

CHAPTER 5

Democratic Theatre Practice in Donor-funded Projects: Challenges and Interventions

Muneeb Ur Rehman

Applied theatre practitioner, educator, actor, voice-over artist, improvisation coach and occasional stand-up comedian, Pakistan

Abstract: Karachi, Pakistan is a mosaic of marginalized communities belonging to diverse ethnicities with distinct yet overlapping histories. Set against a backdrop of gang warfare and extremism, the city's development sector has endeavoured to channelize the energies of at-risk youth toward educational and creative outlets. This chapter will explore if, and how, theatre projects restricted by specific attitudinal goals of countering violent extremism can organically foster more basic values of deliberative democracy within the logistical and temporal constraints of a donor-supervised project. In a divisive climate of struggling institutional democracy and governance, can a grass-roots theatre practice emerge that inculcates collective goodwill and critical generosity in the community while meeting official goals of countering violent extremism and growing even after the project period ends? Using Stephani Etheridge Woodson's *Community Cultural Development* as a guiding theoretical framework, this chapter will explore the possibilities, challenges, roadblocks and opportunities of using *Theatre for Youth Third Space*, within the parameters of said project, to transcend the goals of Counter Violent Extremism (CVE). The project was carried out with 42 youth groups in six districts of Karachi over a period of eleven months, divided into two 18-week cycles, each culminating in youth-devised Social Action Projects (SAPs) that directly or indirectly address violent extremism.

Keywords: democracy, theatre, donor-funded, TFY Third Space

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Introduction

Counter Violent Extremism (CVE)-focused development initiatives in Karachi are born out of post 9/11 interventions in Pakistan's northwestern areas, where many international donor agencies contributed a significant amount of resources to counteract the social and cultural influence of extremist militant groups. By the end of 2005, the US had no results to corroborate the much-touted "decapitation" strategy of the global War on Terror (Kundani & Hayes, 2018). The US State Department's rhetoric, which professed to "kill and uproot... Al Qaeda leaders" to enforce "regime change" (p. 4), with attacks on Afghanistan and Iraq, was starting to be viewed with deep skepticism. In fact, it may have helped escalate violent conflict, with countries in the West that had not previously been targeted, such as the United Kingdom and Spain, facing attacks in 2007 and 2014, respectively. This precipitated a change of tack from the Bush administration, aiming to "win hearts and minds" as well as triggering "shock and awe" (p. 4), which, as had been seen in both Afghanistan and Iraq, had significant limitations and even counter-effects.

By 2006, CVE had entered the global policy lexicon and become a widely accepted measure in the fight against terrorism, having achieved prominence through Tony Blair's "Preventing Violent Extremism" (PVE) (Kundani & Hayes, 2018, p. 7). The rallying cry from Washington and London against Al-Qaeda coincided with the rise of the term "Violent Extremism" in English language news sources, from close to zero articles in 2005 to seven thousand by 2015 (Fig. 1).

The parallel broadcasting of "violent extremism" by western power centers and media outlets respectively as a fundamental threat to peace made it synonymous with Islamic radicalism, which, consequently, led to large-scale Islamophobia in the western world. It is important to note that prior to 9/11, the term "violent extremism" was exclusively used to refer to aggressive far right and neo-Nazi politics (Kundani & Hayes, 2018). Thereafter, uncritical feverish global discourse rebranded "violent extremism" as militant Islamic terror.

CVE programmes adopted two distinct approaches. One was more developmental in outlook, in that programmes spanned across all areas of life including agriculture, infrastructure, education, environment

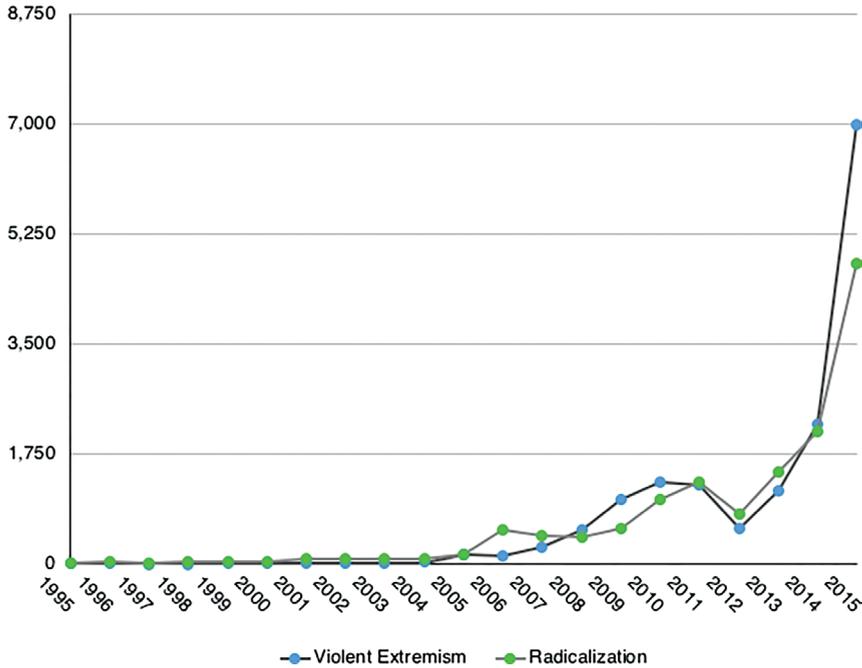


Figure 1 Articles mentioning radicalization and violent extremism in English-language news sources, 1995–2015. (Kundani & Hayes, 2018)

