what is taught, how it is taught, who teaches, and what

materials should be prioritised). Ethnomusicologist and music education scholar Huib Schippers (2010) has argued that ‘what we hear, learn, and teach is a product of what we believe about music’ (xiv). In other words, values, constructs and beliefs about music deeply influence decisions on music transmission, pedagogy, and materials. Negotiations in this critical juncture are thus fraught with ideological difference. Decision-making may consciously or unconsciously reflect the power dynamics and embedded values of the wider cultural context, which in war-affected settings may include legacies of colonisation, occupation, and development aid structures.

Histories of occupation and colonial rule in war-affected places can normalise hierarchies of knowledge that place the knowledge of the ruler above local knowledges. This is particularly evident in music education, where local or traditional practices are often dismissed or de-centered in favor of European music knowledge. Such deference can lead to pedagogical decisions that create a reliance on external musical expertise, further reinforcing power asymmetries that favor outsiders over local musicians. Even when pedagogical choices intentionally build on local cultural assets, achieving consensus on what constitutes cultural assets cannot be assumed.

Hadahur’s founders intended to support both the Timorese people’s love of and prodigious skills in choral singing in the Western classical and church tradition, as well as traditional Timorese music. While both were considered valued cultural assets, the Western classical music program had the advantage of being relatively easy to deliver. The school’s founders, being Australians of Anglo-Irish heritage, were already trained and enculturated in this tradition, instrument donations could be quickly sourced, and experienced teachers from among their existing networks were identified and engaged to teach. Timorese singers associated with a prestigious church choir were the first to enrol and were eager to develop their Western classical musical skills.

In contrast, delivering the traditional Timorese music program was challenging. These local practices had been forbidden during the decades of Indonesian occupation and military rule, resulting in broken intergenerational transmission links and limited sources of expert knowledge. Moreover, these traditions had never been taught in school settings before, necessitating the development of suitable teaching models and materials for the classroom. Despite Hadahur’s Australian Director warning that postponing the delivery of traditional Timorese music education would reinforce any internalised insecurities among students that local music was inferior, the school's modest resources were directed towards delivering the Western classical program.

These differing positions on Timor-Leste's existing cultural assets created considerable tensions and conflict. Combined with an organisational culture that gave Timorese staff only a tokenistic voice in matters of disagreement, (to be discussed next), the conflict led SETM to abruptly close the school and end the instrumental teaching and associations with Australian teachers, to the detriment of the Timorese students and staff.

Considerations at this critical juncture therefore include careful examination of several factors, including:

- Content, and how this connects (or not) with local cultural assets;
- Teaching approaches and their relationship to the practices typically associated with each music tradition;
- Debates concerning the recontextualisation of specific music practices within structured music activities and the wider context (e.g., can the traditional mode of transmission be adapted to a school environment?).

Moreover, the values and constructs underpinning the preferences of the school's organisers, teachers, learners and the wider social environment must be closely and critically examined. In a context of intensive nation-building and development, music knowledge becomes a form of cultural capital that can create access to opportunities but also reinforce inequities. Thus, both local assets and local 'pulls' towards external knowledge must be considered when determining musical content. There are ethical and pragmatic arguments for building participants' critical consciousness of the power dynamics of (music) knowledge alongside shared decision-making about what is taught, how it is taught, and the materials that should be prioritised.

Organisational Culture

Organisational culture encompasses the social dynamics, expectations, values, beliefs, and practices that evolve in any organisational setting, shaped by both internal and external factors. In the context of music activities in war-affected settings, organisational culture also encompasses the social dynamics around project ownership, autonomy, and succession from external instigators and organisers to local community members. My research has shown that this process, while essential to the long-term sustainability of a project and often intended at the outset, can face

numerous obstacles. As a result, negotiating power distribution, promoting local agency, and building capacity are critical considerations at this juncture.

One significant factor relates to the power dynamics of aid and donor funding, where donor 'gifts' ensure greater decision-making power rests with givers and financial intermediaries rather than beneficiaries and the local project team. This reinforces hierarchies of dominance, fostering dependence rather than self-determination (Freire 2000/1970; Kowalski 2011; MacLachlan, Carr and McAuliffe 2010; Stirrat and Henkel 1997). While there is growing rhetoric around partnerships and empowerment in global development, a strong culture of service delivery (i.e., top-down models of decision-making in which power and authority is retained by service deliverers rather than by those who will be directly affected by the proposed action) remains a norm (Anderson et al. 2012; MacLachlan, Carr and McAuliffe 2010; Martin 2016; Wild et al, 2015).

