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**NEGOTIATION-AS-ACTIVE-KNOWING: AN APPROACH
EVOLVED FROM RELATIONAL ART PRACTICE**

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Ph.D.

2013

**Negotiation-as-active-knowing:
an Approach Evolved from Relational Art Practice**

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the
requirements of the
Robert Gordon University
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

This research was carried out in connection with
On the Edge Research Programme,
Gray's School of Art,
Robert Gordon University, Aberdeen, Scotland

Funded by Innovation, Design and Sustainability
(IDEAS) Research Institute

June 2013

PhD Research Title:

Negotiation-as-Active-Knowing: an Approach Evolved from Relational Art Practice

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Abstract

This PhD research offers a new conception of negotiation that attempts to re-imagine the roles of and relationships between artist and participant-other in social art practice.

Negotiation is implicit in art practice, and is often used without elucidation of its exact processes. This research addresses the gap through an articulation of negotiation that brings *both* artist and other to new positions of understanding. The resulting construct, negotiation-as-active knowing, becomes a mode of *knowing* the world, others and otherness and distinguishes itself from more goal orientated definitions.

The research draws on phenomenology and social art theory: Merleau-Ponty (2002) positions the perceiving body-subject as immersed and mobile within an environment. Shotter (2005) differentiates between 'aboutness-thinking' and 'witness-thinking'. Kester (2011) describes the dynamic between the one and the many in the reciprocal creative labour of collaborative art practice. This literature yields three core qualities that are relevant to negotiation-as-active-knowing: *durational immersive involvement*, *relational responsiveness* and *calibrative interplay*.

The research maps these qualities onto the domains of 'ground' (context), 'contact' (encounter) and 'movement' (art work/ process), that are drawn from the researcher's experiences in social engagement for over 15 years.

Negotiation-as-active-learning is tested through three case projects: Networking and Collaborations in Culture and the Arts (NICA), Burma 2002-2007; Galway Travellers Project, Republic of Ireland 2009-2010; and Imagining Possibilities/Thinking Together, Mongolia 2009-2011. Each project inflects and develops the conceptual framework; initially as a critical concept used retrospectively and increasingly as a generative concept that forms the dynamic of the work.

The research concludes that the three core qualities of negotiation-as-active-knowing are intertwined and mutually supportive and cannot be practised in isolation of one another. Negotiation-as-active-knowing may potentially be effective both within the arts and more widely, in social, cultural life, in dealing with difference, or to possibly pre-empt conflict.

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Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my supervisors: Professor Anne Douglas for her firm guidance in this research and relentless commitment to research and Mr. Jim Hamlyn for his sharp and quizzical questions and expression of perspectives different from mine.

Thanks to Innovation, Design and Sustainability Research Institute (IDEAS) for funding this research.

My thanks and appreciation to my fellow research students: Melahat Nil Gulari, Peter Buwert, Helen Smith, Caroline Gausden and Jonathan Price who have been my critical companions and pillars of support. My thanks also to a constant conversation partner throughout the duration of this research, Petra Vergunst, and to fellow artist Fiona Whelan for her contribution to this research. My sincere appreciation to all the collaborators/ participants/ co-negotiators of the case projects: too numerous (and for some, not expedient) to name here.

Finally, many thanks to Jonathan Price for his proof reading of and suggested improvements to the final thesis.

I dedicate this work to my parents, Chu Kim Fah and Yap Choy Ngoo, and my partner Jay Koh. I thank them for their unwavering faith and support in me.

AUTHOR'S DECLARATION

I declare that the work presented in this thesis is my own. The word count for the main body of thesis does not exceed 69,000 words.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Cc Yuan', with a period at the end.

Signed: Chu Chu Yuan

Date: 24 June, 2013

Chapter 1: Introduction to the research

1.1 Prologue

We sit in a circle and wait for each other to speak. Events of the past two weeks have not been favourable for the safety and wellbeing of members of Golden, a group of artists, writers and persons of assorted professions, twelve of whom are present. Now mostly in their 40s, they are bound together by their membership to the student art club during their undergraduate Yangon University days in the late 80s, a time of great political turmoil in Myanmar that has undoubtedly shaped their sensibilities and relationship with one another. Rumours have been circulating about foreign funding being in the hands of the Golden members, something forbidden by law in Myanmar, a country ruled by military generals without proper civil processes, and worse that the funds are being pocketed for personal benefit. Prospects for the future of an international contemporary art centre in Yangon, what we have been working on for the past three years, seem bleak. This meeting has been called by me, to seek advice from the members of Golden on how to proceed and to get a sense of their likely future involvement.

After moments of silence, Tin, a senior member of the group who is sitting on my immediate left, speaks. He flaps his arms, mimicking movements of a crow, and begins to tell a story. "A terrible accident has taken place on the ground, making the crows very agitated and anxious. The crows keep circling the air around the incident, anxiously watching the scene. All the crows are afraid. No one knows what to do next. A young crow cannot take the indecisive atmosphere anymore. He flies over to an older crow and asks him anxiously: *'What is to be done?! What is to be done?!'* The older crow turns to him, and in his response the younger crow hears his own gawky shrill voice echo back at him: *'What is to be done?! What is to be done?!'*"

We sit brewing in this atmosphere for over an hour, with not many meaningful or intelligible words exchanged. Yet each of us fully sense the weight of the situation pressed upon us.

1.2 The PhD research question

In this PhD, I am interested in asking whether an engaged relational arts practice can yield specific insights on negotiation that may contribute to the larger discourse, methodology and processes of socially engaged arts practice, with possible implications for wider practices of negotiation in other disciplines.

My interest in negotiation stems from specific experiences and moments of questioning harnessed from practice. The prologue narrates one of the most powerful and catalysing moments that I have experienced in my 16 years of art practice, which centred on feelings of helplessness. Immediately after hearing Tin's story, I was taken aback and wondered about the meaning behind it; why was he throwing my question back at me? I felt that I could not - did not know how to - negotiate his response. I felt that I needed to find a way to navigate his response. My encounters with positions of difference within art practice have instilled in me a hunch that acts of negotiation occupy a central position in influencing the way we see our place in the world and move within it. It is often mentioned in project narratives without 'nuts and bolts' details of how it actually comes together and works. I felt that negotiation can offer more refined and nuanced ways to acknowledge and respond to differences in terms of values, beliefs, identity, practices and power relations in the field, because it implies greater commitment to actively tackle, work with and find resolutions in response to these differences, compared to, for example, the discourse on dialogue.

1.3 Motivation, scope and methodology of the research

Coming from a background of disturbed political agency¹, I have developed a sensitivity towards others experiencing situations of disempowerment and feelings of helplessness. The episode in the prologue took place in early 2003 in Yangon, Myanmar (Burma)² when great

¹ Malaysian political government since independence in 1953 has been ruled by a three-party alliance divided along racial lines, under a so-called Social Contract where the dominant race, the Malays, have special position privileges in rights and benefits - from endowments, land, education, housing to business and livelihood, guaranteed by the constitution. This policy has marginalised other races who are not able to question these rights as they are vehemently protected. When this protection has been breached in the past, it has provoked authoritarian use of the Internal Security Act, which allows detention without trial.

² The debate over using Burma or Myanmar to refer to the country today has created many divergent arguments. On one hand, Burma was a name given by the British colonisers and is derived from *Barmans* which is the dominant ethnic group in the country that is made up of over 100 ethnic groups. Therefore proponents of Myanmar argue that it is more appropriate to use 'Myanmar' which is the name of an ancient kingdom in the country, as it is a vernacular term and more inclusive of all the ethnic groups. On other hand, dissidents who are

division, mistrust and vulnerability defined social relationships under enforced military rule³. Prior to that my collaborator Jay Koh and I had been working with two Myanmar arts groups to realise a long term plan to establish a contemporary art centre in Myanmar. Political implications of our activities and inter-group conflict amongst the Myanmar made it necessary for Koh and I to step in to take on the management and leadership of the art space which was just established, at the request of the Golden⁴ group, after the other group pulled out of the project entirely. We had gone to seek advice and to consult based on our two year history of collaboration. Tin's story triggered an immediate concern in my mind about whether the trust I had assumed to exist between us was in fact in question. It was only later, after I had spent some time living in and within the social realities of Myanmar, being immersed in the everyday life of the people, that I came to realise a fuller meaning of this story. I realised that the story did not imply that trust had become broken in our relationship with Golden members, but that it is not expedient, in the harsh political climate of a Myanmar under military rule, to rely on others to provide answers to what one should do. The deep sense of paralysis, despondence mixed with cynicism, doubt, and a deep, crippling impotence, inertia and uncertainty that was present in that room continued to dwell within me for a long time after this meeting. It is this sense of helplessness that has motivated me greatly in my research on negotiation and its relation with agency.

In this PhD I will primarily be investigating negotiation located within socially engaged, participative and relational art practice, while surveying/consulting how it is practised in other disciplines such as politics, conflict resolution and architecture. I expect that the research will be relevant to and have implications for practitioners of socially engaged, collaborative and participative art; art theory and discourse; public art commissioning processes; and, possibly the wider practice of negotiation.

Research methodology

This PhD is a practice-led research undertaking. My art practice grounds the research in real experience and challenges theory. Practice is knowledge producing; theory acts as a lens to sharpen the analysis of my practice. A hunch from my practice - that negotiation can produce a way of confronting and engaging with difference that is not exploitative and achievement-orientated but experiential and empowering (see immediately following section 1.4 for a

still resisting military rule in Burma think that the use of 'Burma' is a form of resistance to the legitimacy of military rule in the country. In this thesis, I will be using Myanmar to refer to the country and people, mainly because this is the name used by our collaborators.

³ The social and political context of Burma will be elaborated in chapter 4.1.2.

⁴ All names of Myanmar artists and groups throughout this thesis are pseudonyms given to provide anonymity for persons and groups to avert possible adverse repercussions from these accounts.

mapping of the argument) - is investigated and challenged through a literature review of negotiation in socially engaged art practice (Kester 2011, Lind 2007, Douglas & Fremantle 2009, Steveni 2002 among others) to reveal the exigencies of social art practice. Discourses around phenomenology (Merleau Ponty 2002, Ingold 2000, Bortoft 1996, Shotter 2005) are investigated to understand the interactive process of the embodied self in the perception of the environment and relational knowledge production. The etymology of negotiation and a brief survey of negotiation in the fields of politics, architecture and conflict resolution (Hoffman 1990, Cohen 1982, Sharp 2003, Avruch 2006, Abramowitz 2009) is undertaken. A differentiation between what I term negotiation-as-active-knowing and negotiation-towards-outcome is made. A framework for the qualities of negotiation-as-active-knowing drawn from the literature review is constructed, consisting of immersive involvement, relational responsiveness and calibrative interplay.

This framework is then applied as a lens to look at three domains of practice, which are gleaned from my experience and perspective as an art practitioner and supported by literature. These are the domains of ground (context), contact (encounter) and movement (learning). Three of my projects with international Forum for InterMedia Art (iFIMA), an organisation headed by my frequent collaborator Jay Koh and me, act as 'case studies' for insights that build my argument. The articulation of these projects, analysed and tested within the framework drawn from the literature review, is pertinent in shifting the understanding of the practice of negotiation within social art practice.

1.4 The argument

In this PhD research, I would argue that negotiation can be more than a means for achieving specific ends. It can offer a generative framework or process for relating with difference and otherness in ways that are not paranoid and combative, but agile, constructive, creative. It contains learning opportunities that are anticipative and informs one how to relate with, respond to and move forward with otherness. This experiential process-centred approach to negotiation can be aligned to the history of socially engaged and collaborative art practice over the past 30 years. In the 1960s the move towards dematerialisation of the object and the making/showing out of the studio/gallery has created shifts whereby the aesthetics has expanded to include relationships and ways of relating, even as the centring on and deliberations of the object and objectification continues (see section 2.1 for a discussion of socially engaged art and how my work fits into that context) Encounters between self and other and with otherness have offered crucial opportunities for a consideration of difference

and ways of mediating that difference. An experiential-centred negotiation, which I have termed *negotiation-as-active-knowing*, would be investigated as a counterpoint to practices of negotiation from standard handbooks as “a way of getting what we want or of persuading the other side to give it to us” (Hoffman: 1990). Such an approach emphasises achievement of a specific (usually pre-assessed and pre-determined) outcome, that of winning and/or winning more often, possibly with others. The analysis of the case studies reveal that, while outcome is important in providing the motivation for negotiation, there are other urgent and valuable lessons that the experience of negotiating affords us, that gives us important concepts for learning how to face, orientate and align with positions of difference. Such know-how places us in a stronger position to face and move alongside difference. The changing global landscape of migration has relocated communities and quickly transformed the identity and demographics of entire towns and cities across the UK and the world (I discuss some aspects of postcolonial theory and implications on the experiences of globalisation and metaphors of space in section 3.5.1). This has effectively placed strangers next to each other without having evolved the means and mechanisms for interactive exchange and mutual understanding. This situation attests to the urgent need for such a means of facing strangeness, that the framework of negotiation-as-active-knowing addresses.

The conceptual framework

Durational immersive involvement

Immersive involvement emerges as an important quality that repositions the negotiator from a position and perspective as observer from outside into one of living participation with others. This quality is drawn from phenomenologist Maurice Merleau-Ponty’s (2002) immersion of the human body in a world that reconstitutes it as being ‘in’ and ‘of’ space; anthropologist Tim Ingold’s (2000) relational learning as result of human immersion and working in the presence of others within an environment; and John Shotter’s (2005) witness thinking as a form of participatory thought that acknowledges the “chiasmic” relationship between human bodies and surroundings.

Relational responsiveness

Shotter’s (2005) argument, that actions in human interpersonal interactions should be redefined as responses, contributes significantly to the second quality for the framework of negotiation-as-active-knowing. Responsive activity is a unique category that is neither fully behaviour nor action; it is an interplay of “chiasmic” relational activity, that is open-ended and directed towards others and/or otherness. Attested by the case studies, I would argue

that *relational responsiveness* becomes an active catalyst that enables us to know how to relate with and move with others. It allows us to find our way, to orientate and re-orientate, align and re-align to the differences in human practices, beliefs, behaviour, relationships and organisation.

Calibrative interplay

Grant Kester (2011) argues that the act of collaboration is a relational cognitive process that is tension-filled yet constantly shifting between perspectives of the self and other, where differences are continuously calibrated and fine-tuned. Using Kester's concept of calibrative interplay, I would argue that engagement with others can shift away from offensive or defensive positions, i.e. from commodification of difference or fear of difference. The engagement can offer important opportunities for a gradual calibration between different positions to take place bringing about new understanding for all parties.

1.5 Thesis chapter summaries

Chapter 2: Context, literature review and conceptual framework

In chapter 2, I provide the background context for the importance of the PhD topic through its contextual grounding in the history of social art practice, including my own experiences from practice and contribution to the discourse. I trace the etymology of the term 'negotiate'. Several positions on negotiation emerge from which I construct two working definitions of negotiation: the first, negotiation-towards-an-outcome; the second, negotiation-as-active-knowing.

A brief survey of professional practices of negotiation in business, legal professions and the field of conflict resolution is conducted. The professional practice of negotiation emphasises negotiation as a communicative activity of bargaining aimed at winning and maximising one's gains (Cohen 1982, Hoffman 1990). Theory from the architecture profession (Abramowitz 2009) places greater emphasis on relationship and trust building, understanding, shared commitment and the addressing of longer term issues. Discourse within the field of conflict resolution (Avruch 2006) stresses a need for an expanded canon of negotiation theory that can address the kinds of identity, ideological and value based conflicts that we are experiencing today, rather than those that are buyer-seller interest based.

I continue to build on these concepts of negotiation through literature from the fields of phenomenological philosophy and inter-subjective communication. Deeper readings into

selected literature (Merleau Ponty 2002, Ingold 2000, Bortoft 1996, Shotter 2005) from or connected with the phenomenology tradition offer some qualities for the conceptual framework of negotiation-as-active-knowing. Phenomenology studies the experiential process of the human body located within and intimately entwined with an environment, positioning negotiation, not only as a way of thinking (involving only cognition) but as *a way of knowing* (involving whole bodily sensory as well as cognitive processes). Of particular significance are the writings of interpersonal communications theorist John Shotter (2005) on 'aboutness'-thinking and 'witness'-thinking. Writing with a keen realisation of the spontaneously responsive nature of our living bodies, and on the intertwined, dialogic, or 'chiasmic' nature of events that occur in our meetings with others and otherness around us, Shotter explains that "as participants in such meetings, immediately responsive 'witness-understandings' become available to us that are quite different to the 'aboutness-understandings' we arrive at as disengaged, intellectual spectators." Witness-thinking is tuned in with 'the relations between different aspects of our dynamic world of internally inter-related, continuously changing activities' and enquires into the experience of living as a participant within it; whereas aboutness-thinking enquires into the nature of an essentially dead world as a spectator at a distance (Shotter, 2005). I think both 'witness-thinking' and 'aboutness-thinking' (and Shotter's distinction between them) are important concepts to help us understand what goes on in experiential negotiation.

I go onto an analysis of selected literature from social engaged collaborative art practice (Leeson 2011, Kaprow 1995) for insights on negotiative practices. Grant Kester's (2011) examination of the tensions and negotiations between the one and the many (the self and others) in the reciprocal creative labour of collaborative art practice is especially revealing of the dynamics of negotiation. One calls for the achievement of self-dictated ends, and the other calls for outcomes that are co-determined with others. Kester argues that the perspectives and prerogatives of the 'one' has been emphasised in modernist practices, and those of the 'many' in collaborative practices. In describing the dynamic negotiation enacted by art collective Dialogue's work in India, Kester describes how critical distance is in fact 'always partial and contingent, coexisting with moments of relative integration or proximity in a diachronic unfolding. Insight is generated not via distance per se, but in the play that occurs between these moments.' (Kester, 2011: 90). This description of the toggling of 2 positions - self and other, distance and immersion, outside and inside - resonates with Shotter's positions of 'aboutness-' and 'witness-thinking', and very aptly corresponds with my own insights from practice of the necessity to shift and oscillate between these positions when one is embracing experiential negotiation.

Kester's concepts of durational engagement and tensions between self and other further resonate with concepts from selected writers in race and cultural studies (Sara Ahmed's encounter as intertwining histories of arrival), political science and anthropology (James C. Scott's weapons of resistance of the weak) and sociology (Margaret Archer's reflexivity as internal conversations of the self in relation to otherness) to construct an enriched dialogue around negotiation, tension and resistance.

Chapter 2 ends with an articulation of the conceptual framework of qualities of negotiation-as-active-knowing, which comprises *durational immersive involvement, relational responsiveness and calibrative interplay*.

Chapter 3: The domains of practice for negotiation

In this chapter I draw out, from within my experiences as artist-practitioner, the conceptual domains for the practice of negotiation. They are organised using the concepts of 'ground', 'contact' and 'movement'. 'Ground' refers to the context of a project, and its elements include the different practices, beliefs and values; systems and the organisation of relationships; behaviour and actions; and the forms and structures of power. 'Contact' expresses aspects of the encounter with others. It includes social performative protocols of relationships and roles; attitudes and approaches of interaction; the nuances and rituals for greetings, utterances, verbal expressions, gestures and bodily expressions; and duration of contact. 'Movement' expresses the efforts and learning that go towards achieving progress or the way forward within a project. The elements of this domain would encompass the ideas, skills, methods, strategies, processes, and the knowledge and expertise of the artist practitioner. I then re-examine these conceptual domains through the lens of the literature review, refining them further. I draw up a method of analysis that integrates the framework of qualities of negotiation-as-active-knowing with these conceptual domains, which will be applied to the case studies in chapter 4.

Chapter 4: Examining case projects using the framework

Three of my projects are selected as case studies for the research: (1) Networking and Collaborations in Culture and the Arts (NICA), Myanmar 2002-2007; (2) Galway Travellers Project, Republic of Ireland 2009-2010; and (3) Imagining Possibilities/Thinking Together, Mongolia 2009-2011. They take place at significant points of the research – the first prior to, the second at the start of and the third in the middle of the PhD. By tracing the analysis through these three projects, they progressively unfold views and insights, which

incrementally build upon each other, of the workings of negotiation-as-active-knowing within the projects. The different context and challenges of each provide different scenarios and dynamics to test and investigate negotiation. The framework of qualities of negotiation-as-active-knowing is applied as a lens to re-examine the practitioner's domains of practice as evidenced in the articulation of the three case studies. Together they work as a two-tier analysis to gradually build the argument; and by doing so, test, refine and adjust the qualities of negotiation to result in the proposal of an adjusted framework for the process of negotiating difference.

Chapter 5: Integrated analysis for negotiation-as-active-knowing

In chapter five, I make an integrated analysis and conclusion, drawing out specific points of emerged insights and implication for the domains of practice, *ground*, *contact* and *movement*, derived from the investigation and articulation of the three case studies. Although the three qualities of negotiation-as-active-knowing - immersive involvement, relational responsiveness and calibrative interplay - have been treated as distinct qualities in the articulation of the case studies, the analysis reveals that these qualities are intertwined, mutually supportive, collaborative and cannot be practised in isolation of one another. It will present an adjusted proposal for an experiential practice of negotiation as a mode of active-knowing or inquiry, emphasising active receptive attentiveness, fluid exploration, imagination, and a continual process of orientating/re-orientating, aligning/re-aligning, and configuring/re-configuring of perspectives and preconceived ideas and knowledge. The analysis shows that an increased understanding towards others and otherness can be produced through durational immersive involvement, relational responsiveness and calibrative interplay. A sense of movement emerges, effectively telling us - *moving* us onto - new possibilities, adjusting and fine tuning our skills, methods, procedure, strategies and expertise of judgement, decision-making and problem solving; producing new relational learning and knowledge between the space of self and other. This sense of movement then feeds back to the domains of ground and contact, possibly modifying the established perceptions, ideas and practices of contact and relations; as well as behaviour, protocols and ways of communication; and the organisation of systems, power and practices on the ground.

Chapter 6: Implications, limitations and conclusions

In chapter six, I deliberate on what are some of the implications, strengths and limitations of the research specifically for social art discourse and wider practices of negotiation in general. I draw out implications of negotiation-as-active-knowing for aspects of art practice such as the power of the artist, role and relationship between artist and participant-collaborator,

autonomy of self and other (Kester 2011, Bishop 2004, 2006a, 2006c), improvisation (Douglas & Coessens 2011) and the public art commissioning process (Matarasso 1996, 2010). I consider negotiation-as-active-knowing against practices of public pedagogy (Freire 1970) and critical deconstruction, encoding and decoding (Derrida 1997, Hall 1980). Another important implication shows that negotiation-as-active-knowing has a role as a form of active inquiry towards otherness in our everyday life. Negotiation is basic to our everyday lives and can be practiced as a generative, creative and empowering experience which builds understanding and agility, rather than being foreclosed as a means towards obtaining specific pre-determined outcomes, which builds on, and further breeds defensiveness (protectionism), speculation, uncertainty and insecurity, amongst other qualities.

At this point, I also reflect on some the limitations of the research relating to the balance of power, ethicality and equitable outcome of a negotiation. Interpersonal negotiations are dependent on the commitment and sincerity of each party to negotiate. No framework alone can guarantee a fair negotiation; only human diligence, vigilance and sense of responsibility towards fairness can. Negotiation-as-active-knowing can however stimulate a sense of 'relatedness' (Fromm 1959), an openness and a reflexivity in engagement with difference.

1.6 Notes on my collaborative practice with Jay Koh on the iFIMA platform

Section 1.6 presents the foundational aspects and orientations of my collaborative practice with Jay Koh on the iFIMA platform, which exposes my positionality as the artist-researcher of this PhD, with implications on the scope, assumptions and possible biases of the research. As this PhD research is led by and explored within an art practice, it is appropriate at the end of this introduction, to briefly state some assumptions that are implicit in my collaborative art practice with Jay Koh on the iFIMA platform, which would also assist in understanding how the research is situated within the larger commitments of the practice.

To briefly introduce iFIMA, iFIMA's activities position art as a cultural and creative process that we aim to connect with and contribute to people's developmental needs on an open learning and participative platform. As an arts organisation, the expanded roles that iFIMA has taken on include forging collaborations, knowledge and resource-sharing across cultures and sectors; curating and organizing art and cultural events that respond to specific contexts; and devising and facilitating context specific training to build capacity for self-management and professionalism of communities. iFIMA also conducts formal and informal research and education programmes on publicly engaged, community and participatory art and has been

active in more than 15 countries. We have worked with groups such as artists, youth, writers, intellectuals, cultural enthusiasts, producers, managers, as well as residents of a particular locality or site, and migrant groups in countries as diverse as Myanmar, Mongolia, Finland, and Ireland.

In terms of artistic inquiry, we have been interested to investigate how co-presence, reciprocity, dialogue and non-verbal communication, performance in the everyday, imagination, visualization, and criticality can work together to bring about new forms of knowledge that occur in the space 'in-between' self and other. We hope through such a process to build senses of agency, imagine new possibilities, and construct ways of working together. As artists, organisers and researchers, we are interested in the construction of alternative structures or forms of social organisation; knowledge sharing and exchange, and public pedagogy. In this PhD research, these activities are subjected to the lens of a negotiation framework.

The practice is predicated on ethical reciprocal behaviour and open communicative exchange maintained through co-presence and sustained relationships of self and other. As such, the negotiative practices that I am researching would not include those that fall outside of co-presence, for example, those made on virtual platforms, and through 3rd parties. We believe that engagement needs to be sustained, and agendas and interests need to be made transparent (although almost impossible to be achieved fully); inequality of power between us and our participants acknowledged and wherever possible, steps to be taken to re-dress this, for example in such situations we actively share our knowledge and resources. After we initiate an encounter, we work in a manner whereby we await a response, resonance and invitation before proceeding. We are mindful and cautious of the problem of ethical engagement and the problem of intervening as outsiders. However, I think it is a problem that many artists undertaking public art commissions see their roles and interests as being subservient to those of others in the attempt to reverse the avant-garde history of privileging the artist's role, which has employed strategies of confrontation, appropriation, provocation and imposition of the artist's concepts and vision on audience/ community. I think neither subservience nor imposition fully considers issues of power and agency. Power is fluid and dependent on particular circumstances, contexts and constituency; for example, one may be powerful in one's own context, and wield much influence with one's own group, but will be at

a disadvantage when entering a foreign context.⁵ In this PhD research, I hope to propose a relationship based on negotiation that engages with a wide range of factors around agency and power in more holistic and relational terms.

The way I conceptualise negotiation would then actively incorporate the above concerns. I think that negotiation can, above dialogue, not only acknowledge but also actively tackle these differences of power, as well as differences of values, beliefs, behaviour and interests. Negotiation emphasises each party's subjectivity and personal agency and the working towards new possibilities in response to enabling conditions within each specific contexts. Negotiation (practiced aesthetic-ethically) then affords us an ethical way of making work that involves intervention in others' lives.