and sports, and were executed over the course of five years. These activities were conceived under the canopy of “Crisis Prevention” (M. Javed, personal communication, April 8, 2020), encompassing all stakeholders of the local communities including youth, local partners, provincial government bodies, federal government bodies and the armed forces in their planning, execution, and assessment. The UNDP collaborated with countries like Japan, Saudi Arabia and Italy to fund and organize these long-term developmental projects. The fact that these projects only came about in response to the threat of Talibanisation has significant philosophical and conceptual ramifications, setting a precedent in which Counter-Violent Extremism became a singular overarching aim for multitudinous projects in the following years. Starting in the late 2000s and continuing well into the mid-2010s, the initial reactive drive to soak up extremist elements in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK), the north western province of Pakistan, and the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), spread into a widespread movement in Pakistan’s development sector to actively shift behaviours and attitudes toward

positive civic engagement amongst marginalized communities, which, according to conventional wisdom, were vulnerable to the influence of hardliner religious rhetoric (Kundani & Hayes, 2018).

The other approach to preventing/countering violent extremism, known as “emergency response” (M. Javed, personal communication, April 8, 2020), adopted a swifter and more short-term trajectory. Funded by USAID, these interventions took the form of a myriad of projects in communities potentially receptive to religious extremism, but their timescale was strictly limited, from six months to a year at most. By the mid-2010s, USAID had reset its CVE mission base in Karachi, Pakistan’s biggest metropolitan city, to strategically soak up extremist elements in communities struggling with socio-economic and infrastructure issues. It was believed that the youth of these areas, lacking avenues for healthy social engagement, and educational opportunities for personal and professional growth, could grow alienated from society and potentially ally themselves with rogue networks that were operational in the north-western parts of the country and Afghanistan (UNDP, 2016).

In order to understand the evolution of CVE work in Pakistan, it is necessary to understand the structural hierarchy of the landscape in which an array of projects in schools, community centres and public spaces came to life, carried out by local NGOs and welfare organizations via USAID grants. Authorized by the US Congress under the Foreign Assistance Act (USAID, 2013) USAID operates under the guidance of the US National Security Council, hiring third-party contractors in recipient countries to govern, regulate and assess grants-based projects awarded to organizations working on social development in the fields of education, health, sports, community development and the like. A skimming review of these projects post 9/11, through third-party contractors disbursing grants to organizations working with marginalized communities in Pakistan, indicates that the collective focus of this ecosystem has expanded from buffering the encroachment of violent extremism to long-term skill-building of the beneficiaries, beyond the scope of official project timelines (M. Javed, personal communication, April 8, 2020). However, the desired target of sustained independent community engagement beyond the penumbra of donor-funded projects faces many

administrative, economic and cultural bottlenecks, which may be resolved through community-centred artistic and cultural exploration, as this author asserts on the basis of his experience as a Theatre Trainer in *AzmeNaujawan* (AeN), a CVE-focused community engagement programme with marginalized youth across several districts of Karachi.

The genesis of *AzmeNaujawan* came from an environment that had seen a spate of USAID-funded “emergency response” projects in the post 9/11 landscape pregnant with the global CVE discourse. From the late 2000s till the mid-2010s, almost all civil society organizations and NGOs of Karachi executed programmes in diverse domains as means to counter violent extremism. The running reflection over the efficacy of these programmes – from donor agencies to third-party contractors to on-field organizations – was that different organizations holding expertise in different areas of human development needed to join hands for more enduring and far-reaching results. In acknowledgement of the logistical and resource gaps of various organizations under the donor umbrella, a new USAID-funded project was introduced which convened a consortium of 10 organizations with an established presence and engagement in 10 districts of Karachi, its aim being to cast a wider net in its involvement in community engagement along the lines of countering violent extremism. All ten organizations pooled their intellectual resources from years of working with the youth of their communities to design a comprehensive curriculum. It spanned from areas as broad as civic engagement and political awareness to topics as specific in skills-development as social media and media literacy, benefitting approximately over 1,000 youth from under-privileged areas of Karachi with a total of 90-teaching hours in an out-of-school engagement drive. This new project was *AzmeNaujawan*.