A preference for a service delivery culture may not be apparent until a crisis arises. This was the case at Hadahur, where local people held leadership roles and were involved in discussions about program content and their roles. However, conflicts arose among the Australian team of musicians and SETM regarding pedagogy and the absence of traditional Timorese music in the school's offerings, leading to a major operational and existential crisis. SETM leaders attempted to resolve the conflict by speaking with the parties involved and seeking solutions, but the voices of Timorese staff were lower in the hierarchy of opinions despite their senior job titles. As Kiera, the Timorese Head of Contemporary/Popular Music, lamented, 'We had these job titles, but no authority. We had no real opportunity to voice our opinions on what we could and couldn't do,' (interview, 5 June, 2014).

SETM commissioned an internal review of the school, interviewing the main stakeholders. They then decided to close the school down. The closure was abruptly announced and caused great shock among the Timorese participants. They were given no time to negotiate or adjust to the sudden closure. SETM asked the Timorese trainee teachers to return the instruments they had been loaned, abruptly ending their students' learning journeys. In their interviews with me, the Timorese and Australian teachers expressed deep dismay at this turn of events. They felt that the closure and its communication demonstrated that the school had only ever been treated as a 'project' by its initiators, rather than a genuine educational enterprise that took the students' long-term learning and development seriously. 'For a project, you can just

run it for a period and get money for your interest, and then you leave it. Everything in this country has been driven by project ideas' (Kiera, interview, 5 June 2014).

Like Hadahur, the PMC founders were committed to empowering local people of varying ages by appointing them to senior administrative roles from the outset. David Wilson, the founding director (who was also co-founder of War Child UK), believed in grassroots empowerment and local ownership, saying that 'if anything works, it works from the bottom up, not the top down' (David Wilson, interview, 22 February 2015). He encouraged young musicians to take on leadership roles, which they did with increasing confidence and authority. However, Wilson and War Child neglected to provide the necessary support for staff capacity development in the economic and administrative aspects of running a complex NGO. In later interviews with me, the Bosnian staff admitted they had been poorly equipped to meet the strategic needs of the project (Amela and Oha, PMC leadership team, interview, November 2013). An external business consultant agreed, noting in his 2003 report to War Child Holland that the Bosnian team was still developing their grant-writing skills and lacked the necessary business acumen to effectively market the income-generating aspects of the building (i.e., the recording studio and restaurant) (le Cosquino de Bussy and Esser 2003).

In a desperate attempt to prevent the PMC from closing permanently following its transfer to full local leadership, the first local PMC Director implemented strict austerity measures. However, these measures became increasingly frustrating to work within, causing staff associated with independently funded programs to resign and reconstitute their programs as independent NGOs. This left the PMC with only a skeleton staff and little operational budget, and a great sense of precarity. While the PMC began with an organisational culture that recognised and authorised local ownership of the project, the British founders failed to provide the necessary skills development for the local team to deliver all aspects of their roles. The transfer of ownership and authority to a local team triggered a fiscal and managerial crisis that, in turn, created a crisis of morale and belonging. Both crises took the remaining staff nearly a decade to recover from.

Organisational culture is a multifaceted and complex phenomenon, and the challenges discussed above are only two of the many that can arise at this crucial juncture. While issues surrounding power distribution reveal the influence of development norms, individual subjectivities, political beliefs, and emotional investments can also play a

crucial role. Personal attachment and identification with music activities can hinder the complete transfer of power. Political confidence in grassroots action can result in a failure to recognise where additional support is necessary. A staff member at PMC expressed his frustration with the following straightforward advice: ‘If you made it for them, then have in mind that it is theirs, it’s not yours’ (Oha, interview, 31 October 2013).