Our process often begins with us going into, interacting with and developing relationships with people in a certain site or community, in its public spaces. At the same time, we actively share where we are coming from, so that our interests or agenda is transparent, although admittedly, it is never possible to ensure a totally transparent position or a full or equivalent apprehension of the implications of what we say on the part of our listeners. Although we may do some prior reading about the context before we enter into a new site of interaction, we prefer not to bring in with us prior judgement about the people we will meet. We prefer for the first impressions to emerge from concrete encounters and interactions with others. This is to minimise assumptions or delimit what we pay attention to about the culture and people we encounter. We prefer that the encounter and our durational involved presence and participation bring certain things to our attention. (This does not mean that we would not already have some pre-existing bias within our worldview). We rely on bodily involved participation, attentive experiencing of everyday life and social rituals, and communicative exchange to form and clarify our opinions and judgments. This approach does have its disadvantage, in the sense that we do not have as an available resource sophisticated readings or overarching theories about the history and behaviour of the people. We do, however, subsequent to our initial interactions, complement our knowledge gained from the experiential process, with some reading on relevant and identified topics and issues.

What motivates us to go into the space of 'others' is that we believe that there are too many existing and dividing boundaries that produce anxiety and conflict that need to be addressed. The neo-liberal capitalist world is dominated by an unequal distribution of knowledge and

⁵ For example, from my experience in Burma, while I may have more knowledge and privilege in certain areas than my Burmese counterparts, they in turn have greater knowledge and privilege in other areas than me, particularly in the Burmese context, and this has in fact been pointed out by one of the Burmese artists.

resources, and by certain ways of seeing that are commensurate with these interests. Therefore, we do not claim to be non-interventionist, and our primary intervention could be seen as in working towards re-distributing knowledge and resources and promoting engagement with more varied ways of seeing. Yet when we go into different contexts, we respect that the way of thinking, knowledge and resources we bring may not be right or appropriate for, and may be rejected by the community. Our positions may be opposed to theirs, and possibly in conflict. Therefore it is important that we are not there to impose our views and knowledge⁶ – which are themselves not value-free, but to open up a range of views, and to learn of and negotiate with each other's views. We are not there as 'experts' to impose an 'expert' solution, but to facilitate a process, involving ourselves and others, in exchanging knowledge and building new understanding.

In contributing our skills and knowledge to the matter at hand, we would focus on opening up and presenting a range of alternatives for exploration, consideration and negotiation with our participants/ collaborating parties. Any final outcome needs to be decided by those directly affected by its impact⁷; and any decision made must be owned by the decision-maker. We facilitate the imagination of options, play out possible implications/ consequences and facilitate the generation of knowledge between participants, and the decision-making if needed.⁸ This activity of actively exploring alternatives, as I found out later in the research, resonates with the practices of expert negotiators studied by the Huthwaite Research Group in London⁹, although these experts often carry this activity out as secretive, preparative activity, not collectively with the 'opposite' party in the negotiation, and will only be disclosed and proposed if necessary, at the opportune moment to leverage the best outcome for themselves at the negotiation table. In contrast, we bring these explorations to the table and try to actively share and make them visible to our participant-collaborators. The important point to acknowledge here is that Jay Koh and I are not in directly competitive or adversarial position in relation to our participants/ collaborators, although differences in position do exist. However, we do have an active stake in the negotiation, and that is to evolve a way to face, work out a relationship and ways to carry on with otherness and difference. We often work with people of varying (at times vastly different) backgrounds and positions to us.

⁶ We did not arrive at this position without a learning passage from experience. Our earlier work, even up until the earlier work in Myanmar (2002-03) would reflect varying and changing positions of this practice.

⁷ This in fact sits at the heart of the tricky ethical position between an unaffected 'outsider' community-engaged artist and the affected community. Although the position of the artist is not necessarily one of dis-interest, the impact and therefore burden/cost of the decision is not the same for the artist as for the community. However, one could also argue that the artist's practice - its methodology, reputation - is at stake, which has its own ramifications. I would argue that in negotiation-as-active-knowing, both the artist and participant/collaborator occupy 'outsider' positions to one another, and this is a strength, not weakness of the methodology (section 6.3.1).

⁸ Therefore although not an imposition, our roles are not free from having power of influencing and persuasion.

⁹ Rackham, N., *The Behaviour of Successful Negotiators*, Huthwaite Research Group, England, 1975.

When difference and conflict exist or emerge in the process, the work involves coming up with ways to face it and finding ways to negotiate it, to come to terms with it. Therefore the process and qualities of experiential negotiation that I would be researching would seek to construct a process to facilitate this in a shared, reciprocal, collective manner. Unlike negotiation whereby co-negotiators are in direct competition with each other for limited resources, our negotiations with collaborator-others are not built on such adversarial positions (although tensions and conflicts do come about, see sections 1.6.2 and 5.4.2 for a discussion of this), nor do they rely on cleverly devised solutions. In such situations, I believe that trust needs to be gained or established through time, and not demanded or treated as a given, which then influences the way that I would conceptualise and practice negotiation.

We seek to find and devise ways forward together with fellow participants, collaborators and/or co-producers (which shall be re-positioned as 'co-negotiators' after this research). The conception of our roles and work described here was made prior to this PhD research and stresses the position of artist as facilitator (Graves 2005). The conception of these role and relationship within social art practice are shifted by this PhD research. These shifts are articulated in 6.1.

Considering the scope of our practice, it becomes clear that negotiation is especially important in our work and I believe for participative art on the whole. Its transparency and articulation as a practice, which is the aim of this PhD, is important for ethical reasons and for the learning that it can offer to various practices of engagement.

1.6.1. Negotiations within iFIMA

My collaboration with Koh began in 2001. Prior to that, I have been involved in collaborative work with other artists and groups in Singapore, in addition to pursuing individual work in mediums of installation and performance. When we met Koh was working with concepts of the dialogic and critical reflexive practice, whilst I had practised collaboration primarily as a means of sharing and exchange; collective deliberations and actions. After embarking on collaborative work, we felt that it was important to maintain our distinct personalities and identities as individuals and artists, therefore, addition to collaborative work, we also pursued individual work.

In our collaborative projects, we do not follow any prior agreement on our specific roles and contributions, and have developed an intuition that enables us to know when to lead and when to allow the other to lead. Our actions emerge not primarily from our responsiveness to

each other, but more centrally, in a dynamic relational interplay with others and the situations we encounter. Therefore, although we do discuss the overarching philosophy of our work, our methodology and processes, we do not feel the need to express or project a common stand in our positions. In our communications with our other collaborators or participants, we directly express our difference of opinion on an issue, within a discussion should such a point arise. Within our collaborative practice, we negotiate with others and encourage others to negotiate with us as individuals with different positions.

We however, give each other extensive feedback and criticism of each other's actions and offer our individual points of view of events and experiences that unfold. When disagreements arise, we have heated arguments, after which we step back to see how these disagreements impact our actions and our responsiveness to each other in what the processes to come. We do not feel the need to have resolved our disagreements before our next step, and do not prescribe a 'rule' that we both have to follow based on consensus. However, it did take us some time to arrive at this way of working that is built on trust and intuitive responsiveness to each other.

There is however a rough division of work according to the areas that we each enjoy working in which also taps into each of our strengths. This is however not strictly observed. Koh is more active and comfortable in initiating contact with strangers and exploring ideas and projects with potential participants, collaborators and partners, which is why his area of research in the doctoral research he is undertaking with KUVA, Helsinki focuses on what we call the initial stages of our methodology – work in developing relationships with others from being strangers to stages of greater affinity, relatedness and interest in collaboration.¹⁰ Koh's research is focused on the dialogical, performative and intersubjective aspects of relationship building and micro-acts of communication. He takes on a more sociological slant on how the construction of each individual's subjectivities from one's primary and secondary socialisation impact the construction of meanings within interactive exchanges. He is also investigating the performative aspects of our practice, located within the meaning-inscribed spaces and rituals of everyday life.

I on the other hand, enjoy attending to the finer, more intimate details in the exchanges and negotiations with others, once a set of working relationships have been fairly established.

¹⁰ Koh, J. (2013): *Art Led Participatory Process: Subject to Subject Communication within Performances in the Everyday*. PhD Dissertation in progress. Helsinki: KUVA Academy of Fine Art. Forthcoming: October 2013.

Therefore my research is motivated on investigating acts of negotiations that becomes more manifestly crucial when differences and potential conflict appears during the intermediate stages of our projects (although it needs to be emphasised – as this research shows - that acts of negotiation is already at work at the start of – and perhaps prior to - any engagement across difference). Koh's and my activities and roles are worked out according to each of our interests and strengths and not along gender specific or prescribed roles, although I do acknowledge that our perceived strength in and enjoyment of these areas of work may in fact be culturally constructed, conditioned and habitualised.

In certain situations, particularly gender restrictive ones, we do find it an advantage for the practice to understand how and when one of our genders opens up access while the other is constrained. We at times do perform gender roles we do not personally prescribe to, as a social performance and way of negotiating a situation, when the situation requires it. The performative dimension in a negotiation needs to be acknowledged – both on our part and on the part of our collaborator-others - although it is not actively pursued in the argument and analysis of this thesis. When we do encounter oppressive gender practices that require our intervention, depending on the gravity and urgency of the situation, we would then decide whether to undertake direct intervention (not a preference) or to bring it up within the negotiation in indirect ways (the reasoning for this would commensurate with my argument on conscientisation and practical embedded knowledge in section 6.2). As a transparent practice, gender inequality is embedded within a host of other supportive yet 'normalised' worldviews and practices (the transparency and embedded nature of such practices are discussed in section 5.4) and is often defended as working 'for the good' and protection of the oppressed. They cannot be changed or transformed by being pointed out in isolation or by being 'judged' (i.e. declared as oppressive) by ourselves as 'meddling outsiders' (for a fuller explication of this within negotiation-as-active-knowing, see sections 5.4 and 6.2). It may instead adversely produce defensive behaviour (for example as protection of cultural identity and preservation of traditions, as highlighted in section 4.1.4 Incident 3) and a further entrenchment of such practices.

However there are certain advantages to our position as outsiders. We are not expected to behave in accordance to the local cultural norms, and can more easily be forgiven for having offended or violated certain codes of conduct or ignorance of local knowledge and ways. We are also entertained and responded to when asking questions that the local would not be tolerated for asking (although the degree of authenticity of the answer given is inflected by dynamics of our social relationships with them and possibly our status as outsiders). In the

Galway project (4.2), the Travellers' acceptance of our presence and activities in their halting site must be partially affected by our somewhat 'outside' position to the conflict they experience with mainstream Irish culture. In Myanmar (4.1) our being asked to assume the leadership and management of the art space NICA is informed by our position of being outside of the conflict between Itta and Golden as well as to our assumed greater ease of movement (a point that is challenged by this research) and greater immunity to political persecutions from the authorities as outsiders.

The outsider position does indeed allow us to say and do certain things that may open up new ways of seeing or thinking or doing. A persecuted intellectual who served time as a prisoner of conscience in Myanmar had expressed to me the value of our work in Myanmar using the metaphor of frog in the well to draw out the fact that the existence of a ceiling on the top of the well has become taken for granted, as have the well dweller's views and beliefs. The outsider's blindness and ignorance to these restrictions can serve its purpose; however, they need to be tempered with caution, attentiveness and ethical considerations. More importantly, the different views outsiders bring – informed by a different set of social conditions – serves as material for a coming-up-againstness that is shown by this research to be productive in a negotiation-as-active-knowing.

1.6.2. Complexity in negotiation: potential conflict between iFIMA and collaborator-others

There are many potential areas of conflict in an engagement between Koh and me with our collaborator-others. These areas of tension are in and around issues of gender, post and neo-colonialism, globalisation and neo-capitalism, modernisation and tradition, some of which will be properly teased out and some would not, in the course of this thesis. It would not be possible to exercise a proper articulation of all these complexities without sacrificing a coherent argument.

I therefore acknowledge here, some limitations of this research in dealing with the full complexity of negotiation. Negotiation-as-active-knowing is an attempt to re-frame the understanding of the act of negotiation as one whereby both artist and participant-other are reciprocally challenged and moved from their original positions through the process. Some degrees of the complexity of situations have been sacrificed for the sake of coherence in the framing and development of argument. There has also been some generalisations or 'neutrality' the treatment of my concepts (e.g. concepts of 'ground', 'contact', 'movement' formulated in chapter 3). This results from an attempt to be inclusionary of diverse range of positions, and not from the fact that I do not recognise the contentiousness of these terms

and the possibilities to conceal and flatten out acts/mechanisms of exclusion and/or inequality. For example, in using the term 'difference' to describe and underpin the diverse positions or divides within negotiation, I include in the definition of the term varying positions ranging from discomfort, strangeness, intolerance, tension, dissent, to conflict. However, as will be revealed in the detailed analysis of the case studies, my engagement and negotiations change with the subtleties of power relations, tensions, divisions and inequalities within each contexts.

An implicit part of the method necessitate that I take whatever is offered by each of my co-negotiators as a *starting point* of the negotiation, thereby taking for granted we are able to somewhat correctly understand each other's expression, underplaying the roles of interpretation (translability/intranslability), doubt, observation and ethnography in the activity. The methodology seeks to verify the authenticity of what is offered through clarifications and reciprocal co-negotiations, while not doubting the sincerity of the other. The methodology takes what is offered as the 'stuff' for the starting point of the process and journey of co-negotiation. The various activities in co-presence: clarifying the meanings through repeated conversations with others and self, imaginative reposing of scenarios, opening up to re-orientating views and clues, relational responsiveness and so on, continually shift, re-orientate and adjust our understanding and attention. In this process, what forms the starting point is not as important as where we arrive to.

The analysis also fails to fully discuss the performativity of the co-negotiators to each other. For example, any instance the participants are performing to Koh and me as engaged and interested outsiders, they are also speaking/performing to each other. What they say must be adjusted by the presence of who these fellow others are to them, and what the tensions and conflict are between them, underscored by narratives within their social spheres. This is an aspect of public and private transcripts that are studied by James C. Scott (discussed in 2.5.5). Although I have tried to allude to them in my analysis (for example in the analysis of the Ayed conflict in 4.1.1 and 6.2, behaviour of children in Galway in 4.2.6 and the Ganzug and Oyu conversation in 4.3.7), I have not been able to fully discuss them. Some aspects of these complexities are however investigated by my partner Koh in his doctoral research with KUVA in Helsinki.

The reason why I have not focused on some of the above areas in my analysis (and in drawing up the framework) is that many of these activities are based on judgement and evaluations formed from activities of reading, interpretation and observation conducted from an

'aboutness' position (Shotter 2005, see section 2.4.3). Whilst I acknowledge that there are increasingly critical forms of reflexive and participatory ethnography and hermeneutics, negotiation-as-active-knowing moves away from methods where the other and the situation are 'read' (as text) and analysed from the position of a 'subject' performing upon an 'object'. The 'aboutness' position and critical distance are a part of the methodology of negotiation-as-active-knowing (see 2.6). However, I stress that these activities are not to be performed from an outside position and/or as an isolatory activity, but from a position of 'witness' immersive involvement and subjected to calibrative interplay with others. It is only by centering the negotiation on the subjectivity and agency of all parties that we can overcome the objectification of the other. Readings, interpretations, observations, mistrust, suspicion, doubts and unvoiced thoughts that are intrinsic parts of a negotiation are similarly engaged and calibrated within the process,

Many layers and levels of negotiation, and also many layers of conflict and tension co-exist within any negotiation, forming a dynamic that evades quick judgement or naming. (see further discussions on the complexities of negotiation between Koh and me with co-negotiators in sections 3.1 and 3.2). This confirms the need for a durational, fluid process within negotiation that gradually reveals, clarifies, shifts and adjusts multiple perspectives and worldviews.

Chapter 2: Context, literature review and conceptual framework

2.1 Negotiation within the context of social art practice

Before I go into a definition, the etymology and literature reviews of negotiation, I will give a short contextual background from the history of social art practice to qualify the identification of negotiation as an important subject for research.

Beginning from the past three to four decades, art discourses have become more diversified and wider in scope as artists, practitioners and critics become interdisciplinary and increasingly socially-oriented. Art practices have become engaged with society and life in more directly collaborative and/or interventionist ways. The discipline of art and its discourses are continually being explored and enlarged at its margins, into discourses of everyday life (Highmore 2002) public sphere (Finkelpearl 2001) anthropology (Schneider & Wright 2010), for example. There is a growing pool of theory on collaborative, site-specific, relational, participative and socially engaged art (Raven 1989, Gablik 1992, Lacy 1995, Lippard 1997, Green 2001, Lind *etal* 2007, Bourriaud 2002, Bishop 2004, 2006b, Kwon 2004, Kester 2004, 2005, 2011, Douglas & Fremantle 2009, Thompson 2012).

There are epistemological and ontological challenges posed by these new practices (Kester 2004), which are shifting traditional understandings of aesthetics and the evaluation of art. Kester (2004, 2005) discusses some shared commonalities of these practices, for example, dialogue, collaboration, reciprocal and consultative exchange between artists and specialists/ participants from other fields; durational performance and ethical considerations.¹¹

In the past 20 years social artists have become increasingly involved in the public commissioning process (Hope 2011, Leeson 2011), Percent for Art, and various other public art programmes. Public art funding became available for public participative art projects in the UK and Europe. 'Participation' as a catch-phrase has been touted as the 'new tyranny'

¹¹ Kester has written extensively about these issues, in his book *Conversation Pieces: Community and Communication in Modern Art*, University of California Press, 2004, and essays such as "Theories and Methods of Collaborative Art Practices", published in *Groundworks: Environmental Collaboration in Contemporary Art* exhibition catalogue, Regina Gouger Miller Gallery, Carnegie Mellon, 2005.

(Cooke and Kothari 2001). Museums and art institutions have paid attention to art that involves greater interaction with members of the public. Yet policies on how artists should engage with audience or public or community as participant remain unclear. Priorities, process, relationships, and activities are still debated. Deliverable, measurable, 'positive' (defined for political interests) outcomes are desired, yet the yardsticks and methods of evaluation remain contentious (Matarasso 1996, 2010). And yet, the arts continue to be imbued with 'transformative' and catalytic value and artists are entrusted with the position and responsibility to use the vision and power of art to effect positive changes. One way in which artists and researchers have striven to address these issues is exemplified by the *On the Edge Artist as Leader* project, which seeks to demystify and articulate in more concrete terms the ways artists function as leaders (Douglas & Fremantle 2007, 2009).

Authorship

A central point of contention between established art discourse and these new forms of collaborative practices is the entrenched concept of the autonomy of the artist and the art object, which Kester (2004) assesses as values inherited from Modernist avant-gardism. Indeed, the issues of autonomous and/or shared authorship, facilitation (surrendered authorship?) and the ethical position of the artist in intervening in others' lives continue to plague social arts practitioners. Long after the dematerialisation of the art object (Lippard 1997) and onset of site-specific art (Kwon 2004) that began in the 1960s, the link between autonomy with the identity of art and artist seems intractable.¹² From the 1970s, pioneers of social art practice such as the Artist Placement Group (APG), Stephan Willats, Suzanne Lacy, Helen and Newton Harrison and Group Material have been working in collaborative partnerships with non-artist participants and specialists from other disciplines. However, none of them clearly claim that their work is in shared authorship with others. Suzanne Lacy has in fact explicitly stated she holds herself responsible as an artist for the artistic rigor and impact of her work.¹³ More recently, in Europe, Swedish art critic/ curator Maria Lind expresses the discomfort that artists/theorists have been feeling as a result of there being

¹² This could be due to an inherent belief that the creative and transgressive power of art stems from its autonomy, without which it would dissipate. Art education's emphasis on studio practice and lack of curriculum and preparation for relational, collaborative and negotiation methods may also contribute to the continuation of autonomy.

¹³ Lacy expressed this in an interview with Paul David Young titled 'The Suzanne Lacy Network' featured in *Art in America*. <http://www.artinamericamagazine.com/features/the-suzanne-lacy-network>. Accessed 12 April 2013. Lacy, in presenting an overview of The Oakland Projects in Working in Public Seminar series: Art, Practice and Policy, Seminar 3: Quality and Imperfection, also acknowledged that although there were negotiations in the project, 'visual things took a priority'. She stated that "there are three themes I would think that are very important to this work. One is that it was an artistic practice. This research was always framed as art, thought of as art by a few key artists." Seminar series co-organised by On The Edge Research and Public Art Resource+Research Scotland (PAR+RS). <http://ontheedgeresearch.org/s3-lacy-introduction/>

“too much forced commonality and prescribed collaboration today in the sense of social unanimity and political consensus – at least in north-west Europe.” (Lind 2007:19)

Hyper reflexivity

Larger 20th century postmodern theoretical discourses such as criticality, reflexivity and positionality (Biggs & Karlsson 2011), affecting all kinds of disciplines from cultural studies to anthropology (Clifford and Marcus 1986) have not escaped the arts, and is especially potent in the area of socially engaged, participative art, as artists become self-critical and self-vigilant against exploitation of others in their work (Koh 2004, 2005). Additionally, with the active appropriation and instrumentalisation of the arts in public policy, and increasing bureaucracy and monitoring in public art commissions, there is now less unquestioned license for artists in public art projects to “intervene” in communities’ lives. In fact, the reverse has happened, in some pockets, there is a hyper-reflexivity leading to extreme self-consciousness, heightened sense of responsibility and criticality of one’s position as outsider, from a more educated or higher class background.¹⁴ This may result in apprehensions in making any claims to speak for any position, whether of self (artist) or other (participant).

Being conscious of threading these issues, various efforts within social art practice especially within the commissioning process, have been geared towards re-defining the artist’s role in the social participative process, producing concepts such as artist as cultural facilitator and mediator (Graves 2005), collaborator (Green 2001), interlocutor (Shannon 2011, Dechter 2013), cultural animateur and activator (Monagan 2006, Reynolds 1984), leader (Douglas & Fremantle, 2009). While some of these avoid directly engaging with the concept of autonomy, Douglas and Fremantle (2009) have tried to re-position the concept of autonomy itself as the autonomy of *art* (not the artist) within interaction, arguing that art has something quite specific to offer.

Negotiation

In this thesis, I argue for how and why autonomy could/should be modified to take on a negotiative dimension. A re-balancing discourse and methodology between perceptions of autonomy and shared (perceived as diminished or relinquished) authorship needs to be

¹⁴ Irish artist Fiona Whelan’s work deals extensively with negotiations involving youth, communities and the authorities. I have been in conversation over e-mail with Whelan about this research and her current and past work. Whelan is currently working on a project titled ‘The Natural History of Hope’ involving multiple generations of women in the Rialto area in Dublin. She is delicately exploring and negotiating with young girls, teenagers, young mothers and older women to reveal their current reality and views on their past and future. In e-mail dated 9th November 2012, Whelan writes: “The challenges for me as a middle class educated professional is to be aware all the time of my own impact in a place, my own judgments and my responsibility when opening up these types of processes.”

foregrounded, and I propose that negotiation can become a useful conceptual tool for this purpose. As such, negotiation within this research framework is not just as an outwardly focusing dynamic, but also internal to art's own negotiation of its existence and its reality in the world, manifest through the artist's negotiation with notions and processes of autonomy and shared authorship.

My earlier contributions towards the discourse of autonomy and shared authorship veered on the side of facilitation. In my own and co-authored articles with Jay Koh (Chu 2006, Koh & Chu 2002, 2006, 2010), although we stressed that relationships and outcome need to be negotiated between the self and solidarity with others so that 'self+other+context' emerges as creative entity, the presiding drivers of the work were the participants' specific expressed needs and interests. The process that is based on ethical dialogical processes and durational sustained engagement was aimed at producing the right forms of organisation and outcome for the participants and community. The artist is there to lend ~~their~~ her/his skills and expertise. From 2003 onwards, my experiences as an artist/collaborator/facilitator in Myanmar demonstrated to me how as artists we are not neutral facilitators, as we ourselves entered a relationship of conflict with the participants. I realised that the articulation of our methodology of engagement was insufficient, as it failed to properly address the issues of conflict and difference.

Instead of 'shared authorship', I argue that it should be reframed as 'negotiated authorship'. As with the concept of pluralism which is often constructed and discussed in terms of tolerance and accommodation (Rawls 1987); 'shared authorship' could likewise denote co-existence and tolerance without any real negotiation. When the APG in the 60s worked on 'repositioning art in society' by placing artists within public and private organisations, they tried to preserve artistic autonomy for intervention through an 'open brief' in their partnership contracts drawn up with various organisations such as British Airways and British Petroleum. (Steveni 2002) To me, an 'open brief' still needs to articulate the process by which matters are worked out, articulated, or negotiated between the artists and organisations hosting the artist placement. Otherwise, an open brief could easily become a 'hidden brief' into which every party just inscribes their own agenda. "Negotiation" needs to actively confront and grapple with differences in the interests, and ways of thinking, seeing, and doing of each party.

The notion of negotiation therefore complicates/critiques the notion of autonomy within the tradition of art, which is itself in need of negotiation.

2.2 Definitions

Negotiation is often used to refer to a wide range of acts, and covers psychological and social communicative processes, and involves acts of reflexivity, with the situation/ context and with an 'other'. Different professions and practitioners would emphasise different aspects of its meaning.

2.2.1. Etymology

According to the Online Etymology dictionary (<http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?term=negotiation>), '*negotiate*' as a verb, has the following etymology:

"to communicate in search of mutual agreement," 1590s, back-formation from negotiation (q.v.). In the sense of "tackle successfully" (1862), it at first meant "to clear on horseback a hedge, fence, or other obstacle" and "originated in the hunting-field; those who hunt the fox like also to hunt jocular verbal novelties." [Gowers, 1965];

while negotiation as a noun has the following etymology:

1570s, from L. negotiationem (nom. negotiatio) "business, traffic," from negotiatus, pp. of negotiari "carry on business," from negotium "business," lit. "lack of leisure," from neg- "not" (see deny) + otium "ease, leisure." The shift from "doing business" to "bargaining" about anything took place in Latin.

From the etymology of the verb '*negotiate*', I derive several qualities or aspects to the act of negotiation:

1. The first is 'to communicate in search for mutual agreement', a back formation from the noun '*negotiation*' that initially meant 'business, traffic' and 'lack of leisure' and later took on the meaning of 'bargaining about anything'. This emphasises skilful communication to achieve a mutually agreed *outcome*; the interpersonal aspect of negotiation. However it emphasises *each* party's personal skill in influencing and achieving an advantageous outcome.
2. The second meaning of the verb 'to tackle successfully' is initially derived from the physical act of successfully clearing an obstacle in the hunting field. This involves

navigating, tackling, clearing obstacles. This also alludes to a personal skilful manoeuvre, a mastery of skill and expertise (riding, perceiving, judgement, tackling, clearing), that emphasises a subject-object divide, whereby things and situations encountered by the body are seen as external to the self, posing as challenges and objects to be manipulated and *overcome*. This sense gives rise to a common meaning in negotiation of knowing how to 'go over' or 'go around' or *circumvent*, when necessary.

3. Implicit in the successful tackle is the *relationship* between the human actor, the horse and the landscape that needs to be established in order to negotiate, to accomplish the act of 'successful tackle'. This speaks of close *relationality*, exchange and *knowledge* between the human subject and an 'other' and otherness (landscape).

2.2.2. Defining two forms of negotiation

From the qualities above, I propose two forms/approaches of negotiation that encapsulate the qualities outlined above, termed as (i) negotiation-as-active-knowing and (ii) negotiation-towards-outcome, which will be further explored through a wider literature review.

Negotiation-towards-an-outcome

Negotiation-towards-an-outcome draws from the first meaning 'communicate in search for mutual agreement'. It emphasises skilful, explicit, manipulative and/or persuasive *communication* aimed at influencing others towards a desired agreed *outcome*. Other subjects become the targets of our persuasive skills to be won over. This form of negotiation is mainly dependent on language (verbal and written) as medium and clarifier of meaning. Incidents and situations (otherness) become challenges and objects to be manipulated and overcome.