The lens of TFY third space CCD framework

For three years running – six cycles in all – the AeN programme has undergone structural and curricular adjustments, most notable of which, for the interest of this chapter, was the incorporation of specialized theatre and arts modules in the third cycle. As to how theatre and arts can be most, if at all, effective in donor-defined civic engagement programmes,

it is helpful to approach the subject from the scholarship of Theatre for Youth (TFY).

Theatre for Youth (TFY) has traditionally treated children and youth as “audience” and “learners” (Woodson, 2015, p. 4) who are presented with pre-defined, pre-conceived learning outcomes and educational outputs designed to lead them to wholesome and moral citizenry. This banking model of transference (Freire, 1970) assumes youth as passive recipients instead of active cultural creators. Theatre for Youth Third Space, on the other hand, building on the understanding of cultural processes defined by political theorist Harry Boyte as “free-space” (Boyte, 2004, as cited in Woodson, 2015, p. 15) and critical theorist Homi Bhabha as the “between landscape” (Bhabha, 2004, as cited in Woodson, 2015, p. 15), sees artistic and theatrical engagement as a non-judgemental space for “new ways of looking at the world”(Woodson, 2015, p. 15), and “call[s] into question fixed categorizations” that “foster new possibilities for cultural meanings” (p. 15). Stephani Ethridge Woodson’s (2015) work with TFY is a revisionist attempt to redefine cultural engagement of children and youth as a space of “play, reflection, public-making, recognizing children and youth as civic assets and social actors” (p. 16). The “third space” of TFY is then really an ideological play-space between polarities conventionally marked as clear signposts for young people in their educational conditioning to approach any conceptual, moral, social or practical mode of life, a “free-space” where “powerless people have a measure of autonomy for self-organization and engagement with alternative ideas” (Boyte, 2004, p. 61). The challenge, on a practical level, is to extend the said idea from figurative conceptual use to implemented practical reality whereby youth are treated as capable participatory citizens, building the social, political, economic and cultural power of their communities through principles of deliberative democracy rather than directorial relationships.

The values of deliberative democracy in artistic facilitation with the youth treated as cultural producers places “reasoned, pluralistic discussion front and centre in the process” (Woodson, 2015, p. 34), of collectively deriving measures and interventions involving “both formal publics and informal public spheres” (p. 34). The dicta of deliberative democratic values, in any sort of intervention in a community, thus proposes a

wholesome ecosystem that encompasses all varieties of flows amongst various viewpoints, coalesces communal life and bridges “informal and formal publics” (Gutmann & Thomas, 2004, p. 125). Grounded in the philosophical assumption that “people are not objects to be governed (or risks to be managed); instead, are self-directed agents collaborating in their own governance” (p. 125), deliberative democracy is a core tenet of third space facilitation for youth and informs the author’s critique of AeN and similar donor-funded projects.

The scope of third space facilitation imbued by the values of deliberative democracy transcend the “service” or “welfare” mindset heavily prevalent in development and humanitarian sectors. Gutmann (1999) discusses how third space facilitation widens the scope to focus on other essential skills, such as reading and writing, numeracy, and critical reasoning, all of which will help develop and build communities that are empathetic and understanding, and willing to consider other people’s points of view (p. xiii). These are not learning outcomes for employable skills – which are often the aim of engagement with the youth for their future economic prospects in the capitalist labour market. Rather, in combination with virtues of “veracity, nonviolence, practical judgment, civic integrity and magnanimity” (p. xiii) these skills make for “a spirit of collective goodwill and critical generosity” (p. xiii) in the affairs of community life, in its functioning and decision-making.

The theoretical formulation of a deliberately democratic TFY third space, idealizing a holistically reflexive grounds-up exploration of self-engendered change and meaning-making, cannot be divorced from the broader and deeper cultural and economic contexts of the life of youth in a community. The nexus of artistic expression with cultural evolution in the ontology of a community’s life is articulated by Don Adams and Arlene Goldbard (2001) in *Creative community: The art of cultural development*, as a macro-level value spanning the system at all levels of power that “collaborate[s] with others to express identity, concerns and aspirations through the arts while building cultural capacity and contributing to social change” (p. 8).

Such a conception moves the arts away from being an embellished presentational artefact intended for entertainment, to a collective meditative

laboratory, outgrowing the model of community engagement in which external “service providers” impose pre-determined outputs, instead allowing the youth of a community to explore and create modes and means of living from their own unique perspectives, capacities, and imaginations. The goal of TFY third space facilitation is, therefore, to break the fixed categories of the consumer economy and, by engaging with the cultural fabric of the community itself, collectively renegotiate their modes of living and the assumptions underlying them. It is not about giving youth power, which has more the ring of populist sloganeering than grounded social engineering, but rather models that suggest to them how to “navigate and practice power” (Woodson, 2015, p. 34) flowing at multiple levels in what Arendt (1958) calls the “web of relations” that constitute the ever-shifting culture, norms, and demographics of a community (Woodson, 2015, p. 39). Such a phenomenon enables “people (to) see themselves as the co-creators of democracy, not simply as customers or clients, voters, protestors or volunteers”, who unquestioningly perpetuate status quo power structures to their own disadvantage by continuing to perform rigid, prescriptive, and functional roles in society (Boyte & Kari, 1996, p. 5). A collective navigating and negotiating ground powered by exploratory thrusts of the arts, TFY third space as Community Cultural Development casts a wide net across civic, social, and political structures intersecting with the cultural life of a community, calling what Sampson (2012) labels “collective efficacy”(p. 152) from youth through social cohesion and shared expectations for control in communal life, with “building belonging” (Woodson, 2015, p. 31) taken to be the hallmark of building the public sphere.