Internal Engagement

The critical juncture of Internal Engagement is closely connected to organisational culture, as it involves negotiating and navigating meaning and purpose. This is where factors that keep participants engaged with and committed to the music project over time come into play. While engagement happens at the personal level, it can be reinforced and made even more meaningful through shared narratives of purpose at the organisational level. These narratives explain the ‘greater good’ of individual actions and participation, and articulate likely or desired outcomes. Such shared narratives can bring coherence and a sense of belonging for participants. They are also associated with the cultivation of hope and hopefulness, ushering in a corresponding set of psychological and emotional protections (Ben Asher et al, 2020; Snyder, Rand and Sigmon, 2002.)

However, internal engagement is dynamic. As people and practices interact with the wider context, initial project meanings may shift or lose relevance (Lewis 2003). These shifts may take place as a result of internal contradictions—such as when stated aims are undermined by organisational practices—or external contradictions, where something in the wider environment does not align with the internal narratives of meaning (Howell 2023). The resulting gap between the ideal or imagined version of events and actuality is what Lewis and Mosse (2006) call a disjuncture and is a significant reason for participant disengagement or exit.

For example, at the PMC, a key narrative that contributed to participant engagement was the notion that the centre was open to all young people, regardless of their social, economic, or health status. This philosophy was demonstrated in the approach staff took with a group of local children who were known for vandalising the building. Instead of excluding or punishing them, staff invited them to participate in all the PMC's activities, emphasising that they were valued members of the community. One former staff member noted that over time, these children became increasingly involved in the

work of the PMC, and the vandalism ceased entirely: ‘After a year, I noticed that nobody was doing anything bad to the gardens or the building’ (Mustafa, interview, 6 November 2013).

Another important source of meaning and engagement for many of its regular attendees was the PMC’s explicit welcome of young people from all ethnic backgrounds. However, there were occasional incidents that contradicted the narrative of ethnic inclusion. Two former PMC regulars recalled a local staff member’s declaration that the PMC ‘wasn’t really’ for people from the other side of Mostar, which included both research participants. Despite challenging the staff member and receiving a quick response from the PMC Director to stop such rhetoric, the comment marked a turning point in their daily engagement with the PMC. They drifted away, due to the feeling of disjuncture and dissonance (Alma and Haris, interview, 7 November 2013).

Project participants’ internal narratives of meaning are often shaped by the stated aims of a project, which may be perceived as promises (Anderson, Brown and Jean 2012). However, if the actual practices do not align with what was promised, participants may experience feelings of betrayal. The Hadahur program included a teacher training project with an isolated rural primary school in Bessilau village. The Bessilau teachers and students received an intensive week of workshops with Australian consultant trainers. The students then performed at a prestigious concert at the Timor-Leste Presidential Palace in Dili. The Bessilau teachers had understood that these activities marked the beginning of their involvement with Hadahur, and that the musical instruments used in the workshops would remain in their school. Instead, after the concert, the instruments remained in Dili. Additionally, the Hadahur teachers never visited them again, leaving the Bessilau group feeling betrayed by SETM and the Australian teachers for their failure to take seriously the group's deep enthusiasm and aspirations (Bessilau teachers’ focus group, 6 June 2014).

It is therefore crucial in this critical juncture to remain cognisant of the narratives – articulated or implied – that are supporting the internal engagement of learners, teachers, and other participants. If these are contradicted by internal or external events, it can create ruptures that undermine the feelings of meaning and purpose that drive engagement. Of course, music organisers can’t control the external environment; thus, it is critical to maintain congruence between how the music activities are described and justified (their stated aims) and the realities of the context. These

descriptions may need to adapt in response to political, economic, cultural, or organisational shifts in the wider context and project activities.

External Engagement

External engagement with a music program is not solely limited to external financial support and positive attention. In its fullest manifestation, this critical juncture includes gestures of disinterest and hostility as well as support from groups including participant and target communities, geographically proximate communities, different levels of government, and other institutions such as the media and religious institutions. The negotiations that occur encompass factors that influence or determine external engagement, and how external interests influence and shape the music activities and their long-term sustainability.