Negotiation-as-active-knowing

Negotiation-as-active-knowing incorporates qualities derived from the meaning 'successful tackle'. It involves relational awareness and responsiveness in a continuous mode of experiencing the changing landscape. It involves active attentiveness in seeing and sensing; recognising and responding. Even though it is still aiming towards a successful outcome, it is dependent on a symbiotic relationship, based on relational knowledge, between the human body, the other and the environment. In addition to explicit communication, it pays attention to implicit and tacit aspects of bodily perception, cognition and inter-subjective exchange, as it emphasises the experience of the body in cooperation with others within a landscape/ environment.

2.3. Professional practices and theories of negotiation

Although these two approaches are not mutually exclusive of each other, and their qualities are always present in any negotiation, they are emphasised differently in different professions and at different points of the negotiation process.

A brief survey of literature from the business and legal professions reveals a tendency towards negotiation that focuses on gaining and winning (Cohen 1982, Hoffman 1990). For Cohen (1982), negotiation is a field of knowledge and endeavour that focuses on gaining the favour of people from whom we want things. Negotiation determines influence over one's environment and gives a sense of mastery over one's life. Purporting win-win scenarios, Cohen states that negotiation involves analysing "information, time and power to affect behaviour ... the meeting of needs (yours and others)", however the goal is "to make things happen the way *you* want them to" (Cohen, 1982: 20) (my emphasis). For Hoffman (1990), negotiation is "a way of getting what we want or of persuading the other side to give it to us." Negotiation is an opportunity to win, but to do so with certain 'trade-offs'. He writes: "Our survival as a human race shows that we are able to live in a world of give and take and trade-offs. We enrich each other by negotiating, by settling differences in a way that both sides experience some sense of victory." (Hoffman, 1990:7) Outcome is measured according to win-and-loss, give-and-take involving trade-offs.

This approach resonates with negotiation-towards-outcome. It entails intensive and extensive strategizing and front-end preparation. One should enter a negotiation with a well-prepared plan and researched best alternatives. One needs to have worked out, through speculative analysis, how to react to different possible developments during the course of the make-or-break negotiation, so that there is no possibility for surprises. (Cohen 1982, Hoffman 1990, Abramowitz 2009, Programme on Negotiation at Harvard Law School (<http://www.pon.harvard.edu/>). Such practice of negotiation towards certain prescribed, predetermined or desired goals emphasises individual action, skills and preparation for contest/battle.

Politics and conflict resolution

In politics and conflict resolution, the tendency is towards seeing negotiation as activities geared at influencing others.¹⁵ Feelings of distrust are often harboured towards negotiation, especially with adversaries, as revealed by political scientist Gene Sharp (2003, first published 1993) whose writings have influenced numerous non-violent resistance movements worldwide. In the influential text, *From Dictatorship to Democracy*, Sharp (2003) warns that negotiation can be a deceptive and unreliable means to achieving liberative ends. Negotiation as a means to settle conflict is important only when there are no fundamental issues at stake, which then makes 'compromise' acceptable. However, when fundamental issues are at stake, negotiation does not provide a way of reaching a mutually satisfactory solution. He noted that negotiation may not be an option at all, when positions are *entrenched* (Sharp, 2003: 9 -10). Negotiated outcome is not dependent on "the relative justice of conflicting views and objectives", but "largely determined by the power capacity of each side" (Sharp, 2003: 11). Sharp advocates resistance as a more viable option. "Resistance, not negotiations, is essential for change in conflicts where fundamental issues are at stake" (Sharp, 2003: 13.)

Need for a new theories of negotiation

Conflict resolution scholar and anthropologist Kevin Avruch (2006) thinks that there is a need for an expanded canon for Negotiation Theory that can address identity, ideological and value-based conflict. It would demand shifts from what he calls the buyer-seller interest based model that has dominated negotiation theory, curricula and training modules.¹⁶ He argues that in a world divided by ideological and value-based differences as we face today, the buyer-seller interest model is no longer able to adequately address and resolve conflict. He proposes a new model to think about this situation, what he calls a 2-religion values-based model. The new heuristics for negotiation would include considering the role of emotions, culture, apology, narrative, metaphor theory, power and identity (Avruch 2006: 568). It is within this identified 'gap' in the canon of negotiation theory that I think this research on negotiation-as-active-knowing is placed.

Architecture

In the architecture profession, negotiation is invested within longer term relationship with its clients, as buildings take considerable time to be completed and are difficult to undo once they are built. As such, negotiation in this field places greater emphasis on relationship building between architect and client. Abramowitz (2009) describes negotiation thus: "At its

¹⁵ *Negotiation Beyond Conflict* [online] <http://www.negotiationbeyondconflict.com/>. Accessed 20 June 2010.

¹⁶ Avruch, K., (2006) *Toward an Expanded "Canon" of Negotiation Theory: Identity, Ideological, and Values-based Conflict and the Need for a New Heuristic*, Marquette Law Review, Vol. 89: 567- 582.

core, the whole idea of negotiation is to get you and the person with whom you are negotiating from two places that are apart to one place – together.” (Abramowitz, 2009: 91).

Abramowitz (2009) draws from research by the Huthwaite Research Group¹⁷ on the behaviour of ‘expert negotiators’¹⁸ that establishes that skilled negotiators spend more time planning and strategizing a wide range of options¹⁹ than average negotiators, and ways to solve problems and resolve issues, thus building a wide range of alternatives (Abramowitz, 2009: 129). “Every reasonably foreseeable potentiality is managed visibly for all parties to explore in the safety of the negotiation room.’ She supports the use of option development to maintain flexibility, build trust, understanding and shared commitment to any solution that eventually gets adopted. (Abramowitz 2009:138). The important goals are to establish common ground (to resolve differences) and to focus on long term issues (Abramowitz, 2009: 130, 138).

This emphasis on maintaining flexibility, exploring the widest range of alternatives and seeing potentiality implies the active attentiveness in seeing and sensing; in the exercise of perceptive, cognitive and imaginative power. The building of trust, understanding and shared commitment underline the role of relationships, relationality and knowledge that comes from deep exploration of shared potentiality and common ground. These resonate with the qualities of negotiation-as-active-knowing as I have outlined above.

Abramowitz (2009) further proposes three classes of ‘communication behaviour’ of skilled negotiators that should be learnt and consciously exercised in a balanced manner in architectural negotiation. The first class is that of ‘initiating behaviours’, which she defines as behaviours that put forward ideas, concepts, suggestions or courses of action. The second is ‘reacting behaviours’, which are evaluations and reactions to other’s contributions. The third is ‘clarifying behaviours’, which exchange information, facts and opinions, and offer clarifications. All these behaviours move negotiations forward; however, when designers work alone, they focus more on initiating behaviour and less on reacting and clarifying ones compared with when they have to work in a team or with a client (Abramowitz, 2009: 168 - 169).

¹⁷ Rackham, N. (1975) *The Behaviour of Successful Negotiators*, England: Huthwaite Research Group.

¹⁸ The Huthwaite Group defines as ‘experts’ negotiators who share three characteristics: have a track record of reaching agreements; have a track record of their agreements being implemented successfully; have a track record of the Other being willing to negotiate with them again (Abramowitz, 2009: 127-8)

¹⁹ The Huthwaite Research Group report states that skilled negotiators entertain at least 5 options whereas average negotiators consider half as many (Abramowitz, 2009:137)

Initiating and reacting behaviours imply acts of acting and responding, the active and the passive/ receptive. Clarifying behaviour calls for a durational exchange as a process of refinement that would shift orientations, perceptions and understanding between the architect and the client, the self and the other. From the above, I see that there is more overlapping ground between the architects' negotiation theory and my own experience in relational and collaborative arts practices. The qualities that Abramovitz has drawn together - a *flexible, active searching* for, which needs to be balanced between *initiating, responding* and *clarifying* behaviours through *durational exchange* - are compelling for the framework of qualities of negotiation-as-active-knowing.

In the next section, I will continue to explore and identify further qualities of negotiation-as-active-knowing by going through phenomenology literature.

2.4. Phenomenological insights towards negotiation

In this section, I explore literature from or in discourse with the phenomenological tradition (Merleau-Ponty 2002, Ingold 2000, Shotton 2005, Bortoft 1996). The decision to study phenomenology is because as an arts practitioner working in direct experiential relationships in engagement with others, I am interested to search for a set of concepts that could illuminate these interactions. Negotiation-as-active-knowing involves the understanding of key concepts in human experiential perception and its role in the production of knowledge. Phenomenology deals with the structures of consciousness as experienced from the first-person point of view, taking as the central structure of an experience 'its intentionality, its being directed toward something, as it is an experience of or about some object' (Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy).²⁰ As such, phenomenology emphasises the interface between the human body with the environment, in and through its direct experience of it. Additionally, I will also draw from my own background of Chinese ways of thinking about the interaction between human subjects with worldly affairs, which also resonates with a phenomenological view.

A distinction needs to be drawn between phenomenology and empiricism. According to Merleau-Ponty (2002), phenomenology dwells on the effects of perception and experience in influencing our structures of consciousness. Empiricism on the other hand does not include a

²⁰ *Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy* [online] <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/phenomenology/>. Accessed 29 March 2013.

study into the working of consciousness, focusing instead on experience as the primary source of knowledge, gleaned from sensory perceptions. In this research, as shown in section 5.4 with Bortoft's explication of the *absent active*, it is the transparent dimension of mind in the process of sense and meaning-making that develops a crucial contribution of negotiation-as-active-knowing, allowing it to engage with what I call 'practical embedded knowledge' of co-negotiators (section 5.4.1). (In chapter 3, I discuss further how this differentiation impacts the drawing up of the domains of practice as a second tier analysis for the framework of negotiation-as-active-knowing.)

2.4.1 Merleau-Ponty: the immersion and mobility of the perceiving body-subject

Maurice Merleau-Ponty (2002) developed the concept of the perceiving human body as a 'body-subject'. He writes: "To be a body, is to be tied to a certain world, as we have seen; our body is not primarily *in* space: it is of it" (Merleau-Ponty, 2002:171). The world and the human body as a perceiving thing are intertwined and mutually engaged. The body is tied to and immersed within the world. Merleau-Ponty makes a further point on the essential *partiality* of things to the human view. An object is manifest to us by presenting itself to a range of possible views, and we are not able to see all its facets all at once, for example, from the point of view of our bodies, we will never see the six sides of the cube as equal. Yet we know that in reality that cube has six equal sides. It is by moving around its various sides, we are able to perceive its intelligible structure. He argues that it is only by conceiving our bodies as *mobile* objects that we are able to interpret perceptual appearance and construct the cube as it truly is (Merleau-Ponty, 2002: 236). This to me means that the body-subject is tied to the specific space of the world that in turn forms a ground for the movement of the body-subject. The mobility of the body-subject on a ground of experience is necessary for knowing and grasping what is perceived. This speaks of a way of negotiating objects and experiences - much like the idea of navigating a landscape in the etymology of the term negotiate. *Mobility* (movement) is identified as an important factor of negotiation-as-active-knowing.

2.4.2 Ingold: immersion and relational learning in presence of others within an environment

Anthropologist Tim Ingold (2000) attempts to replace the dichotomy of the nature and culture debate in human subjective development with a dynamic synergy of human as organism within an environment with the aim of regaining a genuine ecology of life. Drawing

on the work of ecology psychologist James J. Gibson,²¹ Ingold argues that human knowledge and skills are learnt by the individual immersed and moving *within* an environment.

“Perception, Gibson argued, is not the achievement of a mind in a body, but of the organism as a whole in its environment, and is tantamount to the organism’s own exploratory movement through the world. If mind is anywhere, then, it is not ‘inside the head’ rather than ‘out there’ in the world. To the contrary, it is immanent in the network of sensory pathways that are set up by virtue of the perceiver’s immersion in his or her environment.” (Ingold, 2000: 3)

Ingold’s writing brings out the importance of investigating the process of an individual’s growth in relational terms. He writes that the human is an organism-in-an-environment “undergoing growth and development in an environment furnished by the work and presence of others.” (Ingold, 2000: 4) Acquisition of skills and learning are produced by the immersion and movement of the human in relationship with others in an environment.

2.4.3 Shotter: immersion, living participation and anticipatory, expressive-responsive understanding

Intercommunications theorist John Shotter’s (2005) writings argue for the importance of knowledge that is produced from within experiential human relationships. Shotter thinks that Cartesian dualism has led us down an inadequate path of thinking with the presupposition that as human subjects we are able to understand objectivity by acts of dissecting, studying and putting together again. Taking from Merleau-Ponty that relations between bodies and surroundings have a chiasmic, intertwined, or entangled structure, he thinks that current forms of thought or institutional practices have not begun to take a proper account of this and that it is a very important area that will provide a more complete knowledge on human relations and intercommunications.

Shotter (2005) writes: “... in ignoring all the already existing relations between things, and the dynamics of these relations as they unfold through time, might we not be ignoring a major influence at work on us as participant parts inextricably ‘rooted’ ourselves in such a larger whole? Might we not be able to gain a sense of the organized beings around us and a sense of their inner possibilities from within our living relations with them?” (Shotter, 2005: 136). He continues that it is through “such lived and engaged ways of relating ourselves to our

²¹ Ingold cites of particular interest James J. Gibson’s work. Gibson, J.J. (1979) *The Ecological Approach to Visual Perception*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.

surroundings, a certain kind of *expressive-responsive understanding* becomes available to us that is quite unavailable to us as disengaged spectators” (ibid) (my emphasis).

What then results is what Shotter calls ‘witness-thinking, which is a form of participatory thought. It can provide a sense of *anticipatory* knowledge which can only be gained “by *‘entering into’* a dialogically- or chiasmically structured relationship with the phenomena in question (Shotter, 2005:153) (my emphasis). However, such a form of knowledge can only come about from our becoming - instead of merely a spectator of this world - active, *living embodied participants* within it’ (Shotter, 2005:134).

Shotter elaborates on this kind of responsive, anticipatory knowledge:

In the interplay of living movements intertwining with each other, new possibilities of relation are engendered, new interconnections are made, *new ‘shapes’ or ‘forms’ of experience can emerge*. These reflective encounters are thus not just simply a ‘seeing,’ for *what is sensed is invisible*; nor are they interpretations (or representations), for they arise immediately, directly and uniquely in one’s living encounter with an other’s expressions; neither are they merely feelings for carried with them as they unfold is *a bodily sense of the possibilities for responsive action in relation to one’s momentary placement, position, or orientation in the present interaction*. In short, we are spontaneously ‘moved,’ bodily, toward specific possibilities for action in this kind of thinking. They provide us with both an *evaluative sense* of ‘where’ we are placed in relation to our surroundings, as well as an *anticipatory sense* of where next we might move. (Shotter, 2005: 146) (my emphasis)

Taoism: Learning produced by close active contact; sensing and responding

Shotter’s sense of the anticipatory knowledge from relational contact and interplay that produces specific possibilities for action is also expressed by a traditional Chinese saying: “To cross the river by feeling its bed”

Traditional and folk Chinese ways of thinking about the interaction between human subjects and with worldly affairs, much of which are influenced by Taoism and Confucianism, emphasises the inter-relatedness of all things. As a traditional saying which describes the best strategy in handling uncertainty, “to cross the river by feeling its bed” means to proceed by close contact with – delicately feeling and sensing - the things and conditions one encounters. One needs to become immersed in the river before one can figure out how to cross it. One moves by actively sensing, responding and anticipating the next move in a very

intimate way. In *active contact*, one touches and is touched by one's environment or the subject that one has to negotiate. The relationship between the feet and the river bed is intertwined. Sensing and responding takes place simultaneously.

Friction

Shotter (2005) echoes this sense of touching and emphasises the fact that a sense of difference is the result of the *friction* that is produced when we come into contact with other persons' utterances, bodily expressions, words and works. "Involved is a meeting of outsides, of surfaces, of 'skins'... They both touch and are touched, and in the relations between their outgoing touching and the resultant incoming responsive touches of the other, the sense of a 'touching' or 'moving' *difference* emerges" (Shotter, 2005: 146). Friction is indeed necessary for movement, and friction is the condition for realising the sense of difference, the border between our bodies and those of others and otherness. These ideas are best captured in his term 'expressive relational-responsiveness'.

Intentionality and directed attentiveness

The anticipatory knowledge discussed above comes from being in living participation with others. However, it can only come about with committed intentionality and attentiveness. Shotter (2005) recognises this problem. He deliberates on how to acquire embodied, spontaneously expressed understandings. He cites David Bohm (1965) who describes the process involved as follows: "Both in the case of perception and in that of building a skill, a person must actively meet his environment in such a way that he coordinates his outgoing nervous impulses with those that are coming in. As a result the structure of his environment is, as it were, gradually incorporated into his outgoing impulses so that he learns how to meet his environment with the right kind of response. (Shotter, 2005: 145).

2.4.4 Bortoft's active and receptive mode of attentiveness

Physicist and philosopher of science Henri Bortoft (1996) discusses two modes of organisation, intentionality and attentiveness that human beings exercise. Bortoft's investigations have been geared towards understanding what took place during Goethe's discovery of a new colour theory, and what constituted Goethe's scientific consciousness. He argues that Goethe's way of science involves a 'plunging into looking' which takes him directly within the phenomenon (Bortoft, 1996: 65). Drawing from the field of developmental psychology, particularly the works of E.A. Burt and Henri Bergson, Bortoft discusses two modes of organisation, one action mode and the other receptive mode. The action mode

results in an analytical mode of consciousness concerned with the manipulation of solid, physical objects. The analytical mode of consciousness is institutionalised by the structure of the English language, which favours the active mode. (Bortoft, 1996: 16) The receptive mode allows events to happen. It focuses on the non-verbal, non-linear, holistic and intuitive, and emphasises the perceptual and sensorial instead of the rational and brings about a holistic mode of consciousness. It is concerned more with relationships than with discrete elements. Bortoft states: "It is important to realise that this mode of consciousness is a way of seeing, and as such it can only be experienced in its own terms" (Bortoft, 1996: 63) "If we are re-educated in the receptive mode of consciousness, our encounter with wholeness would be considerably different, and we would see many new things about our world" (Bortoft, 1996:16).

2.4.5 Orientation and re-orientation

After 'entering into' a dialogically or chiasmically structured relationship and 'dwelling upon or with' others and otherness for a while, Shotter (2005) states that we can "gradually gain an *orientation* toward them as their 'inner nature' becomes more familiar to us." (Shotter, 2005: 153) However, he emphasises that this kind of understanding cannot be acquired in a flash of insight. "Much as we get to know our 'way around' inside a new city which is at first unfamiliar to us, say, by exploring its highways and byways according to the different projects we try to pursue within it, we must take the time required to approach the phenomena of our inquiries in many different directions. In attempting to understand the 'inner' inter-connections and relations within them, we must take our time. For we are not seeking the solution to a problem but, so to speak, to *find our 'way around' inside something* that is a mystery to us – an unsolvable mystery that might remain so." (Shotter, 2005: 153-4) (My emphasis) Finding our way around involves continuous acts of orientation and re-orientation.

Here, Shotter also uses metaphors of active exploration, navigation and orientation within a process of calibrative durational engagement, which by now seems to clearly underline the qualities that constitute negotiation-as-active-knowing.

2.4.6 Summary

Within this review of the literature of phenomenology, there are qualities that clearly resonate with the analysis from architecture, namely Abramowitz's initiating-responding and

clarifying behaviours with Shotter's *anticipatory, expressive relational-responsive understanding*, as well as *Taoism's sensing-responding* and Bortoft's *receptive mode of attention*. The *flexibility* and relational active exploration of long term issues that Abramowitz advocates is also reflected in the ideas of mobility, Ingold's *relational learning*, and Shotter's definition of experiential thinking/knowing as *explorative navigation* and *coordinated orientation* within *durational engagement*. Furthermore, they resonate back with the qualities of negotiation-as-active-knowing established in section 2.2 that emphasises the symbiotic and embodied relationship, relationality and knowledge exchange of the human body in contact and cooperation with others in navigating a landscape/ environment.

2.5. Negotiation in literature of social art practice, cultural studies and sociology

In this section, I analyse selected literature from social art practice (Leeson 2011, Kaprow 1995, Kester 2011) for their revelations for the practice of negotiation, finding and identifying key insights from Kester's (2011) concept of 'calibrative interplay' as a dynamic between artist and collaborators in an engaged process. This concept is then resonated with race and cultural scholar Sara Ahmed's 'encounter as intertwining histories of arrival', political science and anthropologist James C. Scott's 'weapons of resistance of the weak' and sociologist Margaret Archer's 'reflexivity as internal conversations of the self in relation to otherness', which enriches the dimensions of interplay between negotiation, tension and resistance.

I have outlined some tensions around autonomy, intervention, shared authorship and my proposal for negotiation within the discourse of social engaged art in chapter 2.1 'Negotiation seen within the context of the history of social art practice'. As I have stated it is difficult to encounter texts by art practitioners which explicitly articulate how negotiation of difference is worked out within an art process, beyond stating that it took place. As an example, Leeson (2009) in her PhD thesis used the term 'negotiate' numerous times when discussing relationships with participants and collaborators, however, her closest and most explicit definition of negotiation was 'an alchemic process in a pot' which does not prove to be helpful in the exercise of articulating negotiation. Having said this, I believe that negotiation is an implicit act within every artist's work. Deep readings of artist's texts in social engaged practice would reveal its role and operatives within the interactive process with others and otherness. As an exercise, I have made an attempt to read Allan Kaprow's 'Success and Failure When Art Changes' (1995) in which he reflected on his project made in the 60s with Herb

Kohl an educationalist, called *Project Other Ways*, for insights on negotiation. This is presented in Appendix I.

However, in collaborative theorist Grant Kester's writings, I have found concepts that pertinently resonate with and feed back to the tensions and qualities of negotiation-as-experiential-inquiry and negotiation-towards-outcome. His analysis of the negotiations between the self/ autonomy and the collective (many) contributes a nuanced focus on dynamics of intersubjective negotiative processes, with the concept of cognitive 'calibration' that takes place within embodied relationships with others.

2.5.1 Kester: calibrative interplay and oscillating cognitive process

The tension between negotiation-as-active-knowing and negotiation-towards-outcome is resonated in Grant Kester's (2011) examination of the tensions and negotiations between the one and the many (the self and others; the individual and the collective), the modern and the pre-modern; between the artists practicing artistic autonomy and the reciprocal creative labour of collaborative art practice. One calls for the achievement of self-dictated ends, and the other calls for outcomes that are co-determined with others. Kester argues that the perspectives and prerogatives of the 'one' have been emphasised in modernist practices, as opposed to the 'many' in collaborative practices.

In arguing against a reductive oppositional reading of individual versus collective, Kester (2011) states that a closer analysis of collaborative practices can reveal a more complex model of identity, "one in which the binary oppositions of divided vs. coherent subjectivity, desiring singularity vs. totalising collective, liberating distancing vs. stultifying interdependence, are challenged and complicated" (Kester, 2011: 89). He maintains that while it is necessary to operate with some critical distance, this distance is not absolute nor is it a constant characteristic of an independent subjectivity. Distance practised as an 'artist's sheer existence and self-declaration as artist' can lead to stasis or fixity of thought and reproduce prescriptive administrative measures that are meaningless or redundant (ibid).

Using Indian art collective Dialogue's projects in Kondagaon, India as a case study, Kester draws out an analysis of a collaborative and collective art practice that works through a dynamic negotiation between the artist and the community, between the self and the collective. This negotiation involves moments of integration and distancing, and moves

between the assertion and dissolution of self within the collective. In Dialogue's work, Kester maintains that "critical distance is produced *out of* the interactions that occur" at the site of work (Kester, 2011: 89) (My emphasis).

Kester describes the work of Dialogue as beginning "not with an a priori technical solution, but a receptive opening to the site of practice and a heightened sensitivity to the cultural and social protocols, temporal and spatial patterns, and modes of physical movement that define each context. Participants are not singularised and abstracted, but engaged through their *immersion in, and distance from, collective systems of meaning and intentionality*" (Kester, 2011: 136) (My emphasis). Kester's emphasis on *both* immersion and distance, that it is not one or the other, but a dynamic interplay between the two, challenges Shotter's dichotomy of witness against aboutness thinking as a theory of engagement with others and otherness.

The immersion of the artists within the life of the community enabled them to identify a physical feature in the village, the water pump, as an integral part of the social relations, spatial protocol and organisation of the village, significant of the gender dynamics of control and surveillance. This was achieved through an extended process of observing and reflecting on the pragmatic interrelationships and complexity of social structures, practices, and temporalities of site; to the nuances of its social and performative protocols. Dialogue then engaged with villagers to design new water pumps and build them through an extended process of reciprocal interaction, exchange, discussions and co-labouring. The resultant partial enclosure of the space created 'a zone of cohesion, intimacy and reconsolidation' for the women in the village, allowing them to share with each other and build solidarity away from the spatial protocols and gender power relations of the village (Kester, 2011: 81).

The insight or solution came about because Dialogue was able to step in and out, to have both an inside and outside view. Through immersion, they can recognise the water pump as an important nexus in the villagers' lives, and by looking from the outsider perspective, they can see the dynamics of gender power relationships in the village. Kester writes: "Their work is based neither on a claim of seamless integration with Adavasi culture, nor on an equally absolute distance from it. Rather it affects a kind of *toggling back and forth between inside and outside, engagement and observation, immersion and reflective distance...*" (Kester, 2011: 90) (My emphasis)

2.5.2. Nuances and implications of Kester's theory

Kester's analysis of Dialogue's process reveals that criticality is in fact "always partial and contingent, coexisting with moments of relative integration or proximity in a diachronic unfolding. Insight is generated not via distance per se, but in the play that occurs between these moments." (Kester, 2011: 90) This speaks of a continuous interplay of movements, the continuous oscillation of positions between self and other, distance and immersion, outside and inside; while being conscious of the historical situatedness and becoming of each.

At this point, there seems an apparent contradiction between Kester's (2011) oscillative interplay that requires both the inside and outside perspectives with Shotter's (2005) emphasis on moving into the immersive 'witness' position with others. In my attempt to work out the contradiction, I come upon the realisation that the oscillations and shifts between positions and perspectives that produces new understanding must indeed occur *within* the witness-position. This means that within a 'witness' participative relationship, *distance* and *borders* between the self and other must exist, as do positions of inside and outside, distance and proximity. This autonomy of self and distance between self and other are not dissolved or collapsed but are all implicated within dialogic and calibrative interplay. I arrive at the conclusion that *both* 'witness' and 'aboutness' positions are present *within* immersive involvement with others.

Using Kester's calibrative interplay I would also rework Bortoft's emphasis of the receptive mode of attention in the encounter with a phenomenon discussed in section 2.4.4. I would contend that in calibrative interplay, both the modes of active and receptive attentiveness as described by Bortoft (1996) are engaged in interplay, oscillating between the constitutive state of experiencing the encounter, and the reflecting of the new insights produced by difference. This would resonate with Abramowitz's (2009) qualities of 'active perceiving and responding' in good negotiation practice (balancing between initiating, responding and clarifying), Shotter's acting and responding and the incoming and outgoing feeling-response implicated in the metaphor of crossing the river by feeling its bed. I would refer to this as the *active-receptive* mode of attentiveness in negotiation-as-active-knowing.