TFY in the Community Cultural Development framework therefore sees empowered participation of the youth in “culture as means of emancipation, not the primary end in itself” and “artists as agents of transformation” (Adams & Goldbard, 2001). The particulars of emancipatory transformation are not ipso facto curricular goals but determinable by explorations and reflections of the youth themselves through artistic mediums, not by vested interests of external agents in particular prohibitory behaviours of community members, i.e., violent extremism.

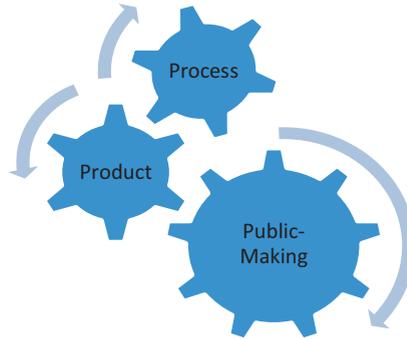


Figure 2 Intertwined fold of TFY third space practice. (Woodson, 2015)

If the cycle of process, product and public-making in TFY CCD theatre facilitation sustains continuity in communal life (Fig. 2), it has the potential to organically “weave multiple endeavors and professions into the never-ending work of building and rebuilding the social, civic, physical, economic and spiritual fabrics of communities” (Borrup, 2006, as cited in Woodson, 2015, p. 14).

Woodson (2015) places TFY third space at the epicentre of the evolving process of culture-building, through which the experience of shared meanings, multiple identities and existing power structures is reflectively and proactively explored by the youth via theatre to continuously expand and materialise new possibilities of living. Thus theatre, and the arts in general, are viewed to be the engine driving the evolution of youth-centred, self-empowered cultural action. What sets Woodson apart is the insistence on youth’s artistic engagement as a “collective” force, not an avenue for individual development, one that takes ownership of articulating, sharing, evaluating and re-imagining community dynamics. TFY CCD offers a long-term, deeper, grounds-up approach to youth development that is not congested by unreflective top-down value impositions. This requires integration of all stakeholders as they collaborate amongst each other (Morse, 2004, p. 55).

To sum up the above, this front-running empowered stance of youth in the complex life of a community distinctly draws away from development models that treat young people as subjects to be trained in modes of being, assumed valuable from the outset, by supposedly superior entities/forces that perpetuate status quo power structures (Woodson, 2015,

pp. 11–12). It is through this lens of TFY third space as Community Cultural Development that donor-funded projects such as AeN can transform into more meaningful interventions.

With TFY third space CCD as our conceptual guide, what opportunities and challenges can donor-funded project like AeN, with pre-set goals of CVE, encounter in pursuing the goals of TFY third space?

Reflections on donor-funded theatre teaching

The AeN programme was structured as follows. In the first phase, each member organisation hired one lead trainer and one co-trainer, both of whom were assigned to schools/youth centres of one locality, to teach the AeN curriculum to two cohorts of local youth, one aged between 14–17 and the other 18–25.

Viewed through the lens of CCD TFY, the move to categorize participants based on age has inadvertent discriminatory consequences which, though mostly indiscernible amidst the administrative rigmarole of designing and executing a programme, are deeply counterproductive to project goals. Segregation based on age, carrying with it deep cultural assumptions regarding maturity and seniority, paradoxically perpetuates the hierarchical power structure that CCD TFY purports to disintegrate and replace with “explorations of power beyond... control structures most youth experience in school settings” (Woodson, 2015, p. 62). Of course, a hierarchy emerges from every group based on its emergent leadership, division of resources and objectives at hand, but pre-determined separation on none of those factors but age implicitly assigns a hierarchy that is not organically determined from empowered interactions of the individuals of the group. Instead, it implicitly affirms organizational hierarchy along assumed notions of seniority attached with age *ipso facto*. Even beyond the immediately relatable experience of school settings, such categorization based on age is already deeply entrenched in our cultural milieu. A CCD framework, on the other hand, intends a “more complex awareness of the circulation of power among the youth” (p. 62).