For example, community engagement (where 'community' refers to target and participant communities as well as the wider community of local people who are not directly involved in the activities) is influenced by a range of factors. The visibility and accessibility of the music activities, the social value attached to music within that society, and the potential for political framing of the project all play a role. In some cases, music activities can be politicised, which can impact who in the community is willing to participate. In the ethnic and spatial divisions of Mostar, for example, the PMC's location on the eastern side of Mostar made it vulnerable to being viewed as 'for' the Bosniak ethnic majority on that side. Many people living in West Mostar 'didn't know and possibly didn't want to know [about the PMC] . . . they didn't necessarily see that Centre as *their* Centre' (Kenet, participant from West Mostar, interview, 20 October 2013). Those that wanted to engage also faced warnings from members of their own community who were committed to ethnic division (Howell, Pruitt and Hassler 2019). Rather than the music activities being able to transcend the wider political environment, they were instead vulnerable to manipulation by political actors, and community engagement reflected this.

In contrast, Hadahur lacked both visibility and accessibility. It could not secure dedicated premises from which to work and therefore operated out of several temporary venues. Intending to start small, the school's organisers restricted its enrolments to members and their extended families of a church choir with whom SETM had already established a partnership. However, this meant that that when people living in the vicinity of the temporary music venues (such as parish halls) asked if they

could join the school and access its music education, they were told there were no places available. This caused perceptions of unfairness, and in retaliation the neighbourhood children greeted those arriving for their lessons with stone-throwing as an expression of their resentment (Milka, trainee violin teacher, interview, 27 May 2014). The school's organisers had not anticipated this negative form of community engagement.

In terms of donor relationships, my research revealed both the benefits and vulnerability that is associated with 'parent' NGOs. Both the PMC and Hadahur were founded by established NGOs that functioned as 'parent bodies', fundraising on their behalf and administering those funds directly. Parent NGOs can help subsidise operational costs and provide essential resources and infrastructure, making this a likely model for many arts programs. For example, even though Hadahur existed in name as an independent entity, its operations depended on the administrative staff, vehicles, premises and communications systems of SETM. This was financially advantageous while it was establishing its programs.

However, the period of conflict aomng Hadahur's leadership coincided with a major organisational restructure and strategic overhaul at SETM. New staff joined SETM in Sydney and all current commitments were reviewed and assessed for their alignment with the organisational mission. Hadahur's umbilical attachment to SETM made it vulnerable to decisions made in the Sydney office. As a small project mired in conflict and engaged in activities that did not directly contribute to SETM's mission to support the most disadvantaged communities in Timor-Leste, Hadahur struggled to demonstrate strategic value. The decision to close the school reflected this period of change in the parent organisation as well as the damaging conflicts taking place within the school itself.

Similarly, the PMC became vulnerable to changes in strategy and staffing in War Child UK. In the wake of the corruption scandal noted earlier, many of War Child UK's founding staff left. They were replaced by aid and development professionals who questioned the PMC's strategic value (W Verloop, interview, 15 July 2016). Around the same time, a number of celebrity patrons, including Pavarotti, ended their patronage of War Child UK, depriving the PMC of an important layer of protective oversight from influential supporters. War Child UK went on to sever its ties with the PMC, ushering in an era of financial instability that has shaped its tenuous existence ever since (Elvedin Nezirovic, PMC Director, interview, 5 November 2013). Thus, while a parent

organisation may provide the necessary backing that allows a new music program to get off the ground in a post-war setting, changes to the parent's internal structure and strategic priorities can make this relationship a source of vulnerability for dependent music programs.

Music development and restoration: a human endeavour

The model of critical junctures I have introduced in this chapter is intended to facilitate critical engagement for researchers, practitioners, and project organisers to plan, implement, and evaluate music and arts programs in war-affected settings. It highlights the complexity of creating space for the arts in sites of tremendous cultural instability, contestation, and change, and the challenges that arise from working with the arts within the norms of development action. The model brings operational issues, power dynamics, and sources of meaning into dialogue in the analytical space, providing a framework for grappling with the technical and contextual realities of the cultural eco-system while attending to the human dynamics that motivate individuals to act and commit.

Moreover, it supports an understanding that music development and restoration projects in war-affected settings are not just about operation and delivery; they rely on human qualities like hope, commitment, faith, and love. They are initiated by individuals who believe that art is a profound and fundamental aspect of human existence. Creating the conditions for what one of my Bosnian interlocutors called 'dreams in a dreamless world' (Howell 2017, p. 3) matters a great deal in the aftermath of war. Remaining aware of critical junctures and the flashpoints they harbour can help shape work with sensitivity to *all* the dynamics of the wider context, with the hope that this initial injection of arts development support can be sustained long into the future.

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