2.5.3 Archer: reflexivity as conversations with self in midst of others

The work of sociologist Margaret Archer (2007) attests to the interaction and existence of multiple conversing positions within human reflexivity. As individuals, we use reflexivity to negotiate our way through the world, and she defines 'reflexivity' specifically as that "regular

exercise of mental ability, that people do on a daily basis, to consider ourselves *in relation* to our social contexts and vice versa". This exercise of mental ability involves internal conversations or conversations with the self. (Archer, 2007: 4) Archer's investigation of such internal acts is important for a more complete understanding of how human beings find and negotiate our way in the world. Archer's work reveals that the qualities of negotiation-as-active-knowing involves both internal and external acts of orientation and relationality. The dynamic relationship between internal and external conversations within reflexivity confirms the oscillating shifting dynamic of negotiation.

Archer's concept adds to Kester's oscillating calibration, which can be seen as an interpretation of what happens in an interactive learning encounter between self and other that involves processes of relationality and reflexivity. The calibration between self and other will then have to take place alongside calibrations *within* the self (in relationship with others), as the artist's (and others') understanding gets shifted and modified through the durational encounter. Negotiation-as-active-knowing constitutes of generative processes that includes both (intrasubjective) reflexive and (inter-subjective) relational knowledge production.

2.5.4 Ahmed: the encounter as intertwining histories of arrival

Kester's concept of an oscillating diachronic unfolding acknowledges an aspect of the *historicity* of others and conditions of otherness that has so far been missing in architectural and phenomenological concepts of negotiation. Race and cultural studies theorist Sara Ahmed (2006) in her response to Husserl's phenomenology pointed out what the implications are in phenomenology's lack of consideration for the conditions of the object's arrival, so that it can be perceived. In a tour de force around the solipsism of Husserl's 'natural attitude'²² Ahmed states: "If we do not see (but intend) the back of the object, we might also not see (but intend) its background in this temporal sense. In order to see what the "natural attitude" has in its sight, we need to face the background of an object, redefined as the conditions for the emergence not only of the object (we might ask: How did it arrive?), as well as the act of perceiving the object, which depends on the arrival of the body that conceives. The background of perception might involve such *intertwining histories of arrival*, which would explain how Husserl got near enough to his table for it to become not only an object on which

²² In his study of Edmund Husserl's phenomenology, James J. Kockelmann states that a pure consciousness is necessary in order to serve as the object of phenomenological inquiry. Therefore, physical or non-psychical aspects of the real world need to be placed between brackets. The 'natural attitude' then refers to the attitude towards the real world that is at all times known as 'a fact-world that has its being out there' (Kockelmans 1994: 120).

he writes, but also the object around which his phenomenology is written” (Ahmed, 2006: 38) (My emphasis).

This act of ‘intending’²³ as contrasted with ‘facing’ the object’s background (interestingly Husserl’s ‘intentionality’ is often referred to as ‘aboutness’ {see footnote} - although this is different from a Cartesian form of ‘aboutness’ as defined by Shotter) suggests the possibility of false projection of meanings, ideas and understandings of the self onto the behaviour and conditions of others and otherness, which is a constant danger in intercultural encounters. As will be explicated in my projects, it is easy to misunderstand what one thinks one does by falling back on what one thinks one knows. This attests to the importance of Abramowitz’s clarifying behaviour and Kester’s calibrative cognitive process as qualities within negotiation-as-active knowing.

Ahmed’s point on historicity also brings into view the fact that the object is an effect of history, a Marxian rethinking of the object as a product of specific conditions of labour, social organisation (Ahmed, 2006: 40) and by extension, power relations: “... objects “have value” and they take shape through labour. They are formed out of labour, but they also “take the form” of that labour.” (Ahmed, 2006: 41). The implications here reinforces that in negotiation-as-active-knowing, phenomenological concepts of relational responsiveness needs to engage with the hidden dimensions of labour, power and social relations which needs to come to the foreground in the immersive experience. They can be accessed, according to Kester (2011) through a generative and improvisational relationship towards the specifics of a given site (Kester, 2011: 145) involving immersion and distancing, whereby the social ecology of relationships, protocols, inclusion and exclusion, distribution and structures of power, labour and resistance becomes manifest and can be recognised in these terms.

2.5.5 Scott: negotiation and resistance

Kester’s concept of intersubjective oscillating diachronic unfolding firmly brings into active view the aspect of power and power relations. Anthropologist James C. Scott (1985, 1990) studies extensively the practices of resistance of the weak, in negotiating various forms of

²³ Husserl’s use of the term ‘intentionality’ refers to the notion that consciousness is always the consciousness of something. Intentionality is also often described as being “about” something. . Ronald McIntyre and David Woodruff Smith (1989), “Theory of Intentionality,” in J. N. Mohanty and William R. McKenna, eds., *Husserl’s Phenomenology: A Textbook*. Washington, D. C.: Center for Advanced Research in Phenomenology and University Press of America. pp. 147-79.

social power structures. He identified the term 'infrapolitics' to denote how invisible and inaudible, basically undetectable, existence and movement are in fact empowering for many communities. Scott states (1985) that people's acts of communication are divided into 'public and hidden transcripts' depending on the exigencies of circumstances, power relations and identity of persons present. Scott's concepts produce a nuanced reading and understanding of conditions of visibility and invisibility; the visible and the hidden.

Scott's identification of such acts resonates with the sense of negotiation as circumvention, finding ways to go around obstacles in undetected ways. Negotiation as circumvention brings us head on with issues of imbalances of power and conflicts of interest that underscore many negotiative acts, giving negotiation its urgency.

'Orientation markers' within resistance and conflict

Scott's texts have a specific contribution to make to the process of negotiation-as-active-knowing in raising the sensitivity in observing and recognising both public and hidden social spheres, behaviours and actions. I begin to recognise and analyse such signs of behaviour as 'orientation markers' in chapter 4, in experiences of negotiating resistance and conflict against and within iFIMA's work in Myanmar.

2.6 Overall analysis and summary

Shotter's (2005) and Kester's (2011) theories emerge as main frames for articulating negotiation-as-active-knowing, as their concepts create the strongest resonance with the other theories. Like Shotter, Kester's view of movement on the ground of negotiations between the self and the collective is also based on improvisational and anticipatory qualities. These qualities are implicit in the artist's generative relations to a given site of practice. Kester's concepts resonate with Shotter's positions of 'aboutness-' and 'withness-thinking', yet adds important nuances to them. Withness-thinking also involves intervals and oscillations of positions of 'aboutness' or distantiation and 'withness' or immersion. Reflexivity involves oscillating movements between self and self, in addition to self and others. Therefore, in any act of negotiation, there are many levels of 'negotiation' going on: between self and self (intrasubjective); self and other (intersubjective); self and environment (ecological, extrasubjective).

Shotter in quoting Bohm speaks of the coordination or fine tuning process between incoming and outgoing impulses in the self's relating with others; Kester's concept of calibration would

also apply to both internal reflective and external relational acts, as the meanings, values and understanding become more and more attuned and re-aligned to those of others and otherness through acts of intrasubjective (reflexive), intersubjective and extrasubjective (self in environment) negotiation-as-active-knowing.

I use Kester's concept to modify Shotter's (2005) prioritising of the witness position and Bortoft's (1996) prioritising of the receptive mode. I think both witness and aboutness positions are important, and are both operative *within* immersive involvement, as are the active and receptive mode of attentiveness.

2.7. Re-articulating the findings for a conceptual framework for negotiation-as-active-knowing

In negotiation-as-active-knowing, instead of learning 'about' a subject (other, otherness) from the outside, one enters into an *immersive contact* 'with' it (Shotter 2005, Ingold 2000). In doing so, one needs to make agile, *flexible explorative movement* with or alongside the subject within the ground that the subject walks on (etymology, Abramovitz 2009 ~~—is this supposed to be a more specific reference?~~); in a way, 'otherness' becomes a 'ground' that one is walking on. One also needs to direct one's *attentiveness in an active oriented* manner towards the subject of inquiry (Shotter 2005), in an active-receptive mode (Bortoft 1996). Through a durational involvement in such a manner of living participation in the utterances, words, gestures and work of the other, one develops a *nuanced relational responsiveness* in acting with and responding to the subject (Shotter 2005). One is able to access, through this involvement, things that are previously hidden, for example, embedded practices, values, social ecology, history of arrival, labour, and power relations (Kester 2011, Scott 1985,1990, Ahmed 2006). The whole durational involvement works as a *calibrative interplay*, which Kester describes as a continuous oscillation between proximity and distance, assertion and dissolution of self. From my own experience, the oscillation involves movements between orientation, disorientation and re-orientation; certainty and uncertainty; fixity and openness. From Shotter (and Ahmed) we know that friction, tension and moments of disorientation are required for creative exploration of new movements. Ahmed describes how disorientations cause us to re-orientate. The encounter with difference produces disorientations, tension and friction. This means that in negotiation-as-active-knowing, positions of the self and the other is not collapsed, and the self does not become dissolute but that both are subjected to being tested. To use Shotter's terms, 'witness-thinking' also involves positions of 'aboutness';

being immersed in living participation with others involves an interplay between proximity and distance. Through relational calibrative interplay, each party's orientations, positions, beliefs and held assumptions are being tuned, shifted and re-aligned. The kinds of knowledge that such a process can produce is a form of generated relational knowledge, produced in the space between the self and the other, or of the space between self with the other (Ingold 2000, Shotter 2005).

The strongest qualities of negotiation-as-active-knowing that one can extract from the narrative above are: immersive contact, living participation, flexible explorative movement, oriented active receptive attentiveness, nuanced relational responsiveness, durational involvement, calibrative interplay and fine tuning. The outcome of the practice of such qualities is a form of relational knowledge, a knowledge of how to go on with others and otherness.

By processing these qualities of negotiation-as- active-knowing further, they can be compacted as follows:

1. *Durational immersive involvement* establishes living contact, participation and flexible explorative movement, bringing about a witness experiencing of relationships, social ecology and power relations;
2. *Relational responsiveness* involves active receptive attentiveness, bringing about nuanced acting responding and a sense of orientation;
3. *Calibrative interplay* involves oscillatory movement, which shifts and continuously fine tunes between positions of certainty and uncertainty, orientation, disorientation and re-orientation, tension and resolution.

2.8 Conclusion: conceptual framework for qualities of negotiation-as- active-knowing

Negotiation-as-active-knowing (experiential inquiry) emerges from the literature review as a *durational process of immersive involvement* and nuanced *relational responsiveness* that gradually *calibrates and tunes* different positions and values so as to produce new understanding and relationships between artist/self and participant/other, thus opening up new possibilities.

Chapter 3: The domains of practice for negotiation

In chapter 2, through the literature review, I have established a conceptual framework of the qualities of negotiation-as-active-knowing which comprises:

- (i) durational immersive involvement,
- (ii) nuanced relational responsiveness
- (iii) calibrative interplay between positions and understandings.

In this chapter, I will draw from my own experience as an artist-practitioner to establish the domains of practice for acts of negotiation to take place within. Subsequently, I will subject the elements of the domains to the lens of the literature review, to arrive at a sharpened view of these domains.

3.1 Emergence of the domains of ground, contact and movement

In the prologue to chapter 1, I recounted the incident of how Tin's story about the crow created great discomfort and disorientation for me. At that moment, the relationship with the Myanmar artists and my feeling of bonding with them and with our common objectives established through a period of interaction was thrown into disarray. I related how, through a durational period of living in and with the people and the social realities of Myanmar, and being immersed in living participation of the everyday life of the people that I began to make sense of the story and find ways to reconnect and re-align myself with the Golden members and with the Myanmar situation on the bigger scale. I could then gradually find my own way of moving within that constraining environment.

What the experience revealed to me was that the alienating situation or environment that I found myself in opened up as a 'ground' for me to negotiate. My 'contact' and relationship with the Myanmar artists connected me to this ground, and helped me understand and make sense of it. In order to know how to go on with my work in Myanmar, I needed to find ways to 'move' within it. This experience and others from my practice revealed to me that the domains of negotiation are underlined by concepts of **ground, contact and movement**.

From my experience, the **ground** for negotiation includes the different *practices, beliefs, values; systems and organisation of relationships; their behaviour and actions; and their forms and systems of organisation; relations and structures of power*. The disorientation brought about by the crow story threw all these aspects of the Myanmar environment into question, and demanded that I assess and regard them anew. They needed to be navigated and re-looked over, as I could not assume that they were what they seemed, i.e. their meanings, organisation and purposes may not be according to how I had previously related to and understood them.

Contact would express the manner in which I established, nurtured and maintained contact with the Myanmar artists and other persons with whom I developed relationships in Burma. The social performative *protocols of relationships and roles* to which I needed to adhere, the *manner of attentiveness, attitude, approach; the nuances and rituals for greetings, utterances and verbal expressions, gestures and bodily expressions*. The elements of the domain of contact also include the temporal aspect of the contact - *duration*.

In my attempt to devise ways forward from the momentary sense of immobility and traction induced by the circumstances, I aimed towards re-achieving a sense of movement. The domain of **movement** for a practitioner encompasses the *ideas, skills, methods, strategies and processes* one uses to advance one's position within an environment and to meet with challenges or overcome obstacles in one's path. It also includes the *knowledge and expertise* one uses to contribute towards one's ease and capacity of movement.

I depict the domains of ground-contact- movement with their constituent elements below:

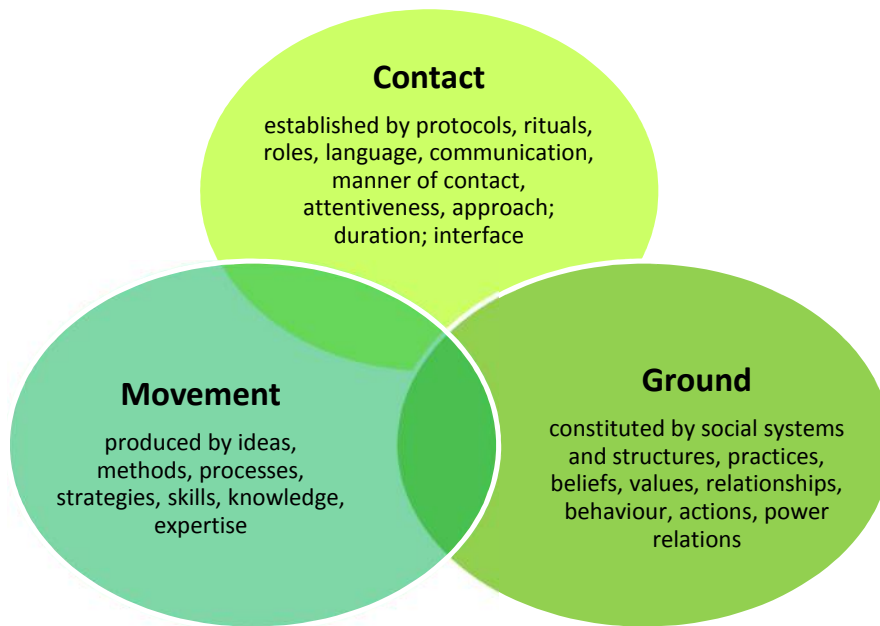


Figure 1: Diagram of Ground-contact-movement as the conceptual domains of practice-as-negotiation

In constructing the domains of ground, contact and movement as ‘analytical tools’, I draw from both phenomenological as well as empirical approaches. As concepts, ‘ground’, ‘contact’, ‘movement’ are based on defined areas of work and challenges from the perspective of the consciousness of the practitioner, i.e. what the artist-practitioner perceives to be the areas of work that demands his/her attention, skills and labour within a project in the social field. However, in articulating the constituting elements that are to be investigated within these domains, empirical practices on the ground: systems, beliefs, ways of association, power, social ecology of relationships; and ways of contact: protocols, rituals, occasions, language and so on, are foregrounded.

This drawing together or combination of phenomenological and empirical approaches should not mislead us to collapse the distinctions between the lived experiences and the concepts drawn up in a framework to discuss and analyse them. The complexities are unfortunately further simplified through the use of Venn diagrams, which are used in the research to map the changing inflections arising from of the articulation of experiences and incidents within the case study onto the domains and framework for negotiation-as-active-knowing, in the larger exercise of developing the argument. In lived experience, we would not experience ground, contact and movement as distinct and separate from one another. Contact is experienced as being within and enabled by the ground, and a sense of movement supports these experiences of ground and contact, in whatever sense it is perceived, ranging from

being restricted or completely free. At the same time, movement also emerges from these experiences of ground and contact. It is also true to say that within an encounter in a social art process, it is contact with others that enables the experience of ground to emerge, and especially so when a new in-between space emerges from within the encounter.

3.2 The concepts of 'ground', 'contact' and 'movement' inflected by literature review

How do the elements of contact, ground and movement appear when looked at from the perspectives of the literature reviewed in chapter 2? Would applying the qualities of negotiation-as-active-knowing as a lens to look at the domains produce a sharper conception of them? Would it bring about a re-focused or altered view of the activities and structures within the domains?

In chapter 2, the literature yielded an understanding of negotiation as navigation, as revealed in the etymology of the term 'negotiate'. The terrain or site becomes a *ground* to be negotiated. Success in negotiation is dependent on elements of skilful *contact* (such as rapport with horse and footing on river-bed) producing successful *movement*.

Ingold's (2000) position on perception reveals that human skill and learning are cultivated and grown in an environment (ground) furnished with relationships (contact) with others. Skill and learning are necessary elements for movement.

Shotter's (2005) writings reveal that the ground is characterised by chiasmic relational dynamic *structures* of relationships, within which, all interactive activities need to be seen as relational responsive activity. The *ground*, to Shotter (1996), is one great *relational expressive landscape* of possibilities; one's embodied *contact* with others on the ground is carried out through *relational-responsive activities*. In live interactions and exchange, people's *voiced expressions, gestures and work* react to and rub against each other. This process creates gradual shifts in our orientation and perception so that we gain an anticipatory sense of our next possible *movements* on the ground. Movement is produced from 'a certain kind of expressive-responsive understanding' (Shotter, 2005) that becomes available to us through living participatory and engaged ways of relating ourselves to our surroundings and to others.

From Ahmed (2006), we see that there are hidden dimensions of *history* and *narratives of labour and power* within the ground. Scott (1985) alerts us to dimensions of *public and hidden*

transcripts in people’s behaviour, gestures, expressions and forms of communication, which is a way to establish contact and communication, and also as a means to achieve movement within the intricacy of their social relationships.

Kester (2011) brings in another view of *movement* on the ground of negotiations between the self and the collective, which is centred on *contingent interplay* between an artist’s relations to others and to the *specifics* of a given site of practice. In his analysis of artist collective Dialogue’s projects in Kondagaon, presented in chapter 2 of this thesis, he details how the immersion of the artists within the life of the community produced an extended process of observing and reflecting on the *pragmatic interrelationships* and *complexity of social structures, practices, and temporalities of ground*, and on the *nuances of its social and performative protocols* of contact (Kester, 2011: 81). Kester’s concept of calibrative interplay requires a continually shifting *oscillatory movement*.

Figure 2 depicts the elements of the domains of practice adjusted by the literature review.

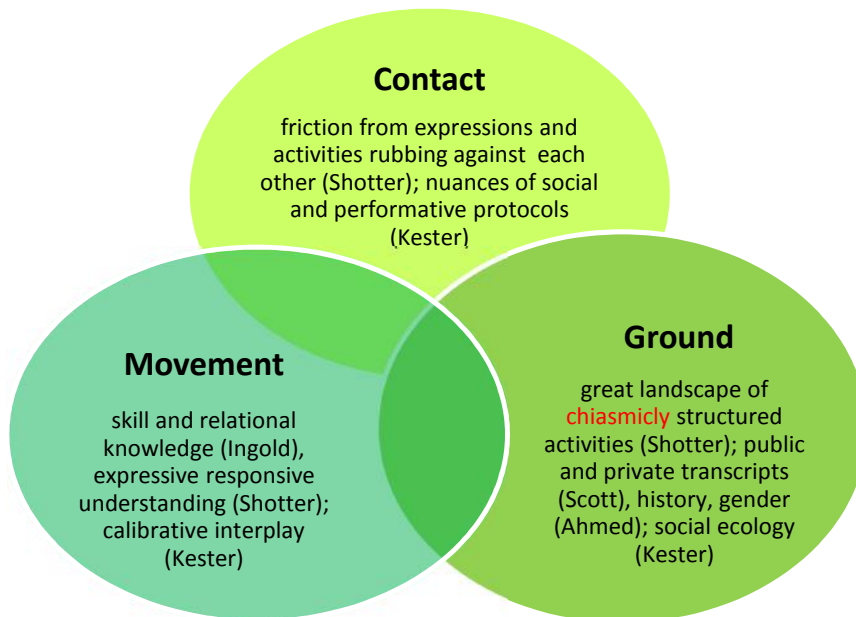


Figure 2: Diagram of adjusted domains of practice post literature review

Following on from the complexities and tensions of the framework and lived experiences in the preceding section, the re-reading of the domains of ground, contact and movement from the literature, reveals to us another set of complexities of the activities within negotiation.

Kester's (2011) calibrative interplay involves oscillations between self and other, immersion and distance, combined with Ahmed's (2006) perspective of the hidden histories of arrival, Scott's (1985) hidden dimensions of communication, and Archer's (2007) contribution of the dimension of internal conversations draws out the multiple layers of negotiation that goes on at any one time. They are constituted by, at the very least: *intra*-subjective negotiation (internal process), *inter*-subjective negotiation (with others) and *extra*-subjective negotiation (with the situation, structures and social ecology). The aspect of extra-subjective negotiation is a negotiation with otherness as a condition of strangeness and disorientation (commensurate with how Shotter uses the term 'otherness'), or as an environment or a landscape to be navigated and manoeuvred (see section 2.1 etymology). In the incident narrated in the prologue (1.1) the disorientation brings these aspects out in sharp relief. It reveals a temporary break down of a way of relating with other subjects (inter-subjective) as well as the encounter with the impossibility of dialogue and impermeability of the situation as 'otherness' (extra-subjective). As we each try to find a way to respond to the situation, we are engaged in conversations within the self (intrasubjective). I further discuss this within globalisation/ post-colonial perspectives in section 3.5.

3.3 Interconnectedness and determined/indeterminate character of the domains

How determined and indeterminate is the character of the domains? In an art practice, are the elements of ground/context perceived to be more determined than those of contact and movement?

As Shotter (2005) asserts, the ground is a relational landscape of chiasmically structured *interconnected* practices, activities, relationships and structures. Practices, beliefs, values: these underpin the organisational structures and social hierarchies that inform and organise relationships; they are in turn informed and organised by relationships. Social performative protocols, roles, mannerisms, rituals and expressions support and maintain social values, hierarchies and forms of organisation. What are then understood as closed, fixed or given and what can be negotiated?

Contact relies on established forms of behaviour and communication. One has to judge accurately in order to respond in the appropriate way to avoid miscommunication of one's intended meaning. In some societies, where social and gender interactions are subject to strict surveillance and control, with behaviour highly regulated, the degree of flexibility in

terms of contact is low. However, the sense of flexibility and indeterminateness of contact may be perceived differently in different cultures, contexts and fields. For example, in contemporary art forms, particularly western forms, and in communication technology, experimentation and explorations constantly aim at pushing accepted boundaries and producing new forms of communicative and expressive possibilities.

In an art project, the ground is usually entered into with its characteristics perceived as being somewhat fixed and entrenched, as a set of enabling and constraining conditions that the artist-practitioner has to deal with and work around. However, interventions are aimed towards producing change within this domain. The premise of an intervention is that there is possibility for change.

Negotiation requires the perception of a degree, however small, of malleability or openness, for movement to happen. Therefore, it seeks and searches for possibilities of movement within the ground and contact domains. While the elements of 'contact' and 'ground' are seen as mutually supportive and reinforcing of each other, the process of negotiation as 'movement' is a continuous interplay between what is perceived as 'fixed' and 'open' (determined and indeterminate), always trying to act upon, tease out, enlarge or increase possibilities for greater mobility within the practices and activities of 'contact' and 'ground'.

Movement is then the domain which is most closely intertwined with the qualities of negotiation-as-active-knowing. For the artist-practitioner, movement is (and needs to be) conceived of as being open and free, as being full of possibility. People living in cultures that are strongly prescriptive and regulated, as in Myanmar, will more likely experience their sense of movement and possibility as restricted; however this in no way reduces, but possibly increases their sense of creativity and resourcefulness for achieving movement. For example, I will recount in chapter 4 how Myanmar young people's access to opportunities and means for realising their interests and ambitions is prescribed and dictated by elders, through a master-apprentice or patronage system, which establish 'scripted' mannerisms, behaviour and activity for them to perform and carry out. It is precisely because there are 'scripts' in life for them to follow, that the notion of negotiation becomes very important. One feels a stronger need to negotiate when there are perceived restrictions; and feels more free to improvise when one conceives that there is no script in life. However, as Douglas and

Coessens (2011) argue, restrictions are an intrinsic part of improvisation,²⁴ a fact confirmed in the investigation of the methodology of negotiation that emerges from this research, in which improvisation plays a crucial role (5.6.1, 6.1.4 and 6.2).

What the discussion above establishes is that perceptions and conceptions of fixedness and openness, or determinacy/ indeterminacy of the structures and activities of contact, ground and movement, are very much dependent on the culture, social practices and ways of learning according to which one has been nurtured or conditioned. However, negotiation is a directional activity that is always geared towards identifying and creating movement and possibilities. The case studies in chapter 4 will show that, no matter how constraining a particular set of circumstances may be for people, we will always try to seek out and construct possibilities for movement. Constraints and threats in public life translates into hidden domains of behaviour, 'hidden transcripts' (Scott 1985, 1990) and ways of association and movement that offer safety and a sense of certainty. In this search and movement, there is a continuous interplay between what is perceived as 'fixed' and 'open' (determined and indeterminate).

3.4 Implications for methodology of analysis

In the method of analysis for experiential negotiation, what should be paid attention to? What are the 'orientation markers' or 'frictive surfaces' that can move and catalyse negotiation-as-active-knowing?

The method of investigation in the case studies in chapter 4 involves an articulation made from within immersive involvement that gives a sense of the nuanced dynamics and character of the domains of ground, contact and movement. From within this articulation, I capture and reflect on what I perceive as embodying 'orientation markers' or 'frictive surfaces' (Shotter 1996) for the practice of negotiation. Through the application of the qualities of negotiation-as-active-knowing, which are immersive involvement, relational responsiveness and calibrative interplay, I will then discuss what kinds of re-orientations, re-alignments and generated knowledge (if any) is produced.

The analysis involves a *revisioning* (Shotter 2005) of aspects of ground as emerging from within immersive involvement, within a landscape of chiasmically interconnected structures

²⁴ Anne Douglas and Kathleen Coessens (2011) draw from Ingold and Hallam's (2007) statement that "there is no script for social and cultural life. People have to work it out as they go along. In a word, they have to *improvise*" (Ingold and Hallam 2007: 1).

and practices. Through these, hidden narratives of history, gender, power and the social ecology of ground are revealed. Due to our not being used to seeing the chiasmic relational structures of ground and the inter-relatedness of practices to these structures, Shotter's (2005) method of 'revisioning', developed from Wittgenstein, involves an act of 'redescribing'. Redescribing does not seek to explain, but to "find relational features or aspects within them, or between them and their surroundings, that will, as Goethe puts it, work to "open up a new organ of perception in us" (Shotter, 2005: 150). Shotter (2005) uses the example of Wittgenstein's (1993) critique of Frazer's *Golden Bough* where Wittgenstein states that Frazer makes magical and religious views look like errors. Instead of *explaining* a strange practice, to make it plausible to people who think like he does, Wittgenstein thinks that it is more important to grasp what is going on, i.e. what it is that is *organising* the practice. The approach then should be to sense the *original feelings* shaping the experience of the people. For Wittgenstein, *descriptions* that capture the experience create more compelling impressions that explanations cannot achieve.