During implementation of phase 1, however, strict segregation based on age was not possible for logistical reasons. There was overlap between

the two age groups due to the limited availability of participants for the programme after school. In phase 2, therefore, total training hours were compressed from 90 to 50 hours owing to challenges faced by AeN trainers, consortium NGOs and partner schools, along with prior commitments of the participants. The burden of schoolwork, tuitions, part-time employment to support family income, domestic responsibilities (especially for females) and madrassah (religious school) engagement already made for a hectic schedule for the participants, manifesting in their struggle to attend all 90-curriculum hours with dedication and commitment. With shortened curriculum hours in phase 2, almost halved from the previous phase, the workload for participants could be adequately accommodated within their ongoing academic and personal commitments.

The trajectory of art and culture over three phases of the programme evolved in terms of the scope for personality development of beneficiaries and not just as a colourful cushion against behaviours potentially signalling violent extremism. In phase 1, a theatre company, a drama school, and an art collective conducted theatre performances and gallery exhibitions at youth centres in marginalized areas, the benefits of which could be seen in subsequent arts- and theatre-based SAPs undertaken by the participants, despite their lack of direct training. Acknowledging the innate inclination participants had for theatre and visual arts, the consortium devoted ten hours to art and culture modules in phase 2, to be developed and imparted to AeN trainers by the performers from the previous phase.

The trainers, however, encountered difficulties in delivering the specialized content of the art and culture modules. With only a fringe involvement in theatre and the arts, limited to the AeN training programme, the trainers required a deeper grounding to teach these disciplines in the context of community development with a particular focus on CVE. Therefore, for phase 3, specialized trainers for theatre, visual arts and music were hired. The first cycle of phase 3, with these three specialized modules, delivered to 35 youth groups from six districts, produced a promising engagement, manifesting in four, five, and 21 SAPs from theatre, music and visual arts respectively. Amongst the three modules, the

theatre module is being evaluated against TFY third space principles for CCD potential. In each cycle, a new cohort of beneficiary participants was enrolled from the communities.

This author was brought onboard as Theatre Trainer in phase 3. The first challenge was to draw out a curriculum that enabled participants with little to no theatre exposure to learn the basics of theatre and how, apart from its entertainment value, it could be used as a tool to transform tendencies of violent behaviours. With 35 groups (one organization's grant process was delayed, so the total of 42 groups was not available in the first cycle) to teach, each containing approximately 20 to 25 participants, sometimes even more, the learning objective was to be delivered in less than 3 hours per group at a local venue. (Venues were partner organizations of the consortium NGOs active in the locality.) Later in the term, the training session was to be followed up by mentoring sessions for those participants using theatre for their SAPs.

The theatre curriculum drew from improvisational theatre and Augusto Boal's Theatre of the Oppressed. From September 2019 to January 2020, this author taught the curriculum to 35 youth groups comprising over 1,000 students. The lesson plan reflected the inherent difficulty of introducing theatre novices to theatrical practice not only under extreme time pressure, but also the extreme specificity of the predetermined CVE outcome. The first half of the three-hour plan was devoted to ice-breaking, theatre warm-ups and improvisational games to build a sense of an ensemble for the ensuing work. The second half was devoted to problem-hunting from the experience of the participants through variations of Image Theatre, with the problems thus identified to be used as themes, should participants so choose, for subsequent SAPs which would, albeit loosely, address CVE and, in so doing, meet the programme's objectives.

The time constraints on participants' availability, however, contracted theatre sessions to around two hours. Issues gathered from collective imaging of problem scenarios from participants' lives included girls' struggles in their homes and community for education and independence, e.g., a girl being dissuaded by her brother from going to tuitions alone, or a girl standing up to her mother pushing her daughter to devote time to housework instead of her studies. Issues involving religion indicated

differences of opinion over ritual or consumption, e.g., disagreement over setting up lights across a shared fence with a neighbour on occasion of the Prophet's birthday, or a row with parents over listening to *Noha*, an elegiac form of Muslim minority Shiite sect, on television. Points such as these were far more common than incidents of violence, and even those incidents were more likely to be of a secular or mundane nature, such as adolescent disputes in games of cricket or football.

Issues generated from boys' imaging also included disagreements with parents, e.g., being disallowed by parents to ride motorcycles for safety reasons, or pressure to meet expectations of masculinity by fulfilling household responsibilities. There was objective identification of communal problems as well, e.g., rampant drug use in the area, from individual experiences in the community.

With the participants neither speaking nor acting radically, the problem-generation through theatre revolved around conflicts – domestic, economic, adolescent and generational – that could be expected in any young person's life. However, in the absence of CVE-related issues, the community organizations and trainers framed the youths' issues as building Community Resilience, a sister-term to CVE, to present to donors results of trainings in the field. This is an indication of the rift between the donor mindset harking back to the post 9/11 discourse and the real lived experience of the marginalized youth in developing countries fifteen years hence, calling for essential revisions of the conceptual basis of programmes such as AeN, if they are to make a long-term, deeper, more grounded impact in the lives of young people in marginalized communities.