In revisioning, experiences of contact that have been 'striking' or 'frictive' will be redescribed, reassessed and 're-looked' as relational-responsive activities, to produce a more nuanced understanding of social and performative protocols and practices. Possibilities of movement will be explored through incidents of relational learning, relational responsiveness and processes of calibrative interplay between positions and orientations, between notions of familiar/ unfamiliar, closedness/ openness, and certainty/uncertainty.

3.5 Re-instating my position as practitioner

In previous models of art practice as discussed in chapter two, the artist is positioned as possessing a special set of skills that are used either in an instigative/ interventionist manner or a facilitative/service manner to work with a group of participants/ viewers, often to produce or bring about change or transformation to a perceived situation of lack or degenerateness. However, in my own experiences within projects, I have discovered that it is presumptive to create interventions in the belief that change is necessary and beneficial for the community without possessing an understanding of the lived realities of the people themselves. What is needed is a process in which both artist and participant are positioned as co-negotiators.

In my cross-cultural projects, I am often placed in a situation of entering into the spaces, or what I term as 'ground', of the other. Aspects of this space may initially be strange and

disorienting, or made so by certain experience of contact. As an artist, I seek to develop methods to gradually understand the character of this unfamiliar 'ground' and its expressive character, which will inform me of the people's values, beliefs and ways of thinking, and what defines their sense of wellbeing, what nurtures and limits their sense of possibility in their situated space. It will also inform and guide me on how to move across this ground, what kinds of actions are appropriate, and what kinds of meanings are to be read or gleaned from my on-going exchange with others and otherness within it.

Contact and engagement with others is crucial. It provides an opening up to, consideration and negotiation of the other's values, practices and ways of thinking; it holds potential for the creative generation of possibilities. In my art practice with Jay Koh (introduced in 1.6 above), I have experienced that through our co-presence, interaction and exchange with others, a 'new ground' seems to open up, something which I seek to understand in this research process. Shotter (2005) calls this new ground the space of a third agency, attributed exclusively neither to our actions nor the others', but to the meeting or coming upon or rubbing up against each other. My activities with Jay Koh and other collaborators and participants, for example NICA and Open Academy learning programmes (discussed in section 4.1), could in hindsight be seen as creating amplifications for and/or constructing this new ground of experience in a way that is born out of relationally responsive action, where new ideas and expressions can be explored, imagined, tried and tested, where new knowledge is generated between co-participants who in turn support new experiences and future activities.

As an artist I am interested in the new insights that a re-framing of the practice of negotiation from that of a predetermined or desired outcome, to that of an active form of knowing can afford me in my future encounters and engagement with others. As a researcher, I am interested to learn what implications these new insights could have on socially engaged practices, and on how we encounter others and otherness in our everyday lives.

3.5.1 Mapping negotiation in relation to globalisation and post-colonial theory

In section 1.4 I have stated how globalisation and mass migration have produced situations where strangeness is experienced as alienating and threatening. I now draw some perspectives from post-colonial and globalisation theory to inflect our understanding of the negotiations of and within the domains of ground, contact and movement.

Perspectives from post-colonial theory will reveal that the activities that I have chosen to describe using the terms 'ground', 'contact' and 'movement' are far from neutral. Although there is an attempt in negotiation-as-active-knowing to bring about a more level field of engagement between artist and other as co-negotiators (underscoring the employment of seemingly neutral terms), the motivation is predicated on an acquired awareness and understanding of such imbalances in lived experience and practices.

Post-colonial literature has exposed the dynamic workings of objectification and power that underscores an encounter or instance of contact with 'otherness'. Frantz Fanon (1986) recounts the shift he experienced from being an active body, a subject, to that of a negated object, by a child's exclamation at his appearance: "Look, a Negro". In her discussion of Fanon's experience, Ahmed (2006) describes it as an experience of a body "stopped" in its tracks – frozen in movement (2006: 110). Ahmed writes: We could even say Fanon's example shows the body before it is racialised or made black by becoming the object of the hostile white gaze. It is this kind of orientation that racism makes impossible.... The disorientation affected by racism diminishes capacities for action" (2006: 111).

My prologue (1.1) describes the situation of engagement as having become alienating. The situation is objectified and the 'others' are also moved from being subjects to temporarily becoming objects of one's scrutiny and inquiry. But by entering into a process of negotiation-as-active-knowing, one is able to re-position, re-organise one's relationship to others in ways that restore and enhance the experiences of them as subjects. This involves among other things, recognising their agency and subjecting oneself to being challenged by their agency. The analysis in the case study in chapter 4 will show that: negotiation-as-active-knowing involves a calibrative interplay with strangeness and otherness that seeks towards restoring or regaining a sense of orientation, which in Ahmed's terms, also restores a capacity for action).

Discourse on globalisation and post-colonialism have inscribed metaphors of space and movement in specific ways. Ahmed (2011) states that "racism is an ongoing, unfinished history, which orientates bodies in specific directions, affecting how they "take up" space (2006: 111). For Ahmed, bodily as well as social space is racialised, Bodies are defined as being *in place* or *out of place* within specific social spaces. Ahmed's (2000) discussion of how the figure of the stranger has become fetishised within the phenomena of globalised migration re-asserts the difficulties and challenges produced by and imposed on the body as an effect of its movement or having moved, to a position where it becomes 'out of place'.

Distinctions of being in and out of placeness is also used by globalisation theorist Raka Shome (2003) to discuss how the functioning of power in the material space of the US-Mexican border. The border produces a territory which ascribes 'illegal' status onto the Mexican immigrants, rendering their bodies 'out of place' in that territory. She asserts that it is not sufficient to think about spaces metaphorically, and the materiality of space needs to be examined. She writes: "Space is not merely a backdrop, though, against which the communication of cultural politics occurs. Rather, it needs to be recognized as a central component in that communication. It functions as a technology—a means and medium—of power that is socially constituted through material relations that enable the communication of specific politics." (2003: 40)

Post-colonial globalisation theory exposes that behind the celebrated openness that the term presupposes - for example as elucidated by Marshall McLuhan's (1964) concept of 'global village' and Thomas Friedman's (2005) 'flat world' - spaces are marked and experienced on territorial terms (Shome, 2003) and movements (denoted by terms such as 'crossings') are heavily contextualised and often illusionary (Ghemawat 2007). Movement and immobility are re-established as social struggles. In section 5.6 I prioritise a sense of movement with negotiation-as-active-knowing from an understanding of the politics and immense task that is required in acquiring possibility of movement as a condition of agency or capacity for action.

Ahmed: agency and 'doing things'

In her discussion of the spatialisation of bodies, Ahmed emphasises that capacity to perform work is tied to a sense of familiarity: "Bodies do this work, or they have this capacity to work, only given the familiarity of the world they inhabit: to put it simply, they know where to find things." (2006: 109) "Doing things" for Ahmed, depends on the ways in which the world is available as a space for action, a space where things "have a certain place" or are "in place" (109-110). In knowing the position of things, and knowing where and how to reach for them constitutes implicit knowledge that we do not need to think about, (I will discuss the relationship between negotiation and what I call 'practical embedded knowledge' in 5.4). Such knowledge anchors our sense of orientation in the world, not necessarily embedded only within objects in and of themselves but within the wider processes of meaning-making that objects are implicated in, as expressed by a particular action or facial gestures, expression, and may also be embodied in them (Ingold 2000).

Negotiation-as-active-knowing, seen from within post-colonial feminist and Marxist perspectives, is a form of doing that is *labour*; the *work* of the interstitial time-space of interaction, building upon increasing familiarity and relatedness, to gradually extend and build this sense of “in place-ness” of actions and relationships for co-negotiators in their negotiations of alienating situations and/or ideas and practices. It is a movement towards claiming and/or ‘restoring’ the subjectivity of co-negotiators, that may have become temporarily disrupted and objectified through the disorientating encounter. The act of ‘re-orientating’ then means regaining or establishing the ‘in-place-ness’ of one’s body within the new context or situation, reclaiming the agency of the body, extending its reach and its ability to perform work.

3.6 Conclusion: Integrating the framework for negotiation-as-active-knowing with the conceptual domains

How do the domains of practice interface with the qualities of negotiation-as-active-knowing? The quality of immersive involvement appears to be very resonant for a way of knowing the ground that can lead to a gradual revelation of its nuances of practices and the hidden dimensions of values, power and social ecology. Relational responsiveness seems to be an apt way to progress the expressive and performative relationships in the domain of contact. The exploration of ideas and methods, the evolution of processes, and the application of skills and knowledge in the domain of movement necessitates a calibrative interplay and fine tuning between the negotiating parties in an interactive exchange.

In interfacing the framework of the qualities of negotiation-as-active-knowing over the elements of these domains, I arrive at the following method of analysis to be used on the case studies in chapter 4:

- (i) Revise experiences of ground (involving social systems, structures, practices, beliefs, values, power relations etc.) from within a perspective of immersive involvement, paying attention to the chiasmically organised interconnections between structures and practices; and to the hidden narratives of history, gender, power and social ecology.
- (ii) Reassess experiences of contact (involving protocols, rituals, roles, language, bodily expression, performance, mannerisms, attitude, etc.) that has produced friction, using

a relational-responsive frame, so as to produce new nuances of interactivity within social and performative protocols and practices.

- (iii) Explore movement (involving methods, procedure, strategies, skills, knowledge and expertise of judgement, decision-making and problem solving) through incidents of relational learning and calibrative interplay between positions and orientations, between what is perceived as negotiable/ non-negotiable, closed/ open, familiar/ unfamiliar; paying attention to what kinds of new understanding is produced.

In this chapter I have drawn out, from within my experiences as artist-practitioner, the conceptual domains of negotiation, which are ground, contact and movement, and their constituent elements. I then re-examined these concepts through the lens of the literature review, refining them further. I discussed the interconnecting influences and dynamic interplay between these domains and re-iterated them from my position as artist-practitioner. On drawing out resonances between the qualities of immersive involvement and the domain of ground; between relational responsiveness and the domain of contact; and between calibrative interplay and the domain of movement, I then created an integrated method of analysis that interfaces the qualities of negotiation-as-active-knowing with these conceptual domains, which will be applied to the case studies in chapter 4.

Chapter 4: Examining case projects using the framework

Reiterating the method and framework of conceptual analysis

In chapter 3, I developed a method of analysis that combines conceptual domains of negotiation and qualities of negotiation-as-active-knowing. In applying the framework of the qualities of negotiation-as-active-knowing over the elements of these domains, I arrive at the following method of analysis:

- (i) Revise experiences of ground from a perspective of immersive involvement, paying attention to the chiasmically structured interconnections between structures and practices; hidden narratives of history, gender, power and social ecology.
- (ii) Reassess experiences of contact that have 'struck' or 'moved' me or produced friction, using a relational-responsive frame; so as to produce new nuances of interactivity within social and performative protocols and practices.
- (iii) Explore movement through incidents of relational learning and calibrative interplay between positions and orientations, between what is perceived as negotiable/non-negotiable, closed/ open, familiar/unfamiliar; paying attention to what kinds of new understanding are produced.

The articulation of my projects is made in what intercommunications theorist John Shotter (Shotter & Katz 1996) after Wittgenstein terms as 'revising' which involves 're-describing' events within one's interactions with others. In re-describing, the accounts or descriptions already evidences a criticality at work. The descriptions launch out from having *noticed specific* features and aspects of behaviour, actions and reactions within the interactive activities between Koh, I and others within the three projects. The analysis demands a re-examination of what comes across as puzzling or bewildering. These are then treated as *clues* (Ingold 2000) which brings us out towards a journey of discovery. I mine these accounts to yield new understanding for the characteristics of a generative and constructive practice of experiential negotiation.

In the following sections, I use this method to articulate and reflect on three of my projects.

4.1 Networking and Initiatives for Culture and the Arts (NICA), Myanmar, 2002 - 2007

4.1.1 Factual details

NICA was the result of 6 years of relationship-building and seeking alignment in relation to a common long term objective between 3 groups: Itta artists group, Golden association and iFIMA, from 1997 to 2002. Differences in background, orientation, outlook and practices underline these relationships; although they were not foregrounded in the earlier phase. Itta membership converged around a modern/contemporary art gallery owned by Ayun, a leading figure of modern Myanmar art. Golden began as a university art club, and its members were fellow students in Rangoon University in the late 80s. By the late 90s, they were in various professions - artists, writers, intellectuals, publishers, designers, teachers and business people – united by their common interest in art and culture. Itta and Golden, at the request of iFIMA, had united to form Ayed Artists Collective (AAC) in 2001. The Collaboration, Networking and Resource-Sharing: Myanmar (CNRM) event in 2002 raised a substantial amount of funds for the realisation of objectives. Funding was raised from various international foundations such as Prince Claus Fund, Japan Foundation and Arts Network Asia. However, a conflict between the groups led to the pulling out of Itta from Ayed. Golden continued to run Ayed activities in a newly established art space in Yangon in late 2002, until damaging rumours caused them to retreat from the frontline of the organisation, requesting that iFIMA take over in early 2003. iFIMA created the name Networking and Initiatives for Culture and the Arts (NICA) in order to create a fresh start for the programmes and activities of the art centre.

The organisation of NICA

NICA was run by 2 directors, 2 groups of advisors, one of artists and another of writers; working groups consisting of local artists and writers; 2 coordinators – one for artists, one for writers; artists who were involved in teaching and/or participating in programmes, resource persons, workshop and training facilitators, and young adult trainees who voluntarily enrolled for NICA's youth training programme.

4.1.2 Contextual background of project; NICA and pre-NICA (1997 - 2006)

Myanmar has been under military rule since 1962, when Ne Win, the then Minister of Defence, took power through a coup. In 1988, the military government experimented with an election, confident that it would be elected to power; however the election was won with a

landslide majority by National League for Democracy, headed by Aung San Suu Kyi daughter of assassinated leader Aung San. The military refused to honour the results of the election, and have continued to govern the country as a rogue government, using various forms of control and oppression to remain in power. After continual international denouncements and sanctions, Myanmar finally created a roadmap to democracy and staged an election in 2011, which many denounce as unfairly constituted and executed. However a civilian government has since been put in place albeit with a guaranteed majority for military officers. There are sceptics and enthusiasts alike for the recent wave of changes. Many see the recent changes as prompted by economic interests. In any case, it is undeniable that Myanmar has inherited a huge bulk of problems, from military rule as well as from the days prior to its independence in 1959. Myanmar exists as a large country brought together in fragile agreement to co-exist as the Union of Burma after independence in 1959. It has over 100 ethnic groups, most of whom had been governed in a divide-and-rule manner by the British in Burma. The ethnic groups historically occupied land that are immensely rich in natural resources and are until today at strife to gain greater autonomy, as many of the promises made by the country's founders in 1959 did not get realised because of Ne Win's coup in 1962.

The historical divide-and-rule political strategy, continuing military control and ethnic struggles for greater autonomy have created a deeply fractionised social fabric in Myanmar today. Political oppression also creates a public culture that is low on trust and high in speculative and surveillance activity.

The lack of a common social and political foundation for interaction, exchange and discourse across groups and factions is identified by international NGOs and intellectuals working on and in Myanmar as deeply problematic.²⁵ There is speculation that if Myanmar is to be free of military rule, it will immediately plunge into civil war due to the fact that it has more than 100 ethnic groups who have all been kept separate from each other, firstly through the British policy of divide-and-rule, while more recently this basic mistrust and fear of others has become a fundamental state of mind which is perpetuated and manipulated by military rulers. Learning to work and develop dialogue across groups to establish a strong culture of consultation and cooperation are deemed as important steps forward.

Events prior to NICA

²⁵ Although this was gleaned from my discussions with an NGO worker and NGO network in Myanmar, a literature review quickly attested to this view. See Rotberg, R.L. (Ed.) (1998) *Burma: Prospects for a Democratic Future*. Washington: The World Peace Foundation.

When Koh first went to Yangon in 1997 he gained contact with Itta through its leader Ayun. Itta artists responded to Koh's presence and desire to engage and requested for Koh to give them talks and to bring in material on 'new' art forms. They wished to know what was happening in the world 'outside' of Myanmar²⁶, to which they have little access²⁷. Koh responded by bringing in books and videos on his subsequent trips. He shared with them by giving talks on what he knows about contemporary art practices from the late 60s onwards, i.e. moving away from material to conceptual explorations, moving out of mainstream to everyday social spaces, site-specificity, performativity, project work, and the ways artists have developed self-organisation as a way to overcome perceived systemic shortcomings.

About a year later, after familiarisation with the artist run organisation of space, events, projects, workshops and residencies and with possible sources of funding, the Myanmar artists began discussions with Koh on the possibility of creating an artist-run contemporary art centre in Myanmar. Koh began working with the Itta artists in 1999 to draw up a plan for getting this realised. At around the same time, Koh discovered that a few of the members of Itta are also members of an older and bigger group called Golden.

Seeing the importance of gradually evolving and establishing the practice of working and dialoguing across groups, Koh responded to the situation by requesting that Itta collaborate with Golden to create a stronger basis for support from various foundations that iFIMA would approach for the proposal. They agreed and began to have joint meetings and discussions, and it was at this point in time that I became involved in iFIMA's work in Myanmar, in the year 2000. The proposal we created for a 6-day Collaboration, Networking and Resource-sharing: Myanmar (CNRM)²⁸ event in June 2002 raised an unexpected level of funding and

²⁶ This represents 'new' on the Myanmar participants' terms; 'new' referring to current and contemporary art discourses and movements taking shape in different parts of the world. Most books available in the 2nd hand books street stalls in Myanmar that the ordinary Myanmar find affordable are published before the 70s. Antiquarian journals and books from the early 20th century are common finds.

²⁷ This situation has changed greatly from CNRM in 2002, and NICA started in 2003. CNRM and NICA increased contact and exchange between Myanmar artists and counterparts and arts organisations from around Asia and the world, in a 2-way movement. Post CNRM and NICA, Myanmar artists have much greater knowledge and contact that brings about mobility and organisation of local and international projects within Burma.

²⁸ iFIMA took the lead in organising CNRM, due to our experience and expertise in this area, taking care to share the process with the Itta and Golden combined organising committee and include them in correspondence and contact with all funding and arts organisations and individuals contacted. A 6-day event of symposium and workshops was conceived, when leaders from foundations, artist-run organisations; artists and cultural workers (identified as inspirational cultural figures, teachers and social organisers committed to engagement and exchange) were invited into Myanmar to understand the situation first-hand and to initiate networked contact and future collaborations. The aim was to expose and provide experiential contact for potential international collaborators and supporters and generate concrete plans going forward. All correspondences – particularly submissions and responses to and from funders, much of it done when Koh and I were outside of Myanmar, were copied to Ayun, the head of Itta who now leads the Ayed alliance's committee. Due to having a fixed home telephone line and a fax machine, he was the most accessible of its members. We brought the committee members to meet with the head of cultural affairs at the Japan Embassy in Yangon, through whom we submitted the application to the Japan

support, providing us with substantial excess funds to enable the creation of an art centre. However, friction between Itta and Golden members emerged just before CNRM and threatened to disrupt the event. The friction was, on the surface, brought about by disagreements over arrangements, use of funds and budgeting details for the event, and decisions being made without consultation with and agreement by all committee members. Eventually CNRM took place without a hitch, attended and participated in by a large gathering (over 100 persons) of Myanmar artists and poets, including writers from all over Myanmar, high level representation from the Japan Foundation, Arts Network Asia and various arts and cultural organisations, plus artists, intellectuals and cultural activists from many countries in Asia and Europe as well as Canada²⁹.



Figure 3: Audience and panel for one of the CNRM symposium sessions, Yangon, 2002

4.1.3 Analysis – Points of learning for negotiation

Revisioning of ground: evolving from family-minded ways

Ground: systemic problems

The failure of the Ayed alliance recounted in chapter 1 and the many situations I have encountered in Myanmar from the year I began visiting in 2000, to my residing there from

Foundation. Part of the defence made by Ayun in face of accusation by Golden later is that he is not in full knowledge of funding details.

²⁹ It is until today remembered as a hugely important and impactful event – regardless of the negative rumours that followed- with many Myanmar artists expressing that they were physically moved, even shocked, by the sight of such a huge gathering of Myanmar and international artists and cultural activists, and the rigorous exchange of knowledge and experiences that took place.

early 2003 to early 2005, made me experience personally how the struggles over and workings of power on the country's topmost levels are replicated at all levels of society, producing the accompanying and ensuing behaviours of defensive loyalty, fear, intrigue, suspicion; and *acts* of surveillance, accusations/ counter-accusations, crafty strategizing and undermining of others, which then further feeds into and exacerbates the power struggle. It organises relationships so that people work only with those they trust and whose loyalty they can count on, while agency is experienced as only possible by being part of a group or under the patronage of an elder, more powerful person of higher status.

The history of separation manifests itself in the people's behaviour and patterns of interaction and organisation. People worked within what they call 'family-minded' groups with those they have known for a while and trust (to a certain extent). The fragmentation of people into fractionised groups has been looked at primarily with a negative lens by development agencies and political analysts. This interactive and associative behaviour has also been said to be a major impediment towards democratic state of affairs for Myanmar. There was a belief amongst Myanmar political analysts and NGOs whom I had conversations with that if Myanmar were to be free of military rule, it will immediately plunge into civil war due factionism in the country.³⁰ In our early years of working in Myanmar, prior to being based there, Koh and I thought in the same vein. The human rights analysis that the Myanmar people needed to associate, develop dialogue and learn to work across groups had then informed iFIMA's request for the formation of Ayed prior to the CNRM event. In this view, working in closed internalised groups in covert manner is a deficient arrangement. As recounted, the collaboration ended in disastrous failure.

When Koh and I began living in Myanmar from early 2003, our perspective of the problems on the ground changed. The change came from within a process of durational immersive involvement which re-oriented us into a 'witness' relationship and experience of Myanmar ways of association and interaction. We experienced how such a way of affiliation and organisation was necessary in order to survive under these harsh political conditions. They were strategies for survival that the Myanmar people have developed which gives a sense of certainty, security and protection. Seen from Scott's (1985) analysis of 'weapons of the weak', this was in fact an empowering arrangement under a set of deficient circumstances. The new

³⁰ Seen in the light of recent events post Burma's political reforms since 2010 and the outbursts of violence against the Rohingya and muslim communities in Burma since 2012, this analysis rings a scary truth. The question remains, however, of how to devise or rather evolve a solution that effectively addresses the deeply embedded feelings of resentment and separatedness behind the violence. See BBC News, What is Behind Burma's Wave of Religious Violence? 4 April 2013. <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-22023830>. Accessed 15 May 2013.

alliance of Ayed created a sense of uncertainty, which we had not created a mechanism to deal with. It disrupted the confidence and sense of ease that are requirements for movement.

Knowing this as information or fact from an aboutness position would not have been the same. The immersive experience gave us a 'bodily' sense of how to relate with Itta and Golden's 'family-minded' ways; so that we could then begin to intuit or orientate towards thinking about how to respond to or work from the position of the 'family-minded' way – i.e. the 'family-minded' way of working needs to form the starting point of any attempt to evolve a new practice. The new practice needs to be calibrated from within the older practices and should not introduce or adopt something that has evolved from different conditions of practice. Unfortunately we did not have this understanding in 2002.

Being within an immersive involvement also made us see how the 'family-minded' way as a practice was intimately interconnected with the wider practices and conditions in Myanmar and could not be properly changed without altering them, or at least by establishing a supportive interconnected environment for a different practice to be tested.³¹ This is the meaning of the chiasmic structure of ground that Shotter (2005) discussed. The 'family minded' behaviour and way of working needed to be understood and looked at from within immersive experience of the chiasmic interconnected structures of ground.

Reassessing contact: over-reliance on (uncalibrated) understanding of terms in language

The Ayed conflict also functions as an 'orientating moment' in the aspect of contact and movement. Koh and I had responded to the Ayed crisis by introducing a negotiative and discursive process between the groups that was not based on personal likes and dislikes, but on a foundation of collaborative protocol, procedures and commonly agreed principles. We had relied on insufficiently negotiated and calibrated terminologies and rational discussion to secure a common base of understanding and agreement, based on terms such as 'openness' 'accountability' and 'transparency' - staples of democratic jargon. It was important to have brought the concepts represented by these terms into the dynamics of the situation, but the terms themselves needed to have been negotiated. Such terms are understood differently in different contexts and cultures, set against and made possible or constrained by existing structures and practices. They could be interpreted in different ways. In the process of

³¹ Since a large scale change was not possible without large-scale mechanisms and efforts, small-scale ways of experiencing and testing new practices can be created within 'alternative environments' established within the bigger environment. NICA attempted to do this in our activities, practising more equal relationships and open ways of discussion with our trainees, which is discussed in chapter 4.1.4 Incident 3. This resulted in some tension which, unlike the Ayed case, could be negotiated. This brought about a new approach in our work, as seen in M-Project, chapter 4.1.4 Incident 2.

reassessing the Ayeed conflict, it struck me that the negotiation process needed to have been calibrated by exploring and connecting these terms with similar or related terms from the Myanmar language so as to bring out nuances of different meanings and their implications on our collaborative protocols and arrangements. We need to have given the different meanings greater *visibility* and *clarity*, so that they could become '*legible*' to each party, and to understand where the differences/disagreement were or could stem from. The problem is exacerbated by the fact that our communication is conducted through translations, wherein Koh and I spoke in English and some of the Myanmar artists need translators in communicating with us. The implications of the use of translators and translation increase the possibilities of misunderstandings within the complexity of negotiation, and necessitates that there are multiple strategies of clarifying meanings that are not solely reliant on language. The '*legibility*' of meanings within the ground and in exchanges is not induced through acts of verbal communication alone. The adjusted definition of the methodology of negotiation-as-active-knowing discussed in section 5.6, post integrated analysis of the case studies, reveals the multiple dimensions of various activities involved.

Lyotard (1998) states that a *differend* is "a case of conflict between (at least) two parties that cannot be equitably resolved for lack of a rule of judgment [sic] applicable to both arguments. One side's legitimacy does not imply the other's lack of legitimacy (1998: xi). Grappling with the gap exposed by the *differend* - inexpressibility, incommensurability and impossibility for translation of different thoughts, ideas and 'facts' across discourses and cultures - has produced problems of relativism. However, negotiation-as-active-knowing does not call for a suspension of judgement but an active negotiation with different values, beliefs, ideology and ideas in a way that produces another way of facing, following, opening up, relating with and learning to move with them, without necessarily having *solved* the problem of *differend*. For this reason, attention needs to be given to the exercise of judgement so as not to foreclose the negotiation. In this aspect negotiation-as-active-knowing attempts to find ways of working across the *differend*, that can with time gradually reduce the gap posed by the *differend*. I will argue that the multiplicity of actions in addition to verbal communication within the methodology of negotiation-as-active-knowing – for example gestural communication, embodied co-presence, imagination, reflexivity (conversation with self), visualisations and embarking on journey of following clues and discovering views – positions it as such a process of engaging across difference.

I map the discussion above onto the diagram of domains of practice - ground, contact and movement.

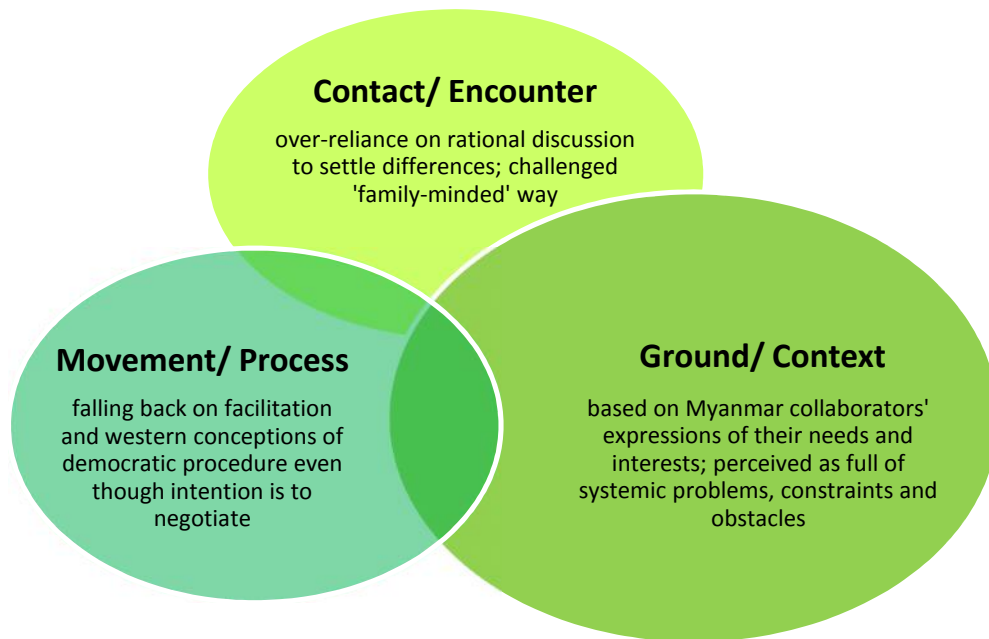


Figure 4: The qualities of negotiation practice prior to NICA.

Exploring movement: re-orientation produced possibilities for movement – through actions and performance rather than talk

In the initial months of NICA, where I served as Director for Programmes, I experienced various attempts to block NICA’s activities with Myanmar artists and writers. My lack of a proper grasp and understanding of how the bigger political environment affects the behaviour of the people led me to be very troubled by the rumours that were spread about Ayed and subsequently NICA. It also caused me to perform incessant acts of asking for advice and explaining all of our actions numerous times in order to ensure that they understood our intentions and to clarify any misunderstanding, when talk is in fact a highly suspected activity in Myanmar. An artist eventually told me that whatever I said would be interpreted in at least 10 different ways.

James C Scott’s (1990) analysis of the art of resistance would have shed light on the situation. iFIMA’s different ways of operating and refusal to be bound by allegiance to only one group under a master-patron arrangement, led to feelings of being threatened, which then triggered an onslaught of resistance tactics designed to weaken and thwart our efforts. Scott asserts that there is a “politics of disguise and anonymity that takes place in public view but is

designed to have a double meaning or to shield the identity of the actors. Rumor, gossip, folktales, jokes, songs, rituals, codes, and euphemisms—a good part of the folk culture of subordinate groups—fit this description.” (Scott, 1990: 19) Rumour-spreading is a rampant tactic that is bred by the Myanmar political environment of suppression and powerlessness, where there is no trusted and reliable official channel for information. However, the fragmented patron-group based forms of organisation in Myanmar also leads to intense contestation and power struggle between groups. Rumour in this instance is no longer just a tactic of the weak, but an assertion of power by the different patron-leaders. Seeing rumour-spreading as a relational-responsive activity led me to suspend judgement and feelings of personal injury over Itta’s actions. It led me to see the relational cause-effect interconnections between the overall political situation, people’s forms of organisation and their behaviour towards iFIMA’s approach.

A more calibrated understanding then led me to focus my energies on other avenues than talk. I eventually focused on doing and letting actions and performance in everyday life do the talking. It was however, an attitude towards negotiation that is poised as active knowing or experiential-inquiry or active-knowing rather than as an assertion of my position and approach, that enabled me to arrive at that juncture. It came about through immersive involvement, a way of giving attention to hidden (less visible or not immediately accessible) aspects of ground, relationships and activities of contact, which then leads one to re-orientate and re-align to different possibilities of movement.

4.1.4 Examples for negotiating movement

The following are a few incidents which have lessons for negotiating movement within relational-responsive activity. The performative and communicative processes involved have implications for understanding ground and movement³² in Myanmar.

Incident 1: Negotiations to gain legitimacy for NICA

In order to gain some form of official approval for NICA in early 2003, which is essential for the safety of our collaborators and visitors, Koh and I were advised to pursue activities on several fronts; one of which is to obtain affiliation with associations that are seen to be friendly to the Myanmar government, like the Japanese-Myanmar Friendship Association and

³² CNRM and NICA constitutes iFIMA’s longest running project, spanning from 1997 to 2007; however, projects begun with our Myanmar collaborators are running until today. There were many points and incidents of learning that gradually oriented and made us more attuned to ground and movement on that ground. For the purpose of this thesis, I had to choose a few significant ones for explication, deliberation and analysis.

the Singapore-Myanmar Association. Another would be to seek a license to operate in Myanmar from the authorities. In pursuing the second activity, we set up a meeting with the Director of the National Museum, whom we had met when she had attended and told us she was impressed by CNRM (Collaboration, Networking and Resource-sharing: Myanmar), in June 2002 at Beikthano Gallery in Yangon. A meeting was set up on the telephone, and was agreed upon by the director. We found out on the day of the meeting, from the vice-director that we had failed to follow official protocol for foreigners to meet with public officers, which stipulates that a formal application has to be made 8 to 10 days prior in order to obtain permission from the Minister of Culture for the meeting. The meeting then had to be re-arranged. When we finally met, the director responded positively towards our plans. She, however, cautioned us not to work with artists on the 'black list'. We said we were willing to oblige, but we needed to know who was on the black list so as to be able to follow her advice. She of course could not produce one for our perusal. Through the director, we formally submitted our three-year plan for NICA to be sent up the rungs to the Minister of Culture for his approval. After a few weeks we received news that the Minister had said that our planned activities were too broad in scope for what is defined as 'culture'. The ministry said that it is therefore beyond their jurisdiction and advised us to seek permission from a committee that is comprised of five ministries: home affairs, defence, education, culture and information. The entire process was likely to take five years. By this time, we were confident enough of the local ways in order to seek alternative ways of moving forward. Consultations with our collaborators and advisors gave us a degree of assurance that our initiative to present our plans to the government was a declaration that we did not intend to hide from the scrutiny of the authorities and therefore would have already accomplished our intention of securing a certain degree of acceptance and safety to begin our operations in Myanmar. Going via an alternative strategy, we applied for a gallery license under the name of our Myanmar coordinator who had offered to do so. We also became friendly with foreign communities and organisations which were recognised and accepted by the military government, for example, the Singaporean business community. We participated in some of their activities; they in turn contributed some support for NICA's activities. Although we did not officially join the Singapore-Myanmar Friendship Association, being visible and seen to be interacting within the community lent us some protection/cover.

Analysis - implications for negotiation

Our movement on the ground which brought about NICA's operativity was itself brought about by relational-responsive activity and bodily immersive participation with persons and institutions in Myanmar. The revisioning of ground done through immersive experiencing led

to fuller expressiveness of ground; revealing its 'front' and 'back' spaces, public and hidden transcripts; which then showed us the next move forward.

Through the experience above, a more variegated and nuanced grasping of ground emerges, which corresponds with J C Scott's (1990) public and hidden transcripts in *Domination and the Arts of Resistance* and Erving Goffman's (1959) analysis of public and private social spheres of activity. Ground becomes understood as being composed of front-and-back, public-and-hidden spheres which have their own paths and regulations for negotiations which enable movement. Our re-orientation and subsequently relational-responsive activities to this new knowledge of ground enable our actions in one sphere to generate 'visibility' in and dissemination to other spheres. In Kester's analysis of NICA's work, he noted how we developed a refined nuanced awareness of the manifold ways in which our actions, gestures and words were being watched by groups ranging from dissidents to authorities; how they were received and translated (Kester 2011: 149). Our conscious performance in ways that sent subtle messages to different groups was a form of relational responsive activity. The conveying of the right messages and meaning was often accomplished through correct understanding and judgement of our and others' interpretation, observation and ways of transmission, i.e. whether through word-of-mouth dissemination to/from trusted sources, which form the most reliable sources of information in Myanmar, or more official channels. This skill to read local gestures, actions and words more accurately is honed from immersive bodily involvement, which then over a durational period of living participation *calibrated* our methods, practices, knowledge and understanding and gave us an *anticipatory* sense of how to go on. Our presentation of self and our relationship with the museum as a public institution conveyed a message that procured tolerance from the authorities, as well as communicating to the arts communities our intention to create a safe space for NICA's activities. Our consultations and meetings with specific respected intellectual figures throughout the process also conveyed the integrity of our actions and intentions. We subsequently began operating NICA's activities with a gallery licence without any disturbance or obstruction from the authorities.³³

Incident 2: M-Project: negotiating with bureaucratic authority

M-Project was Jay Koh's solo show that NICA organised at Lokanat Gallery in January 2005. This is the oldest and also the most accessible public art space in Yangon, as it is available for rental, unlike most galleries in Myanmar which are privately owned and available for

³³ The tactical and performative strategies that went into the establishment of NICA was discussed in greater depth and served as a case study in Grant Kester's (2011) *The One and the Many: Contemporary Collaborative Art in the Global Context*. Pp. 145 - 152.

members' use only. Lokanat is located in what was then the Ministry of Finance building in down town Yangon, increasing its accessibility and visibility, both to the public and authorities. The exhibition was specifically made to respond to circulating rumours claiming that Koh was not a 'real' artist (meaning that he had a hidden political identity and agendas), which increased the risk to NICA's collaborators and visitors. Additionally, Koh conceived that it provided a good opportunity to renovate one of Lokanat's two old 'salon-style' exhibition rooms into a more minimalistic space so that Myanmar artists who have been making installation artworks would have the opportunity to exhibit in the renovated space in the future. Since the other room is left in its original state, the renovated room would then become a long term intervention of the 'new' that sits parallel with the 'old'.



Figure 5: Half old and half new: *M-Project*, 2005, Yangon, Myanmar.

After the renovations, the show that was set up consisted of installation works created as direct responses to conditions of living and creative expression in Myanmar. The process of approval was firstly from Lokanat's executive board, after which applications had to be made to a censorship committee made up of representatives from more than five ministries and government bodies. Due to Lokanat's public accessibility and visibility, every exhibition needs to display a certificate of approval from the censorship committee, without which a show cannot open. No foreigner had ever held a solo show at Lokanat previously, and it was estimated that the processes may take months or years for various approvals with no guarantee of success. After consultations and negotiations with the authorities, Lokanat's manager U Aung Tun, advised us that the applicant for the show has to be a local Myanmar who would take on the title of 'artist' for the show. This was done by one of our staff and a

trainee, who on the morning of the opening, had to explain the works to members of the committee, in a 2-stage discussion and inspection censorship process. I was present during this process, while Koh waited outside the room, but we did not speak a word. It must have been quite obvious to everyone that Koh was the artist of the show, as it was printed in all the publicity banners and invitations, and yet everyone played their role accordingly, as the bureaucratic proceedings dictated. This episode taught us an invaluable lesson about the performance of fronts and backs in a regime of surveillance and control. In the end, the censorship committee requested the removal of two installation works, after which they issued the certificate of approval, and the exhibition opened accordingly, with the German ambassador to Myanmar as special guest.



Figure 6: The Performance of Censorship: M-Project, 2005, Yangon, Myanmar

Analysis: Lessons for ground, contact and movement

The examples above illustrate the complexity of front-back spheres in a society and the meanings carried in each of them. One must always assume that one's entry into a new culture or environment is from the front – and it is only through time and durational engagement, can one get to the 'back' of things (or to the 'bottom' of things).³⁴

Situational nuance of ground developed through immersion, living participation

Koh's and my immersive involvement and relational responsiveness nurtured our relationships with the manager of Lokanat to a degree of 'assuredness' that made him willing to take risks in organising *M-Project* in Lokanat.³⁵ Our immersive participation in Myanmar also produced the knowledge of how to *navigate* and realise the exhibition that would not have been possible otherwise. These activities produce an active *response-building-upon-*

³⁴ Lakoff and Johnson (1980) in *Metaphors We Live By* discusses the use of metaphors as mechanisms of structuring thought and meaning within language. The study is particularly instructive for how we may understand the peculiarities of thought and inflections of meaning in each culture by a deep study of the metaphors in its language.

³⁵ The past work, relationship building and communication that have been established with the wider arts community since Koh and my emergence in Burma also play a part in realising *M-Project*. They are investigated by Jay Koh (2013) in his doctoral thesis with KUVVA Academy Helsinki.

response process (Shotter 2005). Our actions invited responses from others, and we in turn allowed these responses to guide and show us what the next step should be. Others' judgements and decisions to further associate or work with us were also in response to our responsive actions and behaviour. This attests to the correctness of Shotter's (2005) assertion that in the interactive realm, all actions should rightly be seen as responses.

On another level, the *M-Project* exhibition functioned performatively as a form of response to larger communicative acts within the Myanmar contexts. The exhibition was strategically intended to respond to destabilising rumours of Koh not being a 'real artist'. Our negotiations with the Lokanat committee, one of the oldest and most respected independent organisations in Yangon, and, through the manager, our negotiations with the censorship committee, as well as the successful opening of the exhibition with the German ambassador as guest of honour, all had signifying communicative functions. They communicated our seriousness and commitment as artists now based in Myanmar, and our increased ability in adapting to the conditions and structures of organisation in Myanmar.

All of the artworks and visual elements of the renovation itself carried subtle codified language which spoke of the suppressed conditions for artistic and political expression in Myanmar. Even though these were not picked up by the authorities, they could be read by artists who are attuned to such codes. These sent affirmative messages to the artists that we were sympathetic and sensitive to their situation.

The relational responsive activities outlined above concentrated on finding ways to navigate the complexity of ground. Additionally they also sent signals to the wider communities who are watching and listening. The fact that we voluntarily presented our plans to the authorities signalled to them that we acknowledged their authority and sought to operate 'above ground' - in their visible radar, in accordance with government procedures. It also signalled to the potential audience and users of NICA that it was a 'safe space' to come to, and that we were committed to being responsible for our actions and activities.

Emergence of a space for calibrative fine tuning of new practices

As discussed earlier in this case study (chapter 4.1.3) any existing practice is intimately interconnected with, i.e. supported by and supportive of wider practices and mechanisms of relationships and meaning. Therefore the introduction of a new practice needs to be supported by the establishment of a supportive interconnected environment for it to be tested and calibrated with the old. In *M-Project*, the renovation was a long-term intervention

which created a newer exhibition format, convention and style alongside the older half salon style space. This was a gentle way of introducing something different; for me this represented a movement sideways, an opening up alongside. It did not create too much of a disruption of the older established ways, yet offered an alternative that could be tested and tried out to ascertain its value to the users and relevance to local context. This realisation further informed our approach in the Galway Travellers' project (which will be presented in chapter 4.2).

Mapping the above analysis onto diagram of domains of practice would produce the following:

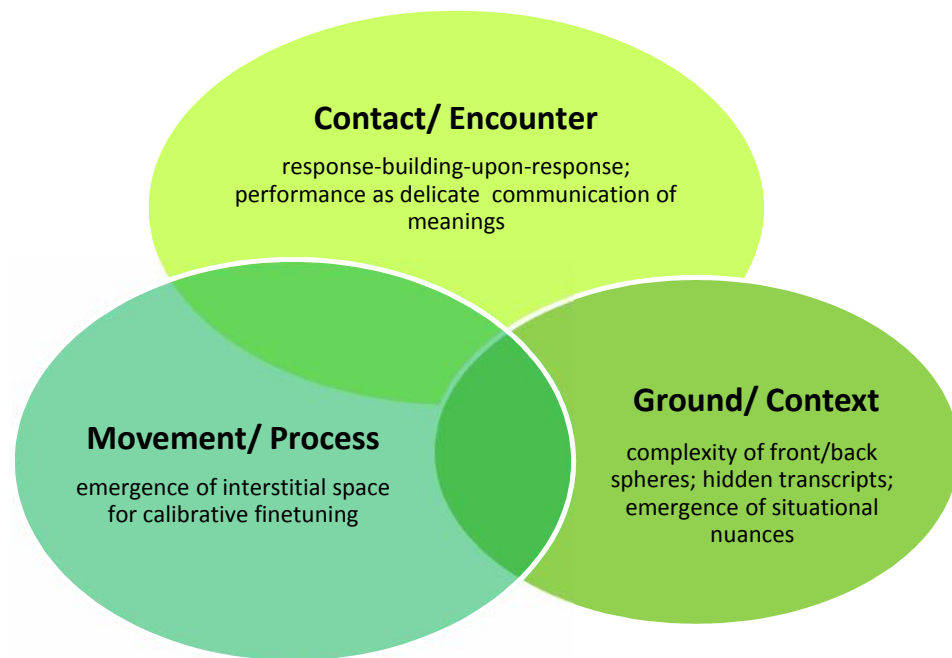


Figure 7: The changing qualities of negotiation practice during NICA

Incident 3: Negotiations between iFIMA and NICA's young adult trainees

After being blocked in NICA's activities with artists and writers in early 2003, with time and my increasing familiarity with the ground of Myanmar's realities, I began to perceive other areas that opened a possibility for movement, which brought about our work with young people.

The situation for young people in Myanmar

Power replicates itself at all levels of society in Myanmar, from the rulers down to basic group relations where patronage, suspicion and surveillance are strongly practiced. Because of this, opportunities, which are rare, are jealously guarded and controlled through the system of patronage. One needs to become a loyal adherent to a patron in order to gain favours and opportunities. In the arts, this system works in the master-disciple manner. As such, the young are the most powerless, and often are not able to initiate and organise events on their own without being heavily criticised, rebuked and even ostracised.

The situation is further exacerbated by the poor education and information system which developed due to isolation and control in the last 50 years. Many of the established universities' courses, especially humanities and arts courses, are closed to prevent student uprisings such as that of 1988, and they are only conducted through distance learning. In Myanmar, distant learning means having very few resources and attending school for 10 days of a year, during which you study topics that will likely appear in the examination. This situation closes the door for many young adults who want to gain some opportunity for education in order to escape from the oppressive domination. For Buddhist Barmans³⁶, their social trust and alternative education opportunities have only one source, which is the Buddhist monastery structure. Many young men join the army as it provides a source of stable income and opportunities that are rare in the country.

The majority of young people in Myanmar receive poor education and socially they occupy the lowest positions in the hierarchy of power, having always to defer to the wishes and patronage of elders. We introduced management training programmes at NICA, and took in six young trainees in the first batch. We taught management, applying it to arts and cultural management; computing; and English language and writing classes became supplementary subjects.

NICA's young adult trainees consisted of Karen, Chin, Indian-Barma and Barmans from varying backgrounds. They came with an expressed interest to learn arts and cultural management³⁷. The basic components of the training consisted of English, computer studies, writing, art history and project management classes. In addition to these classes, the trainees (and two coordinators, one for visual arts and another for literature) also attended workshops and discussions conducted by invited Myanmar and foreign artists, writers,

³⁶ The Barmans are the largest ethnic group in Burma. There are altogether over 100 ethnic groups.

³⁷ We are aware of the reality that many young Myanmar people get involved with foreign organisations with the hope of gaining opportunities for education and/or work abroad.

curators, historians and designers. Koh and I taught classes and also led workshops and discussions.

Workshop as a structure for learning were unusual, as the locals are used to demonstrative and instructive lessons, where a master demonstrates and imparts his/her methods and knowledge to listening pupils, who learn by copying, repetition and memorisation. The young trainees have been accustomed to listening to the teachings without questioning. They were uncomfortable with the manner in which our classes and workshops were delivered, which encouraged discussion and questioning of the content delivered. In one particular incident, a female trainee from a well off family stood up and expressed her unhappiness with what she saw as a 'disrespectful' way of speaking. What lies behind this is a national discourse that clearly demarcates the 'Myanmar way' and the ways of foreigners, which are characterised as corrupting forces that will erode Myanmar ways (see the article below showing the English translation of a Myanmar text, originally printed in a Myanmar newspaper, used in a magazine on learning English).



Figure 8: reproduced image of article in a Myanmar journal for the teaching of English

Analysis: flexibility as necessary condition for negotiation

As indicated by the article above, the inside-outside boundary between Myanmar people and foreigners is clearly marked.³⁸ This creates a rigidity that is not supportive of negotiations. In

³⁸ The boundary between Myanmar and foreigners/ foreign culture is constantly reinforced and strengthened in print and public displays that reminded the Myanmar people of Myanmar ways and that the protection of these is

NICA's operative strategy, executed in our almost hyper conscious attention to performativity, communicative protocols and methods in negotiating relationships and activities, we attempted to create a relatively 'safe space' for learning and testing of different ideas. As I have said earlier, this could be identified as a parallel or subsidiary ground or environment that is opened up by relational responsive activity and it performs a calibrative function. Within this space, there were intervals and liminal spaces and some sense of security, familiarity and assuredness for testing and feedback between self and others, old and new; new knowledge from direct experience and entrenched representative conceptual knowledge (e.g. schemata) that guides our daily actions and movements. They therefore create possible conditions of 'elasticity' and fluidity for a sense of movement to take place and for negotiations-as-active-knowing to work.

A related incident involving learning took place at a community school for youngsters retaking their higher school certificate examination, which did not allow for negotiation-as-active-knowing to take place, while circumvention and blockage was exercised through the actions of the headmistress. Koh and I had met the headmistress at a dinner hosted by a foreign ambassador in Myanmar and she later became well acquainted with NICA's work and requested that we collaborated as she was running a private free community school for youngsters retaking their secondary school leaving examination in a poor neighbourhood in the outskirts of Yangon (near Insein prison, famous for its high number of 'prisoners of conscience'). She invited foreign guests who came to conduct workshops at NICA to also do the same at her school, if the topic was of benefit to her students. One of the events we co-organised was a talk and counselling session by an experienced counsellor on career development who had come from Singapore. During the course of the talk, we noticed that at certain times, the headmistress who acted as translator, was not making direct translations of what the counsellor said. I deduced that she was using her own judgement to determine what her students 'should' hear and learn or perhaps what they would or would not be able to understand. She was probably protecting her students from hearing things that not did conform to or would disturb their accepted worldview. Koh and I did not question her about why she did not directly translate, but did not agree with her action. At the end of the event, without disclosing my awareness of or objection of the 'mistranslation' that took place, I requested that for future events at her school, we used one of our young trainees as translator. She rang me up a few days later, saying that foreigner presence at her school had caught the attention of her township officers and she had been questioned about it. She said

of supreme importance to Myanmar's sovereignty. Through the years 2003 – 2007 when NICA operated actively in Myanmar, there were laws prohibiting free interaction of foreigners and locals, and foreigners are not allowed to stay in hotels designated for Myanmar people.

that for that reason, we could no longer conduct any further activities at her school. At a later time, I learnt to recognise this as a form of 'creative resistance', one that could serve as a powerful tool against undesired elements.

The nuanced workings of power, to protect or to suppress?

The lesson from within immersive participation that I took from this incident re-orientated me on the notion and workings of power. Power was mercurial and could shift from moment-to-moment. The expert from Singapore who was supposedly in a position of power armed with the knowledge she had to transmit was made powerless by the action of the headmistress, who also wielded power in her capacity and position. She could exercise her power in subtle acts of resistance that may be unknown to the artist-outsider. This strongly challenged conventional discourse on the power of the artist instigator or facilitator who engages with community, which assumed that the imbalance of power was in favour of the all-powerful artist as the expert imbued with a disproportionate amount of cultural capital, whilst the 'community' was powerless. I was able to adjust my judgement on the headmistress's action and not see it necessarily as a suppression of the student's right to knowledge when I saw it as a *relational responsive act* within the protective environment of Myanmar. This was the headmistress's way of answering to the weighted responsibility of elders over young people. To me, her deliberate act of 'mis-interpretation' or censorship was a 'weapon' of resistance (Scott 1985, 1990). To me, it affirmed the power and agency of people. No matter what position one occupied, that there were always possibilities for the exercise of power. In this incident, the act of 'mistranslation' can be seen as an act of sabotage which Koh and I tried to 'negotiate' by circumventing it. The actions here, on both the head mistress' and Koh and my part, would not be conducive for negotiation-as-active-knowing. Negotiation can be foreclosed by defensive action, a closing off, perhaps due to unpreparedness or unreadiness to accept a new and/or challenging practice that threatens or disturbs the existing status quo. My request to use our own translator brought with it uncertainty and threat that she was probably not prepared for. The incident emphasised that the process of negotiation-as-active-knowing needs to be a durational process, that works in ways that are attentive and sensitive to the *timing* of actions and ways of keeping the engagement *open* (this realisation of time and timing informs our approach in Galway for engagement punctuated by intervals of disengagement, see 4.2.7). It needs to consider the preparedness of participants to engage and re-orientate, and ways of bringing about willingness, interest and a sense of readiness to engage. Calibrative interplay needs to bring about re-orientation and re-alignment in all directions and on the part of all co-negotiators.