Using image theatre to draw problems from the lives of the participants ensured that theatrical content generated was grounded in community experiences, a fundamental element of TFY third space CCD. This did not, however, prove to be the beginning of a new approach to the TFY *process*, because the focus from there on out became the presentation of SAPs before the end of the cycle. This is typical of donor-funded programmes in which the *actual* efficacy and potential of teaching methods is compromised by the need to *demonstrate* outward evidences of predetermined outcomes to donors. This meant that the groups interested in

presenting theatre-based SAPs received only two of the planned mentoring sessions before they presented their projects. Under these constraints, it was impossible for any of the groups to conduct long-term SAPs – all six of the theatre-based projects, presented by six different community centres, covering themes of interfaith harmony, the ravages of drug abuse, violence against students, street harassment, abuse of language, and thalassemia awareness, were one-day events. While a couple of other programmes had produced self-sustaining projects that survived beyond the programme cycle, theatre- and arts-based SAPs that lasted no more than a single day were able to meet the requirements of community development, even though their ephemeral nature meant they could not have long-term effects on the community.

The compressed cycle of most CVE programmes is symptomatic of the “emergency response” approach to CVE that took hold in the early 2000s, when, in the frenetic political climate that followed 9/11, marginalized communities throughout the Muslim world were thought to be potential hotbeds of terrorist activity. This run-and-gun approach, with its rapid bursts of projects, assumed a centrality and an urgency in the ascent of religious radicalism that was not borne out by subsequent research on these communities. In effect, the idea that these communities were in imminent danger of turning to violent extremism led to projects that attempted to solve a problem that did not exist, while failing to address deeper and more relevant issues that were not related to foreign policy. Furthermore, the short-lived nature of the projects did not allow for long-term impact of any kind, even within the parameters of CVE.

AeN, while more developmental, and therefore more long-term in its approach, was nevertheless designed to correspond to the academic calendar, with most of the participants being adolescents or young adults who were enrolled in school or university, and programmes under AeN were therefore built around academic schedules. The already cramped nature of these schedules meant that no cycle could extend beyond a single term, i.e., about five months. With as many as seven community organizations engaged simultaneously, this was only just enough time to cover training for all participants, let alone for the TFY process to take root in communal life. With new participants inducted at the beginning

of each cycle, participants' exposure to AeN training was limited to no more than five months, which meant the emphasis of these programmes became the delivery of CVE-related SAPs in order to meet donor requirements, rather than the holistic approach to transforming communal life that was the original aim of TFY.

Old seeds don't grow new trees

It can be seen that programmes like AeN are tied to the foreign policy interests of the governments that fund donor agencies, creating a functional relationship between the donors and participants of such programmes, in which CVE becomes both the primary goal of project planning and the sole yardstick for project evaluation, at the expense of larger possibilities of youth empowerment and community development (Woodson, 2015). There is, therefore, a lacuna in the current methodology for a counter-approach that, rather than "focus[ing] on what communities lack (or the risks they carry of violent extremism), suggests asset development as a useful lens" (Woodson, 2015, p. 52) for community-based artistic interventions.

Although AeN avowedly targeted CVE outcomes, it remained ambiguous as to the *means* and *reach* of achieving such. Each cycle was to culminate in SAPs designed by participants that, while ostensibly grounded in the critical reflections and personal experiences arising from their theatre practice, were nevertheless required to explicitly address CVE in one way or another. This overarching concern incentivized trainers, organizers, and participants to frame SAPs in CVE-related terms, and to subsume the broader developmental goals – such as self-determination, critical reflection, and collective nurturing of multiple capitals – into the narrow CVE agenda.

Such ambivalence regarding the *means* to achieve CVE outcomes in donor-funded projects is symptomatic of the fundamental policy-level vagueness surrounding the *means* to counter radical behaviours and attitudes. In the frenetic aftermath of 9/11 and subsequent to the invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq, the notion that broad-ranging development goals (which sought to reduce poverty and provide education)

would help “reduce violent extremism” (Kundani & Hayes, 2018, p. 11) captured the imagination of policy makers despite the fact that “there is no evidence to demonstrate that such a causal mechanism exists” (p. 11).

Recent research on causes of terrorism also identifies the tenuous relationship between radicalization and terrorism. John Horgan, director of the International Center for the Study of Terrorism at Pennsylvania State University, has said:

The idea that radicalisation causes terrorism is perhaps the greatest myth alive today in terrorism research... [First], the overwhelming majority of people who hold radical beliefs do not engage in violence. And second, there is increasing evidence that people who engage in terrorism don't necessarily hold radical beliefs. (Knefel, 2013)

However, the groupthink carrying over from the 19 years since 9/11 has translated into the designing principles of development initiatives such as AeN, because the impetus behind such initiatives itself came from that line of thinking. The fact that this line of thinking has been extensively discredited by nearly two decades of research has not been sufficient to undo the founder effect of post-9/11 panic. Therefore, development initiatives and human rights praxis that should be established because they are an end in themselves become “subsumed within a counter-terrorism agenda” (Kundani & Hayes, 2018, p. 11) as can be seen in the compromised potential of TFY CCD in a donor-funded project such as AeN. Furthermore, the broader social and political contexts impacting the life of a community are sidestepped or airbrushed by donors' project designs which are informed by a simplistic model of radicalization, in which the causes of radical behaviour are located in “individual motivation and belief systems” (p. 12) rather than wider cultural and socioeconomic factors. This naturally results in the “emergency” CVE approach, with long-term developmental programmes, emphasizing self-determination and reflection in community life, supplanted by brief project cycles with predetermined outcomes.