Incident 4: Finnish artists' project

Finnish artists Lea and Pekka Kantonen gave a performance-talk and showed their video work at NICA in 2005, as part of their project 'Asking for Advice', which involved presenting a selection from over 15 years of video footage of everyday life incidents within their family and with various communities where they had made projects, e.g. in Mexico and among the Sami people in Finland, and asking the advice of viewers on the presentation and editing of the videos. According to the artists: "We show the material organized by themes that the public can choose from, taking the advice offered by the audience and using it for the editing of our video installations. We are approaching the material in different ways: one is the memory of the people who have been involved with them, another is the cultural interpretation given by viewers representing different cultures."³⁹ Building on from French ethnographic filmmaker Jean Rouch's process of shared decision making with the people he filmed, the Kantonens called their method Generational Filming, in which they listened to and filmed the viewers' comments on the original videos, and added this material to the next edition as a new generation of the video to be shown to other audiences. In their words: "Viewers are helping us form both interpretation and theorization."⁴⁰

In Yangon, the Kantonen's open-ended, inclusive and shared method of art-making incurred the irritation of some members of the audience, comprised mostly of Myanmar and an expatriate Singaporean woman and a French woman. A video which depicted the Kantonen's youngest daughter reaching out for a hot bowl of soup while Pekka continued to film and did not prevent her action which led to her being scalded and crying, was criticised by the Singaporean as an act of irresponsibility. This drew a response from a Myanmar present who said that in Myanmar children face greater dangers each day like being exposed to possibility of touching live exposed wires and fuse boxes in the decrepit buildings they live in. This developed into a heated discussion amongst the attendees of whether it was better to teach by control and instruction or by self-discovery. Later, a bright young and rather critical Myanmar writer and theatre enthusiast began criticising the Kantonens' presentation of their work for having wasted his time in watching and listening to them without being able to learn something valuable at the end, arguing that their 15 years of art making should have afforded them the skills and expertise to be able to distil some 'truths' for their audience's benefit. This brought to sharp relief at least two very different approaches to learning, making, discussing and engaging others. The reactions reveal the conditioned or accustomed

³⁹ From Lea and Pekka Kantonen's website

http://www.kantonenart.com/kantoset_web_eng/kantonen_eng/sukupolvittelu/index.html. Accessed 4th Oct 2012.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

knowledge and practices of the Myanmar, Singaporean and the Finns. ⁴¹For the Myanmar, perhaps the search for affirmative, resolved ‘truths’ that can strengthen their own inner resolve and struggle was especially urgent and necessary. The point here was that such kinds of knowledge becomes entrenched within the local culture, and within people, and informed the ways we behaved and judged others. They were unquestioned and taken-for-granted as truths, until a confrontation with difference raised the spectre of discomfort which might unravel a process of questioning one’s and other’s thinking, values and beliefs. This point is resonated in a conversation with Mongolian collaborators described in chapter 4.3.7 and discussed more thoroughly as practical embedded knowledge in chapter 5.4)

Analysis: revisioning of ground and exploring movement as necessarily complementary processes

This incident revealed important lessons on how differences in one’s lived environment, historical background, social and cultural conditions and practices inform different approaches towards knowledge and methods. The ground that grows and nurtures also enfolds, instructs and conditions people in specific ways. In this case the Kantonens’ and the writer’s backgrounds, with their multiple dimensions, collided in a frictive moment during their encounter. The incident revealed how the shock of confrontation with a new or other ways of practice can create a closure and rejection if not negotiated well. The encounter opens up a new experiential *ground*, on which the clash of two very different inner world-views needs to be negotiated. This clash of different ‘inner worlds’ can result in moments of un-permeability, in-operativity, inability to move and navigate. This is due to an inability to penetrate (enter) and orientate within the new experience, which in turn produced a lot of uncertainty and anxiety. That situation, because it was a one-off encounter, unlike the one involving NICA trainees, could not establish a sense of familiarity, relatedness⁴² or relational responsiveness to allow intervals for calibrations to take place. *Intervals between proximity and distance* are necessary to allow for the oscillatory movement, conversations and reflections which take place within a calibrative process. *Re-orientation* and *shifts* need to be created gradually through reciprocal exchange and relational responsiveness which slowly produce re-orientations of communicative and cognitive habits so that a more attuned

⁴¹ Of course, the complexity of the layers of negotiations here, is not just reduced to this dimension. There can be other underlying tensions that motivate the responses of the Myanmar participants, for example the awareness of condescending narratives amongst the expatriate that sees local Myanmar culture and conditions as backward. There is a possibility of an attempt at asserting a sense of the ‘supremacy’ (or strength of character) of the Myanmar by emphasising the incomparability of the Finnish child’s suffering to the dangers that the Myanmar children face on a daily basis, thus expressing the strength of the Myanmar people’s endurance in the face of their experiences.

⁴² Psychologist Erich Fromm postulates that human beings learn better if there is a sense of ‘relatedness’ between the learner and others or with the new experience. Fromm, E. (1959) *Psychic Needs and Society*. Available from the Literary Estate of Erich Fromm, <http://www.erich-fromm.de/e/index.htm>

process of communication can take place. This process of producing gradual shifts will be discussed further in the next case studies in sections 4.2 and 4.3.

In spite of the friction and intractable experiences involved within the Myanmar project, I take lessons from and am encouraged by CNRM's and NICA's achievement in producing increased mobility of Myanmar artists. The process of how the ground has 'opened up' for the Myanmar artists in ways that then support their venture out of Burma to the international scene is predicated on a few steps that can be exemplary and instructive for the process of experiential negotiation. It first involved gaining contact with specific and significant others; establishing 'assured' or 'firm' relationships (with a certain degree of certainty and trust); gradually learning a path for movement; and developing the required skills for this process (the application process: where to do it, how to do it, the language of filling out forms, writing proposals, corresponding, negotiating the conditions of the event, per diems, fees etc.). In the same way, what experiential negotiation needs as a first footing (for the ground to become firm enough to hold one's first step into it) are these necessary elements of contact and enough of a sense of commitment to form a 'firm' sense of engaging with the 'other' or otherness, and guiding each other towards and along a path of movement. By pointing out (through showing, telling)⁴³ the elements of that path – it becomes visible and known, when it previously was not. Thus this path could be walked and its character and qualities discovered which were previously not accessible to the uninitiated.

Mapping the above discussion onto the diagram of domains of practice produces the following:

⁴³ Tim Ingold (2000), in *Perception of the Environment*, narrates how youngsters of Australian Walbiri tribe learn by being 'shown' - pointed to - a leaf, a mark etc. from nature by their elders. This will be picked up again in chapters 4.3.12 and 5.1.2.

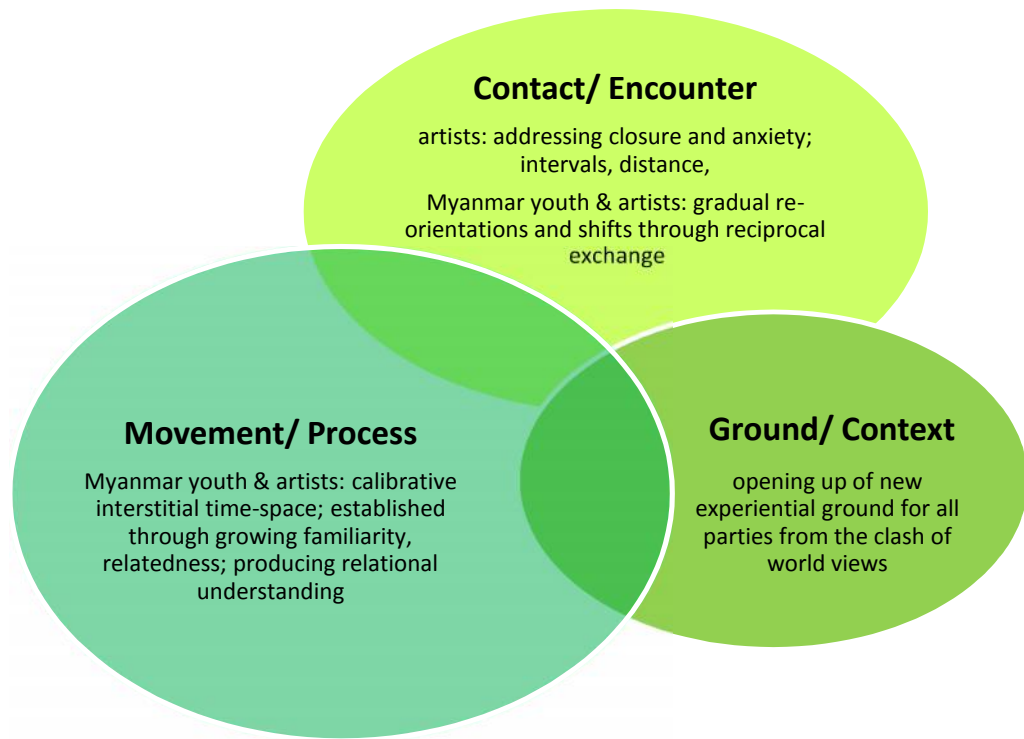


Figure 9: The changing qualities of negotiation practice towards middle of NICA

4.1.5 Conclusion

At this point of the research, which is towards the middle of NICA, the qualities of the experiential negotiation had begun to generate re-orientations and shifts for both Jay and me and the Myanmar young trainees. We were moved into positions of *co-negotiators* within a reciprocal process. Prior to NICA, the encounter had brought tensions and differences to the surface without a means to create resolutions or show ways of movement forward. I discuss some points of learning for the framework of negotiation-as-active-knowing below. These points of learning from Myanmar will be built upon and continually calibrated with the articulations of the next case studies, Galway and Mongolia. A fuller adjusted framework for negotiation-as-active-knowing is achieved at the end of chapter 4, and an integrated analysis made in chapter 5.

Immersive involvement as a quality of experiential negotiation faces the risk of reinforcing assumptions, as immersion indicates collapse of distance that in western discourse is associated with objectivity and criticality. I will address this issue in section 6.7, discussing it

in relation to Freire's (1970) process of critical consciousness. It is important to bear in mind at this point that negotiation-as-active-knowing as a methodological framework began its investigation from the position of *outside*. The co-negotiators in the projects come together from positions of difference and are outsiders to each other's cultures and practices.

Negotiation-as-active-knowing involves and calibrates acts of questioning and disruptions

In the cases of CNRM involving Itta-Golden artists, NICA's young trainees and the head mistress, iFIMA and the Myanmar co-participants built relationships through a relational-responsive process in the development of the events. The quality of the exchange needed to have created reciprocal feelings of sufficient assuredness in order to move on further. However, through the encounter and our actions of forging a collaborative relationship of active exchange, our different ways of practice, beliefs and values were brought into a friction with one another. This friction, in Shotter's terms involved a touching and a rubbing between surfaces moving against each other and it is the process by which difference is tangibly experienced. Through the Ayed and NICA experience, all of our expectations and assumptions were greatly challenged. The relational-responsive process of encounter produced unexpected results and consequences for all of us. It made us tangibly aware of some contradictions and tensions between our concerns, values, beliefs and aims, and the methods used to achieve them.

For the Itta and Golden artists, their desire for knowledge about self-organisation, western discourses on art, and access to funding from international foundations brought with it other undesirable elements that challenged their closed systems and hierarchical and protective structures. For the young adults, their desire to learn western discourse greatly challenged their way of learning. For iFIMA, I realised that our roles, supposedly as 'facilitators', were not as neutral as we'd previously thought. Being resisted and resented for doing the very thing we had been requested to do, was at first a shock. It took some time for me to re-orientate myself in terms of our role and the impact of our actions in relation to the ground that we were traversing. It also made me think about re-positioning the role of the artist in socially engaged art, which does not fall into that of instigator nor facilitator, as we were active *negotiators* of the conditions and relationships on the ground. This will be picked up again in chapter 5.



Figure 10: NICA: day and night circles (different ways of interaction)

There were many lessons from the early part of our work in Myanmar. Our immersive involvement within the Myanmar ‘ground’ opened up negotiative relationships between ourselves and the specifics of the site. We were bodily moved towards deeper understanding of relationships, gesture, local forms of contact and protocols of performance. The lessons suggest a need for a dynamic calibrative interplay between self and other, existing knowledge and practices with different/new knowledge and practices. The calibrative interplay needed to be played out within intervals and interstices (liminal spaces) where reverberations between reflections, direct experience, conversations and testing can take place. It can produce knowledge that is anticipatory and generative of new possibilities.

Mode of perception: open and anticipatory, yet focused and attuned

The calibrative interplay would not be possible without a mode of perception and reaction, which, according to Kester (2011):

‘notices things or events that carry meaning in hidden or unexpected ways. The mode of perception evident in these works is not instrumental (site is not a resource for the enactment of an a priori vision or a goal already-in-mind), but rather, anticipatory and open. At the same time, it is intensely focused and attuned, prepared but not projective. It is this unique form of perception, aggregated over countless discrete moments of insight that led Dialogue to recognize the potential of neglected water pump sites as a fulcrum for reconfiguring social interactions in Kopewada, or NICA to master the delicate choreography of gesture and pose, inflection and enunciation, necessary to operate effectively under the gaze of an ever vigilant police state.’
(Kester 2011:152-153)

Kester’s description of a mode of perception that is ‘anticipatory and open’, and at the same time ‘intensely focused and attuned’ (2011: 152), resonates resoundingly with my own

experience of the mode of attentiveness of negotiation-as-active-knowing, which is a restless, roaming, shifting mode of knowing that oscillates between keen and sharp searching (zooming in), and pulling back (zooming out). Reverberations allow for adjustments and cognitive digestions to create new meanings of what has been taken in. It is my adjustment of Bortoft's mode of attentiveness into the 'active receptive' (section 2.6.2).

Gradual development of trust and certainty

The emotions at the heart of conflict/difference – such as fear, anxiety, defensiveness, mistrust, amongst others, the differences in values and experiences, and its accompanying worldviews and mode of knowing/being in the world, cannot be addressed/ redressed through short term interaction and aboutness-knowing. It requires a deep recognition of the behaviours and actions of conflict through experiential negotiation. The Myanmar experience shows that trust cannot be a prerequisite in the methodology, but that the activities and process of experiential negotiation need to gradually build and establish a greater certainty, of which trust is the eventual result. These realisations came as a result of active durational and experiential negotiation, involving witness-knowing, within relational art practice.

I bring the above points of learning into the next case study on Galway.

4.2 The Galway Project, Oct 2009 – April 2010

4.2.1 Factual details

The Galway Travellers project⁴⁴ was a competitive commission organized under the Percent for Art scheme, where 1% of the construction cost of building a halting site for Travellers was channeled for the production of a public artwork to be installed at the site. Jay Koh drew up the proposal with my input and was awarded the commission by the selection committee, which included one resident from the site. Koh then made a call for collaborators and began the project in Oct 2009 with Irish artist Yvonne Cullivan and independent arts administrator Martina Finn. I became involved with the project in Jan 2010. Beatrice,⁴⁵ a tuition teacher hired by the Galway Travellers Movement (GTM), an NGO, to provide tuition for the children at the site, became a mediator and regular participant in the project. The project was initially scheduled to run for 3 months, but it ran until June 2010 at Koh's request to lengthen the process of engagement.

The parties involved in the project were the selection committee, the arts officer, the public Arts Office, the Housing Office, Galway Travellers Movement (GTM), the residents at the site, and the artists.

This project is different to iFIMA's longer-duration independently evolved projects that Koh and I have undertaken. Although Koh had been involved in consultation and evaluation projects and we have both had dialogic forms of exchange with staff of City Councils, this was our first art project directly commissioned by a City Council. The Travellers project is included as a case study in this thesis even though it does not conform to our usual independent working procedure, in being an art commission, for exactly that reason - that it would be interesting to see the implications of this research for public art commissioning processes.

Koh and I went into the project with great apprehension about the bureaucracy and hidden government agenda that we felt were involved in art commission work. It turned out that our working relationship with the city council would not be the main area of our negotiation efforts. Instead the negotiation of our contact and relationship with the Travellers came to the fore; negotiating the ground of organization of relationships, divisions and animosities at

⁴⁴ Galway is a county in the Republic of Ireland. The exact name of the halting site is not given in this case study to preserve anonymity for the Traveller residents.

⁴⁵ This is a pseudonym coined, to preserve condition of anonymity for the halting site of this project.

the halting site between the rival Traveller families who have been randomly placed there by the City Council; and negotiating the Travellers' poor relationship with the City Council.

4.2.2 Contextual background

Irish Travellers are a traditionally nomadic people of ethnic Irish origin, comprising less than 1% of the population. There are different accounts of their historical origins; for example theories which speculate that they are descendants of aristocratic nomads from the late middle ages, or of settled people made homeless by Oliver Cromwell's military campaign in Ireland in the 17th century or the 'Great Famine' in Ireland in the mid nineteenth century.⁴⁶ There is evidence by the 12th century of the names Tynkler and Tynker ('tinker' is a term for Travellers which refers to services that they traditionally provided to the settled community, i.e., tinsmithing). Tynker also emerged with reference to a group of nomads who maintained a separate identity, social organization, and dialect.⁴⁷ In 2011 a study undertaken at the Royal College of Surgeons in Dublin and the University of Edinburgh conducted DNA analysis of 40 Travellers. It provided evidence that Irish Travellers are a distinct Irish ethnic minority who were separated from settled Irish community at least 1000 years ago.⁴⁸

A report in the Irish Times states that Irish Travellers have maintained a distinct identity and lifestyle that is separate from the rest of Irish society and their traditions and practices are not well understood within the larger culture. A 2011 survey by the Economic and Social Research Institute of Ireland concluded that there is widespread ostracism of Travellers in Ireland, and that this could hurt the long-term prospects for Travellers, who "need the intercultural solidarity of their neighbours in the settled community . . . They are too small a minority, i.e., 0.5 percent, to survive in a meaningful manner without ongoing and supportive personal contact with their fellow citizens in the settled community."⁴⁹

Traveller children are currently enlisted into the Irish national education streams, where they reportedly face discrimination in being identified as not seriously interested in learning.

⁴⁶ From Irish Traveller.org.uk. <http://www.irishtraveller.org.uk/images/history-culture.pdf>. Accessed 14 June 2013.

⁴⁷ O'Riain, S. (2008) *Solidarity with Travellers*. Roadside Books.

⁴⁸ Hough, J. (31 May 2011), DNA study: Travellers a distinct ethnicity. *The Irish Examiner*. <http://www.irishexaminer.com/ireland/dna-study-travellers-a-distinct-ethnicity-156324.html>. Accessed 23 Jan 2013.

⁴⁹ Holland, K. (18 May 2011). Young among the most prejudiced, expert finds. *Irish Times*. <http://www.irishtimes.com/search/search-7.1213540?q=Young+among+the+most+prejudiced%2C+expert+finds>. Accessed 23 Jan 2013

Studies show that the Irish society at large treats them with a degree of mistrust, ostracisation and prejudice.⁵⁰

The Travellers' traditional ways of camping on accessible land have caused conflicts and tensions as times change and as the laws governing land rights and land uses have changed, along with notions of public and private spaces. As a result, the Irish government has been experimenting with forms of housing for the Travellers. In many counties, halting sites have been built for Travellers, where Travellers can park their caravans next to a housing unit, and have access to amenities, schools, medical attention etc. The halting site in Galway in County Clare where this project took place is one such facility.

On the one hand these could be seen as empowering and enabling social 'integration' which is a means for Travellers to be supported through intercultural solidarity with the rest of Irish society. On the other hand it is seen as imposing regulations restricting their movements and changing their traditional ways of life. The artistic position that Koh and I took was as follows: intercultural 'integration' that forcibly alters one community's way of life is not something that can be implemented from above. It needs to be strongly negotiated, bringing about collective understanding and agreements that are respectful of difference.

4.2.3 Engagement with Traveller organisations

Galway Traveller Movement (GTM), a Traveller NGO overseeing the welfare of Travellers in Galway, had been mediating between the Housing Office and the Travellers on site and had tried to persuade them to set up a residents' committee, but no headway was being made. They managed, however, to set up a tuition class for the children at the site, which took place every afternoon. Beatrice became a mediator and participant in our project. Koh had written to another Traveller organization, Pavee Point, to invite their participation in the project. They declined on the grounds that they are not connected to the Travellers at the Galway site.

⁵⁰ *The Kitchen Sisters (Davia Nelson and Nikki Silva)*, April 29, 2010 12:01 AM, For Traveller Women In Ireland, Life Is Changing, *National Public Radio NPR* series, Hidden World of Girls. <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=125907642>. Accessed 23 Jan 2013.

4.2.4 Advocating for an open-ended experiential approach

From the start of this project, we made it clear to all parties that we were not representing or working for any bureaucratic agenda. Koh's proposal for the commission clearly stated that the process and results had to be kept open-ended, and would be determined through the artist's interactions and negotiations with the residents of the halting site.

This open-ended approach was not a norm in a public commissioning process, which commonly demands to see a clearly articulated and predicted outcome. However, Koh's proposal received full support of the arts officer in charge, Megs Morley, who was herself an artist and curator and a researcher on publicly engaged art, and understood the complexity of the relational and bureaucratic dynamics within a public art process. During the selection process, the Traveller resident who was part of the committee had been in favour of another proposal of a permanent horse sculpture. However, she was finally persuaded by Morley, on the ground that Koh's process is consultative and open-ended, which means that it would still be possible to realize a horse sculpture should that be the decision of the residents. Morley had communicated this to the artists, and we kept this option as a possibility. At the start, Koh set aside a certain amount of the available funds as production costs of an artwork - which could possibly be a horse sculpture - while another portion was used to begin some activities with the residents.

4.2.5 Revisioning the ground: power relations on site

When the project began, the artists learnt from conversations with the tuition teacher and residents. We observed that the relationship between the City Council and the residents was negative. This resulted in a deadlock in arrangements between the Council and the residents for access and use of a community facility on site which contained two big rooms and a kitchen in a standalone building. The deadlock effectively cut off the residents' use and ownership of the facilities built for them on site. The Council's criterion was that the facility has to be run and managed by a committee made up of representatives of the families on site, which would assume responsibility for site matters and with whom they would communicate and negotiate. The residents have refused to elect and form this committee from amongst themselves. Exact reasons were unknown but attributed to mistrust of government institutions, rules and procedures that control their way of life.

Establishing contact: observing protocols, approaches and alignments

Making a point about our position that was independent from that of the City Council became an important aspect of our relationship with the Travellers. We had to constantly carefully negotiate our own position and movement within the bigger ground marked by the struggles between the Travellers themselves, with the city authorities, and within the Irish national policy governing the Travellers. Due to the fact that Travellers do not readily accept outsiders, we also had to negotiate how to establish relationships with them and how to align the work in ways that were meaningful and relevant to their situation and interests.

Activities in the early months of the project focused on consultations, conversations and interactions to find out what kinds of activities and outcomes the Travellers would like realized within the time of the project; to understand their situation, what their interests and concerns were; and to understand their relationships, both amongst themselves and with external groups, including their relationships and negotiations with Galway City Council. The artists took care to reach out to all families by making visits to individual bays, even though some were more forthcoming than others.

In addition to actively declaring our independent autonomous position from the city council, we also actively expressed our interests to work together with the residents, to realize something that would be desirable to the community, inviting their input, engagement, participation and involvement in the course of the project. We took care to stress and reiterate that the final outcome/ material production of the art project would ultimately be decided by the residents, i.e. what was to be done with the available funds would not be decided without the participation and agreement of the residents. This was achieved through verbal communication, as well as actions. Our work process evidenced the consultative and relational responsive ways with which we organize and proceed with activities at the site.

In early consultation sessions, ideas were fielded by residents on possible activities at the site. A resident expressed interest in woodworking and the artists tried to set up a woodworking facility on site. However, the request for a woodworking facility at the site with the housing office, like requests to deal with other problems at the site, did not receive a favorable response from the housing office. In addition to safety issues, the reason given always refers back to the failure to set up a resident committee. We learnt that the relationship between the Travellers and the Housing Office had been cold and strained for some time. The Housing Office was not willing to have direct dealings with the residents at the site, preferring instead to go through GTM as go-between party.

During the same consultation sessions, from listening to underlying connotations in the utterances of the adult residents, Koh and Cullivan learnt that their expectations were that as artists our 'job' was to conduct art activities at the site for their children. Koh's interest was in sharing organizational knowledge and learning about their experiences and conditions and involving the adults in realizing a public art activity. However these ideas were somewhat new and did not fall under the purview of what was expected of an 'artist's work'. Time was needed to gradually introduce and re-orientate the residents towards the new roles and activities associated with art. Koh, Cullivan and Finn then began with arts and crafts sessions for the children, which were well received as the adults appreciated care-giving and engagement activities for their children.

4.2.6. From 'revisoning' to 'envisioning' of ground: social ecology and spatial dynamics from within immersive involvement

The artists conducted activities two to three days a week, interspersed with discussions and meetings with adult residents, caravan and bay visits whenever possible. The regular art activities with the children established an acceptance of our routine involvement within the lives of the Traveller children and women who are the ones who spend the most time at the site. This proved to be extremely important. Through such immersive involvement in their lives, we could get a sense of the spatial dynamics and social ecology (Kester 2011) of the halting site; of the roles, relationships, protocols and performative demands on different individuals, and their feelings about their lived environment and the social structures governing them. This is what Shotter (2005) would call the knowledge that comes from witness-thinking.

Through our regular contact and activities with children, their behavior, gestures and utterances gave us a sense of the experiences and thinking of the larger community at the site. The children were very sensitive and protective of their language and of 'secrets' amongst them. They would chide and scold each other to be loyal and keep to their code of behavior. In one incident, when a 6-year-old child wanted to confide something to us, she was scolded by a 9-year-old child, called a 'traitor' and told to watch out for consequences of her action. From this, we came to realise the existence and dynamics of deep seated resistance and suspicion amongst Travellers of people and elements considered as external of their clan and way of

life.⁵¹ In such a way, sentiments and attitudes on the 'ground' - what Shotter (2005) calls *relational expressive* character of ground - gradually became revealed to us.

The residents' and children's behavior, actions and attitudes began to act as what I term as 'orientation markers'. The research at this point is gradually changing its method. Instead of identifying 'frictive moments' (Shotter & Katz 1996) as in the previous Myanmar case study, which were then revisioned retrospectively, in Galway, negotiation-as-active-knowing began to unfold as a present continuous process. The role performed by revisioning of 'frictive moments' gave way to a process of *envisioning* catalyzed by actions and behavior that began to function as what I now call 'orientation markers'. These 'orientation markers' began to give us an anticipatory sense and to prompt us towards certain possibilities of movement, while informing us to be mindful of certain sensitive areas in our relational-response to proposed activities for the project.

By being immersed with the residents' routine and everyday lives, we learnt that they were unhappy about not having the key and access to function rooms, whereas the tuition teacher and her assistant (both hired by Galway Travellers Movement) and the artists (on art project commission) did have keys. The flooring for the rooms was left bare, and there was no furniture in the bigger activity room, whereas the tuition room was minimally furnished with a table and chairs. The artists requested for the housing office to furnish the activity room so that we could begin art activities with the children. When we did not receive any response after a while, we proceeded to procure some furniture ourselves for the room. We also requested for a key to be given to the residents, but we were told that this rested on the successful establishment of a committee to answer for use and running of the facility.

The halting site was a temporary transitional location. The residents knew that they would be moved again, thus we felt that this possibly diminished any sense of certainty or point of being organized. It was located directly on a busy highway, creating a problem of very heavy traffic right at their doorstep which posed a danger for the children who would play at the front of the compound. We began discussing with the residents what could be done about this problem. We began communicating with the City Council about putting up some road signs to alert drivers to slow down and that there were children playing in the area.

⁵¹ This in a way illustrates Koh and my approach of preferring not to have a preconceived picture of the community but learn by being attentive to things that emerge from within out interactions. Although we do conduct some prior research and reading, we turn to these activities more intensely as ways to affirm or refute our perceptions gained from within the interactions. Reading combined with conversations with others test and clarify our understanding of emerging insights. These would then serve as knowledge that informs our subsequent actions.

Our immersion also led us to feel and learn that there was tension between some of the families on the halting site. The City Council had brought families from different sites and randomly placed them together at this site. Making some research on our own into ethnographic studies on Travellers, and from conversations with a few persons who had had contact with Travellers, we learnt that the Travellers have for hundreds of years been very closed and operate mostly within their extended families. Their code of honour is bound up with one's family's, therefore an individual does not act alone, but one's actions affects the whole family/clan's name and honour. Therefore it is a very difficult concept for one of them to step forward to assume the responsibility on behalf of all the families on site, not only their own. We therefore came to understand that the strained relationship between the Traveller families, though not explicitly stated, may be one of the reasons for the stalemate in forming a residents' committee.

The residents were placed there as a 'physical community' by the action of the authorities, but they were not united and nor could they act or think as a real community⁵². In a community-based public art project for such a context, how should the consultative process proceed and what processes should be adopted for reaching a consensus? This process needs to be mindful of difference, and able to engage and include different positions involved in working towards a common understanding together. In my opinion, this process cannot be rushed or coerced. It needs to be based on a durational experiential process which gradually moves people to a new 'place' together. Therefore it makes sense when Shotter and Katz (1996) use the metaphor of 'scene' or 'view' to describe the new insights that we arrive at. It is as if we have moved and come upon a new *view* of the other party and/or of the situation, making it possible for a new alignments or re-alignments to take place in relation to others and/or otherness.