The *reach* of TFY CCD aims beyond the parameters of donor-funded projects tethered by foreign policy interests like CVE. The TFY CCD lens

provides a counter-approach to the limitations of the risk-management approach of donor-funded CVE projects. This ambivalence can be mapped on a spectrum:



Figure 3 Spectrum of risk management and asset development

A CVE-centric programme nevertheless undergoes its own strategic evolution over its 3-year cycle. AeN was no exception. Measures to improve the curriculum for greater civic engagement – which measures included the introduction of art and culture modules – were pushed by all stakeholders, but aims of an educational and developmental bent eventually faced obstacles emerging from the enterprise’s own contradictory foci, manifesting in manifold ambiguities at all levels of the operational hierarchy of the programme. The operational focus from NGOs, trainers and participants, during evaluation of each cycle, aspired toward asset development; the conceptual focus of the entire enterprise, however, remained rooted in managing the risk of countering violent extremism. While the curriculum goals aim clearly at developing attitudes and skills of active citizenry among the participants, the overriding concern of meeting the criteria of CVE caused an organizational strain – from donor to donor administration right through to recipient community organizations that assessed and appraised SAPs against a strict standard of addressing CVE. The overall drift of the enterprise thus became risk management rather than the ostensible aim, namely asset development. This author argues that these aims need not be set in opposition to one another but can only be brought into alignment if the good of the community itself is prioritized, rather than the need to meet circumscribed donor requirements.

From the lens of TFY CCD, theatre-based intervention can have a reach far beyond the parameters drawn by donor-funded projects. The use of theatre primarily as presentational evidence of community engagement undermines the creative and self-determinative potential of its participants whilst also undervaluing the developmental capability the

process of theatre affords. A single theatre session culminating in a short theatre performance does not pave the way for “multiple axes of participation”(Sen, 2006, as cited in Woodson, 2015, p. 69) for the youth to have the “substantive freedom to lead the lives they have reason to value” (Sen, 1999, as cited in Woodson, 2015, p. 68). TFY CCD recognizes the intertwined “web of relations” governing society and envisions critical navigation of “both formal publics and informal public spheres” (p. 34). With theatre contact limited to an introductory session, the importance of building on those spheres could not be explored nor reflected upon by the youth through the theatrical lens.

A theatre programme on TFY CCD principles ought to target both formal and informal public spheres; the scope of AeN, however, tilts more toward the informal sphere, whereby the programme’s point of contact with the community is through community centres, welfare organizations and schools in designated localities; and that, too, not for a sustained period but only for the brief duration of the grant period. Thus, sustained reflection dissecting the matrix of formal and informal public spheres through the embodied criticality of theatre is inconceivable for participants working under the ambit of strictly defined donor-funded projects.

How to govern TFY third space potential

Under these conditions, a TFY third space initiative faces certain existential and ontological obstacles, arising from the circumscribed aims of donor-funded development projects, the limited duration of project cycles, and the lack of a long-term plan to nurture an ecosystem in which sustained theatre practice is possible.

For instance, participants willing to practice theatre regularly are not able to, because of economic, domestic, and educational pressures, and programmes such as AeN do not provide an ongoing infrastructure for them to do so. The efforts of such participants are restricted to one-time performances, which take as their themes certain social issues, commissioned by a donor.

There are, however, certain measures that can be taken that would, this author argues, make significant headway in surmounting these obstacles.

First of all, community organizations with continuing presence in their communities can augment the potential of TFY third space CCD by training participants in arts governance and dramaturgy, in addition to theatrical performance modes. These participants would then be in a position to incorporate the social and cultural phenomena of their own communities into ongoing communal theatre practice, even after the completion of the donor-funded project where they received their training. An introduction to theatre training, when paired with an awareness of social, historical, and political forces, can allow for the organic cultural development of a community, with the goals and concerns of this development arising from community members who have been trained in methods of performance and communication. This is a far more impactful strategy than one that pushes community members to enact the concerns of external donors. Rather, this vision of TFY Third Space takes as its ultimate goal a systemic overhaul of the marginalized community that is driven by a critical evolution of collective thought and behaviour, beginning with the community's youth. This is a truly progressive and long-sighted approach, in marked contrast to the closed-ended, conservative anxieties of post-9/11 projects, and, unlike those projects, the philosophy behind such an approach would engender sustained, mindful project designs, in which the welfare and development of the communities themselves would be the core consideration.

Community organizations, if trained in art administration and dramaturgy, will be in a position to devote sharpened attention to engaging the youth at their community spaces through theatre. Donor-funded projects with specific aims can, instead of overlaying the organization's operations wholesale with a new project, integrate their aims with the existing network, as the artistic governance models already in place will be able to mediate the gap between donor requirements and the given community's own needs, pressures, and limiting factors. This will allow for community organizations and donors to have a symbiotic relationship that has more balanced terms of contribution to the design and content of projects, further reinforcing the self-determination and self-governance that are the long-term goal of these initiatives.

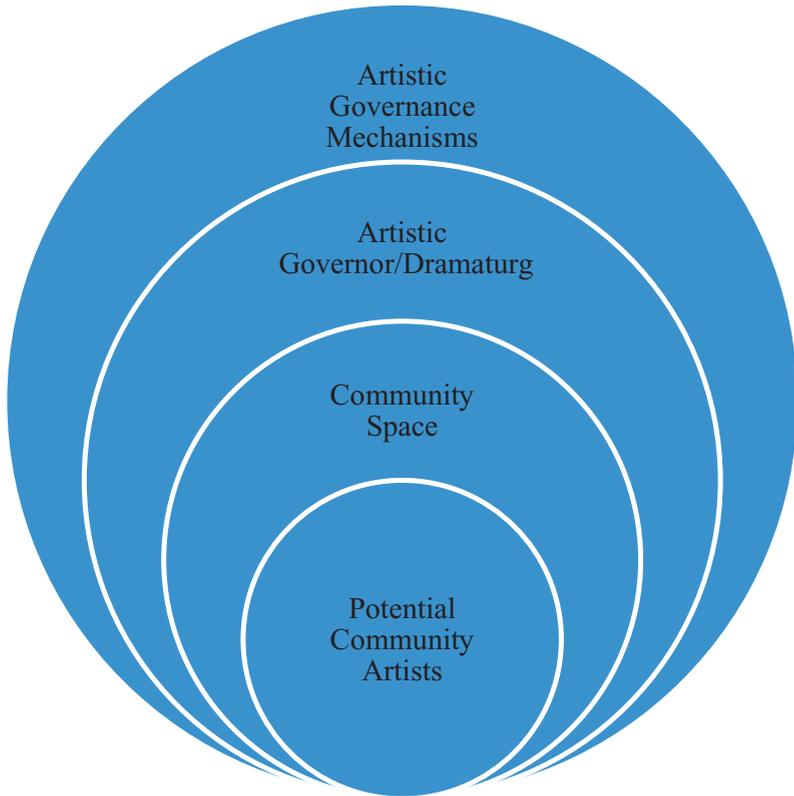


Figure 4 The fold of artistic governance in community theatre practice

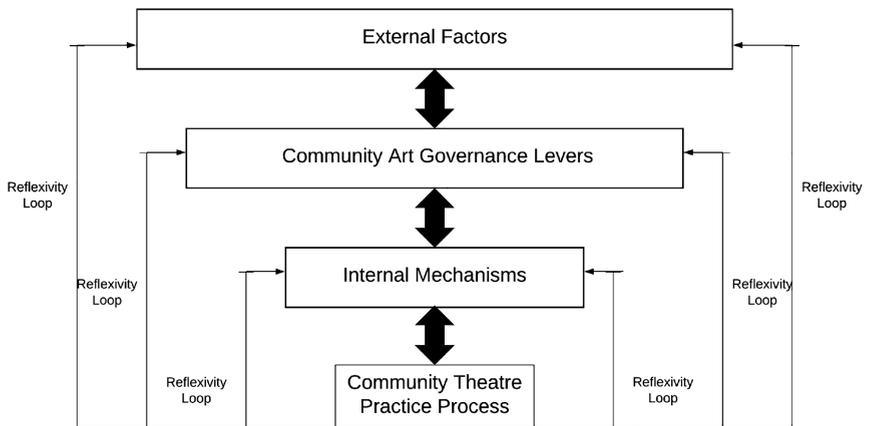


Figure 5 Framework for community art governance informing community theatre practice. (Turbide & Laurin, 2014)

Art governance in the community, dually informed by external factors and internal constraints, and fed by reflexivity at every stage, can inform a theatre curriculum that goes beyond the conventional welfare game of building awareness of specific issues defined by donors or governments. The “beyond” is the “in-between” space of TFY third space where, provided a continuous process of artistic governance, young people can collectively navigate ways of living for themselves and their communities.

Future research

For community organizations in agreement with the TFY third space CCD vision, the artistic governance model requires bespoke acknowledgment of internal and external factors influencing their socio-cultural landscape. Further research can investigate donors’ interests and reservations in investing in projects with TFY third space ethos as primary goal which can helpfully inform art governance mechanisms, including human and artistic development needs at the level of the community.

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