4.2.7. Assessing contact and exploring movement: relational-responsiveness and calibrative interplay

From an early stage in this project, we allowed relational-responsiveness within an immersive environment to inform our ways of contact with the residents and lead us towards gradual incremental anticipative knowledge that then informed our subsequent actions or what I term *movement*. It enabled us to gradually develop a sense of the situation that the residents faced. This knowledge came from bodily involvement in their everyday

⁵² Miwon Kwon (2004) in *One Place after Another: Site-Specific Art and Locational Identity* differentiates between communities formed through long-term and short term interest-based arrangements.

environment and activities, from involved participation in their daily lives, 'witness' co-presence and active receptive attentiveness, all of which are aspects of relational-responsiveness. This knowledge served to orientate and calibrate our responsive action as a way of moving forward – informing us of the appropriate approach to engage with the residents and propel further engagement between the residents and the city council. This kind of knowledge is of a bodily sensory kind, and moved us towards knowing possibilities for movement in active response to one's placement, position, and orientation in relation to others. These qualities are what I would define as the characteristics of negotiation-as-active-knowing.

Calibrating our terms of engagement: intervals between proximity and distance

Revising and calibrating our approach of engagement as a result of relational-responsiveness resulted in a more successful engagement with the residents. Whenever residents were not forthcoming with their participation and views, Finn and Cullivan in the earlier part of the project engaged in more active caravan visiting. Koh felt an alternative strategy of engagement should be pursued, and I agreed with his thinking. We came up with the idea that we should practice engaging with some degree of dis-engagement. We felt that too much attention and effort on our part could give the wrong impression that we are being too coercive and agenda driven. Interest on our part could be mistranslated to feelings of intrusion and imposition on theirs.

The approach we evolved – involvement and interest combined with a degree of dis-engagement and withholding, while keeping activities and channels of communication alive and possible outcome open-ended – began to make some headway in constructively engaging the residents, as they gradually became more involved and interested in the activities.

Reflecting on this, I think it was because the alternating approach of engagement/disengagement created intervals that were extremely important for calibrative interplay. Within the project, the calibrated directions took time to reveal themselves. It was a constant process of testing and clarifying; moving between observations to formulate tentative, prospective ideas, discussions amongst the artists and with others, firming up the ideas, trying them out and then stepping back to observe and reflect. This process of constant moving to and fro, searching and roaming, responding to meaningful signs, is the restless shifting energy of experiential negotiation. It corresponds aptly with what Kester (2011) describes as an oscillating movement between proximity and distance, in the process of fine-tuning or calibrating its direction and approach. It involves an interplay of idea generation, concentrated attention and action.

After the initial period of actively reaching out, we would 'pull back', taking a more *passive* stance (which did not mean non-activity) until something happened such as a response from the residents in form of visit, request, expression of interest that propelled further relational-responsive actions and decisions on our part. This relational-responsive approach (Shotter 2005) which is non-imposing, is in my opinion more respectful of the dynamics of interpersonal interaction, giving time and space for different parties to observe, consider, reflect, clarify the actions and intentions of the other, as a process of overcoming reservation and doubts and developing greater sense of certainty for the subsequent steps of the relationship.

Calibrating our means of communication – forming indirect artists-adult communication loop via the children

In addition to taking an oscillating active-passive approach with the adults, we also discovered that our activities with children became an indirect loop of communication with the adults. Through weekly sessions with the children, when we did drawing, painting, soft sculptural work, clay moulding and introductions to using the internet, the adults were also exposed to the activity and products of their children's creative engagement. Occasionally the parents would drop by to observe what was going on, although they did not stay long. The children looked forward to the art activities and were very enthusiastic to try new things each week. After each session, they were always very eager and proud to show off what they had done to their parents, and would insist on bringing home what they'd made. Although this did not start out as an intentional strategy on our part, it turned out that the children's excitement and enthusiasm mediated and calibrated the women's relational responsiveness towards our roles and activities and began to suggest to us some things we could do with them.

4.2.8 Establishing a wall of visual communication: interface and reiterative medium

Amongst the activities we made with the children were celebrations or commemorations of important sentiments and events in the children's lives. In one consultation with the adults, we were told that with the children had been hugely affected by the death of a girl nicknamed Darkest Torrents who had passed away at the age of twelve. The first anniversary of her death was pending. We worked with the children to create a special memorial wall as a *Memorial for Darkest Torrents*, with multimedia images combining drawings, photographs and dedicational texts for Darkest, which were installed on one of the walls of the activity

room. We also worked with some of the children individually to articulate their unexpressed thoughts or any embedded anxiety or fears caused by or associated with Darkest's death. They made clay objects for a grave visit. Their drawings, gifts and sentiments for Darkest were all posted on the memorial wall in the activity room. This process and its visualisation exercises turned out to have lasting impact as the children would continue adding to the memorial wall set up in the activity room, even up to March 2010.



Figure 11: The children's drawings, writings and photographs installed on Darkest's memorial wall

Creating a visual interface and reiterative loop for facilitating contact and cognitive movement

As recounted in the Myanmar case study in 4.1, our experiences in Myanmar led us to realize that it is important to introduce something new as an alternative alongside something established and accepted. This then acts as a testing site for new ideas and/or practices. The intention is not to aim for acceptance and adoption of the new practice, but to provide a space for testing, negotiation and improvisation; to decide whether (and which parts) to wholly or partially accept or reject and/or to adapt/evolve the different ideas to the local situation and conditions. The aim is towards opening up engagement, not imposition or insidious manipulation. For the Galway project, we began to explore what kind of visual strategy could be employed that would also play off elements of new and accepted. As we knew of the residents' interest in horses and the expressed interest in a horse sculpture, we started to create more discussion on this subject. We posted pictures and stories of horses and practices from another horse-loving culture, that of nomadic Mongolians, with whom we have been working since 2006, to share our experiences of this culture with them. The purpose of this was to present to them the practices and stories of another culture which has something in common with theirs, by placing them alongside those from their own culture. Through a commonality, we hoped to stimulate and invite the Travellers' interest to engage and connect with others. Instead of a direct or forceful confrontation with difference, this approach

quietly created a less aggressive passage of space and time wherein exposure to and consideration of difference would allow for an unforced gradual calibration and shift to take place. It would be based in an interest or desire to engage and connect.

We also began to turn the walls of the activity room into documentation and discussion boards that recorded and sign-posted the progression of the project. They would also serve as a record and reminder – to ‘reflect back’ to the residents - the progress of shared activities and introduce new ideas to the residents without imposing any specific idea or choice. More importantly, we realized that the visual wall acted like an interface, during periods of our physical absence from the site, to sustain communication and contact between us and the residents. It served as reiteration of our expressed approach that the project outcome was to be determined by the residents and as a feedback loop between the new experiences and the knowledge-building, between options and responses from the residents.



Figure 12: Visuals in the interactive wall of communication that serves as interface and record

Using the walls, we explored with the children and adult residents the various options on how to realize the horse sculpture that the residents’ representative had said they wanted – in terms of type of horse, build, figure, posture, size, colours, and the material to be used. We continually updated the wall postings in the activity space with new material. Images and documents were posted to serve as reminders to reinforce what had been discussed or agreed upon, or as a way to conduct or further consultations/conversations. Drawings of

horses were made together with the children, and our plans and exploratory sketches for the horse sculpture were placed side by side. These aimed at encouraging a sense of explorative movement.



Figure 13: Sketches exploring various postures and form for the proposed horse sculpture

4.2.9 Relational-responsive exchange with the women

The women and older girls gradually warmed to the activities and requested baking and cooking sessions. They were interested in learning bread and cake baking from Cullivan and Chinese cooking from me. From Feb 2010, baking and cooking sessions began with the female adults at the halting site. As the cooking and baking activities with the women gradually progressed, our interactions and conversations became more open.

During the baking and cooking the women were very happy with having some time for themselves, undisturbed by parenting and household duties. The women led busy lives, taking care of all the work at the site - the children, family needs, and household chores - in addition to running errands outside. The sessions became time for them to relax and recharge, to come together, joke and learn something together.



Figure 14: baking activity with the women residents

While cooking and chatting together, the women felt more comfortable to voice their thoughts. The women were very humorous and witty and would often say things by making jokes about it. They made jokes about the setting up of a resident committee, about not understanding how it worked. This presented another ‘scene’ or ‘view’ of the situation or ground for negotiation, in which a more practical reason for their resisting the formation of a resident committee *revealed* itself. It showed us that they could be uncomfortable with the workings of a system that is entirely foreign to their culture, one that they did not know about nor understand. The concept of a committee, how it works, what processes it employs and what it can achieve, for them were alien. As a relational response to this, we began to share information about how a committee works, what it can achieve and how to discuss and find resolutions to issues and problems that crop up. We shared with them our knowledge on organisational processes and advised them on how to negotiate and adapt the structure of the committee in ways that could accommodate their reservations. We also mediated between them and the Galway Travellers Movement (GTM), suggesting that they could seek their advice on the matter as well.

After activities with the women began, Beatrice reported the activities to GTM and an officer from GTM contacted us and expressed their wish to support our activities with the women. We shared with them details of our activities. After some discussion, GTM could not identify exactly what their involvement or contribution would be and therefore no concrete form of support was established.

4.2.10 Calibration of project outcome as result of experiential relational-responsiveness

In the last two months of the project, it was time to firm up what was to be made with the money set aside for the horse sculpture. Koh had made enquires with the Galway Institute of Technology to have the horse sculpture made there. Other than a standing horse sculpture, we explored variations such as creating the horse as a play structure for the children's playground. Meetings with the housing office revealed that the office refused to approve of any permanent fixture on the site. We then explored having the sculpture mounted on a cart to make it mobile so that the Travellers could use it in different ways like in a procession, carnival or event display.

During an activity with the children, one of the older boys said that they did not wish to have the horse sculpture anymore but instead they wished to have the keys to the activity room. We felt that this indirectly expressed to us what the adults' wishes were. After some clarifications through consultations with the adults, they confirmed that they would like to abandon the idea of a horse sculpture in favor of more activities similar to those we had been conducting at the site, as well as a wall mural.

A meeting was set up at the artists' request, with representatives from the City Council Arts Office, the Housing Office and GTM to discuss the diversion of the allocated funds from the Percentage for Art for the horse sculpture for further activities at the site. The Housing Office agreed but requested that GTM oversee the use of the funding in the absence of a resident committee. GTM would set up a meeting to discuss the situation with the residents. The artists then handed over the project as by then it had already exceeded the agreed duration.

As the City Council had not acted on our requests to address the issue of road safety for the children at the site, we had begun to explore different interventions we could make to alert drivers to slow down on the main road in front of the site. The last activity we made was to create two 'children playing in this area' road signs together with the children. They followed the graphic image and colours of conventional road signage except that they were larger than the standard ones and were painted all around the edges with graffiti by the children. The signs were installed one on each end of the fence around the halting site and could be seen from at least twenty feet away by traffic from both directions.

On our last visit to the site, we heard from Beatrice that the group of women who had been cooking and baking with us, had agreed to join the residents' committee. At a meeting

convened on 30th April, it was agreed by all parties that the committee, plus one GTM representative, would receive and manage the funds allocated for the production of the sculpture, and would use it for the continuation of more art activities and a mural project on site.

4.2.11. Overall Analysis

Change of 'view' from concrete experiential exchange led to acceptance of a previously 'strange' practice

The cooking sessions with the women created interstitial spaces for convivial relational responsiveness. It provided relief from daily labour and created a space that gradually established a sense of familiarity and assuredness that makes possible re-orientations towards new ideas i.e. to begin to entertain/ consider/ weigh/ assess and test different or new ideas and practices. Orientation is a kind of '*facing-towards*' that needs to happen before consideration and gradual reverberations can take place. As stated before, the emergence of such a space of relative fluidity is *founded* on certainty and familiarity and its existence is necessary for the calibrative interplay and reverberation between existing and new ideas.

The eventual establishment of a resident committee commensurate with the stipulation of the Housing Office could be viewed as contentious. It could be interpreted that the artists had managed to achieve this for the Housing Office as a tool employed by the Housing Office to manipulate the outcome towards their desired end. In this way, the artists' approach could be seen as an insidious process for achieving a prescribed set of goals in an indirect manner. However, the decision by the artists to share organizational knowledge on how to work by means of committees, was not pre-meditated but an act of relational responsiveness to the women during the cooking session. The act was not targeted at procuring the establishment of such a committee by the residents but came about as an act of relational responsiveness to the women's curiosity/ irritation as revealed by their jokes about it. This focus had gradually become obvious to the women through exposure to and experience of our activities at the halting site, our communication with them and our attempts to achieve constructive outcome for them throughout the seven months. They had begun to realise that not knowing how to deal with the situation was working against their own interest, as their numerous requests for things and benefits were being turned down.

In iFIMA's work, which includes capacity building and developing alternative forms of organization most suited for a community's interests and concerns, Koh and I work towards

showing and opening up a range of options without imposing or directing people's choice. We support the decision-making process with an open, critical discussion and assessment of the different options, in as unbiased a manner as we possibly can exercise. Having said that, it is important to realise and state that we are not neutral in our positions and in the values that we carry, exercise and represent, as the Myanmar events have shown. What is important to us is to be transparent and to allow for negotiations to foreground our interactions with others. As Ahmed (2006) expressed, an encounter is a meeting of (at least) two histories of arrival, each with her/his own narratives, set of values, concerns and the prior experiences that have conditioned these concerns and values. Negotiation-as-active-knowing is a way of negotiating these different interests, experiences, values, perspectives, towards each other. It can strongly challenge and transform our initial positions and assumptions, as the Myanmar turn of events shows (as discussed in 4.1 above). At the very least, the negotiation-as-active-knowing re-orientates and re-aligns us, and leads towards certain outcomes that are calibrated from within the interactive exchange, in this case, between us and the Traveller women.

The learning and changes – which some would call 'compromise' - are *relational-responsive realignments* that take place when our view and experience of a certain situation changed. The position and perspectives of *all* parties were realigned. A change of view indicated a change of perspective which meant that movement had been achieved resulting in a new position on each side. In this way, we are able to appreciate more fully why Shotter (2005) uses the metaphors of movement that brings us to arrive at different 'scenes' and 'views' in discussing his ideas of witness-thinking and relational responsiveness. It is my view that eventually the Housing Office understood the difficulty involved in their imposing the criteria of equal representation from all the families in the site. They realized that to expect these representatives to be answerable for the actions of all families on site was not possible or workable within the terms of Travellers' culture. Instead of sticking to an insistence of total representation from all the families on site, the representation of only two of the families in residents' committee was accepted. Both parties that were stuck in a deadlock were 'moved' to new positions of relationships with each other, making possible a movement out of the deadlock.

Softening of boundaries as a result of experiential relational-responsiveness

Feedback given later on by an arts officer indicated that our project produced a more successful approach in engagement compared with a commissioned project at another halting site. The artist of this project had proposed a performance as the targeted outcome

from the start and the artist's work consisted in collecting stories from residents. Residents had not been welcoming or forthcoming and the performance could not be realized.

The arts officer felt without our involvement, the situation at the halting site would have remained at a deadlock. GTM was able to leverage our activities and movement made possible through a blurring or softening of boundaries. As reinforced by the analysis of Kaprow's *Project Other Ways* in Appendix I and Gene Sharp's text in Chapter 2, a softening of boundaries is crucial for any kind of negotiation, without which a sense of movement is not possible. From our perspective as artists, we did not take on the City Council's or GTM's agendas. Instead, through an open-ended approach that did not seek to push our own goals nor just accept and execute the wishes of the residents, we relied on ideas and insights that came about from *durational immersive involvement*, *relational responsiveness* and *calibrative interplay* – the three qualities of negotiation-as-active-knowing – that informed and revised the conceptions of *ground*, and the practices of *contact* and *movement*. This approach proved capable of producing a more constructive engagement with the Travellers that eventually re-aligned the expectations, positions and terms of acceptance of the different parties.

Negotiation-as-active-knowing acted as a process of calibrative interplay that is relational-responsive to the values, attitudes, positions and interests of all the parties involved, expressed through language, gestures, behavior and actions within interactions between self and other. In the Galway project, through a process of relational-responsiveness to the Travellers' experiences on site, and the aggregated moments of activities and interactions together - listening, talking, cooking, drawing, making; all done in co-presence of self and other – a re-orientation and re-alignment of the values, positions and experiences of the self and of others took place. For the artists as outsiders, the expressive character of the ground was gradually revealed, producing a kind of seeing and response that informs the choice and practice of contact and movement in ways that were more appropriate. This required an oscillation between proximity/distance, familiar/unfamiliar, acceptable/unacceptable, possible/impossible in the positions of self and of others. We were gradually moved towards knowing how to face and how to 'go forward' with each other. Various positions and actions became gradually aligned. Thus a calibration towards greater clarity, certainty and alignment was gradually achieved.

The points of learning from the analysis above within the domains of practice are captured in the following diagram:

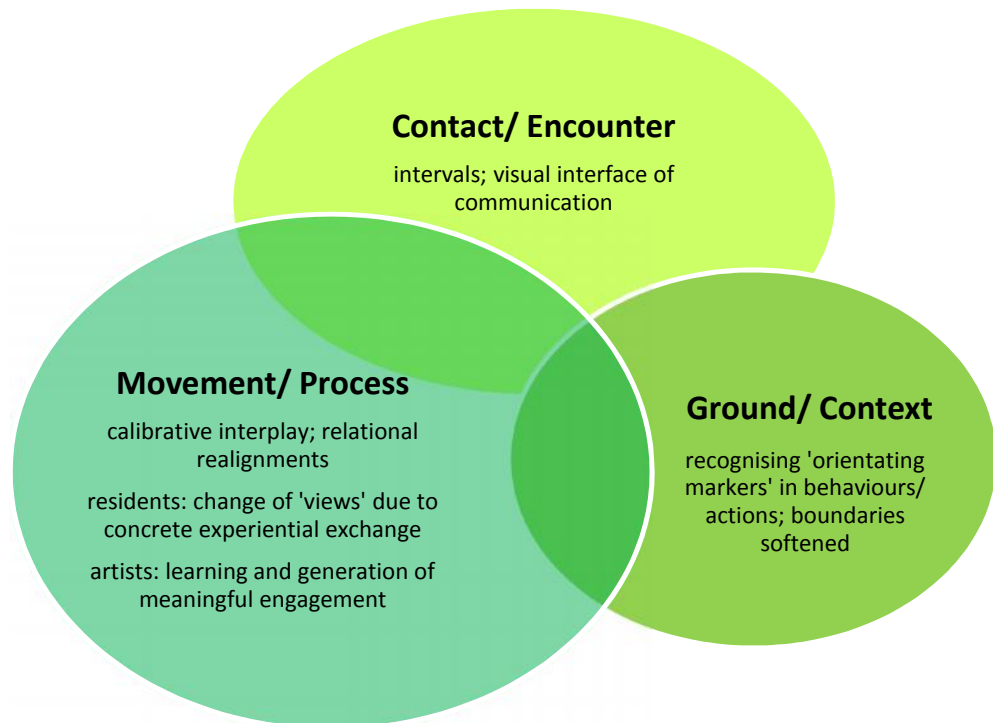


Figure 15: Emerging qualities of negotiation in Galway

4.2.12 The increased learning in the Galway project compared with NICA

While the Myanmar case study was an articulation and reflection of past work, the Galway case study was made at the start of my PhD research. Therefore while the research on Myanmar involved mainly analysis and revisioning, with Galway, I could begin to test some initial ideas about negotiation as the project and interactions unfolded. This resulted in a slightly different manner of presenting the case study, narrating it in a more continuous manner while showing the toggling of both action and reflection, i.e. the working of the active and receptive modes (Bortoft 1996).

From 'frictive moments' to 're-orientating views'

This has implications on the identification and treatment of the research material. Instead of looking for and at 'frictive moments' such as those identified in the Myanmar case study that then acted as re-orientation devices, in Galway, the relational-responsive activities with residents progressively and continuously opened up new 'views' (Shotter & Katz 1996), such as those opened up during the cooking sessions and conversations with the women. These

'views' were productive for calibrative interplay of reflexivity and engagement. It is as if we had gone for a walk and stumbled upon a view that gripped us. 'Views' are experiences in progress; they allow us to exercise active-receptivity in a much more spontaneous way than revisioning exercises catalysed by frictive moments. They also re-orientate us, redirecting our attention in different ways and to different things. 'Re-orientating views' supports calibrative interplay in more 'in-the-present' ways.

Calibrative interplay requires intervals and fluid interstices that facilitates oscillatory movements, so that reflexivity can continuously and seamlessly toggle with direct experiential engagement, between the active and the receptive modes. In Galway, the alternating phases of contact - between engagement and disengagement - created *intervals*, the distance which opened up interstitial spaces for mediating between reflexivity and direct experience.

From the experience of failure to accept new practice from our work in Myanmar (recounted in 4.1), in Galway we allowed a calibrative dynamic interplay to guide the interactive exchange between what is perceived as acceptable and unacceptable, taking care to observe the boundaries and taboos that existed between the Travellers and the dominant Irish society, for example, the strong values attached to travelling vis-a-vis settled ways of life, communication and sense of secrecy. The selection and presentation of the images and drawings mounted on the wall in the activity hall (which acted as a visual interface) was informed by the creation of a link between the familiar and the unfamiliar, the Travellers' established culture and variations of it from other cultures. The interface supported loop-backs and reiterations that facilitated internal conversations (Archer 2007) and conversations with others, and acted like sinews or threads between reflexivity and engagement.

At the start of my work in Myanmar, I still possessed the misguided thinking of the artist as neutral facilitator and service-provider. As the work progressed and tensions emerged, I began to appreciate the role of the artist as an active negotiator and not a neutral reactive facilitator. This made me more aware of the values and judgements that we consciously or unconsciously carry within us and that we project into our work with others. It also made it possible to see that as artist I am a 'co-negotiator' with the other 'participants' in the project and should also be open to being challenged and changed by the process. The process of negotiation-as-active-knowing needs to provide opportunity for all parties to become more

empowered, attuned, 'calibrated' and relationally responsive through the encounter and interactive exchange with others.

Figure 17 captures the increased points of learning discussed above.

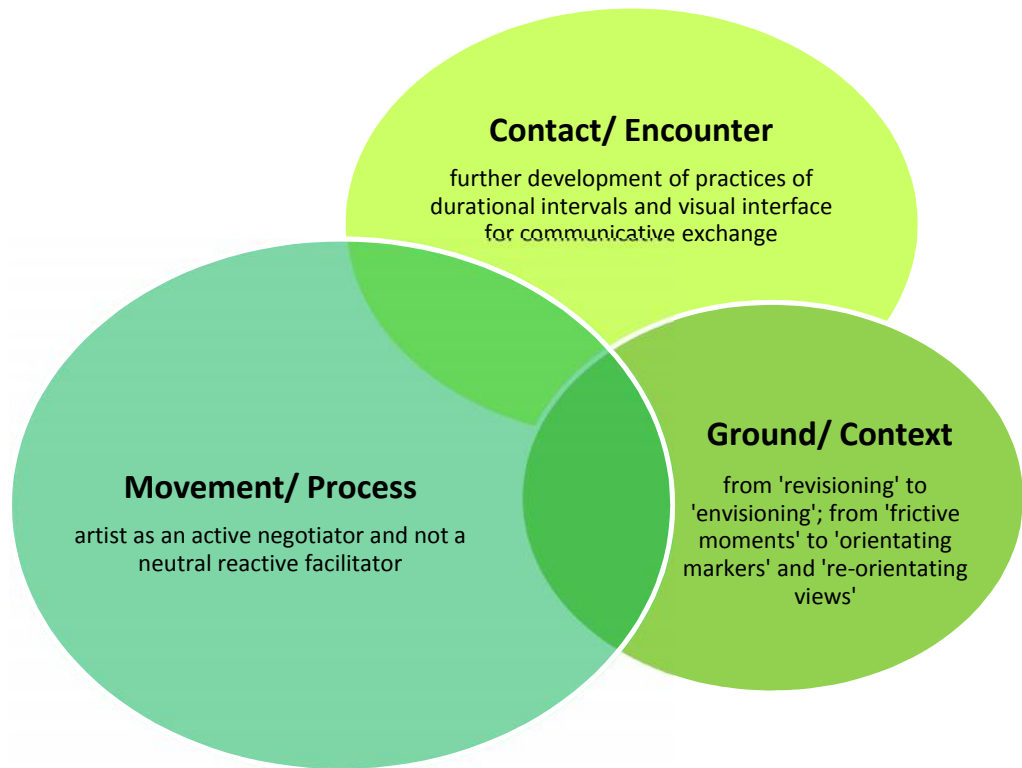


Figure 16: Increased learning for methodology of negotiation-as-active knowing in Galway from Myanmar

I move onto the third case study, which will further evidence increased learning building upon the above analysis.

4.3 The *Imagining Possibilities/Thinking Together* Project, Mongolia, June – July 2011

4.3.1 Factual details

Thinking Together took place in the summer of 2011 in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia during iFIMA's *Open Academy Ulaanbaatar* (OAU) Phase II (2011) and built upon an earlier project entitled *Imagining Possibilities* that took place in OAU Phase I (2008-09). I see the two projects as forming a continuum, and at times refer to the overall project as *Imagining Possibilities/Thinking Together*.

OAU was the result of a 2-year process of fact-finding, visitations, research residency, networking, relationship-building and discussions, principally between Ariunaa Tserenpil of Arts Council Mongolia, Jay Koh, myself, members of the Blue Sun artist group led by Dalkh Ochir, Davide Quartrio of Arthub Asia, the head and lecturers of the Fine Art Institute of Mongolia, and staff at the Prince Claus Fund of The Netherlands. In the first research trip in 2006, Koh, Quartrio and I gave a series of introductory talks and workshops, and actively visited and consulted with artist associations, heads of national art institutions like the National Art Gallery, the teachers and students of the Fine Art Institute, art galleries and artists' groups, amongst others. Blue Sun, the Fine Art Institute and Arts Council Mongolia identified the areas and subjects of interest, after which iFIMA and Arthub arranged the programme, including its facilitators, presenters and workshop leaders. (Concept for iFIMA's *Open Academy* and history of *Open Academy Ulaanbaatar* is given in Appendix II).

The participant pool for OAU in 2011 has enlarged since 2008/09. In 2008/09, the participants in the OAU sessions were mainly artists, writers, curators, cultural organisers, and students of the Fine Art Institute. In 2011, the members of Blue Sun, some young artists and curators, students who were still with or had graduated from FAI and Mongolian Culture University, were still involved in OAU. Newcomers included artists from the wider arts circles (outside of Blue Sun); the art director, manager and members of Design Park, an art and design complex; cultural management students from the Culture University; members of a women's artist group called Nomad Wave and some ex-art students who after graduation had left art practice and ventured into other professions. All the workshops of OAU 2011 took place in Xanadu Gallery, a contemporary art space in the heart of Ulaanbaatar city. (More information on OAU activities – events, lectures, presentations, workshops, work groups - is in Appendix III: CD Rom 1)

Core participants for Thinking Together

The core participants of Thinking Together have a history of relationships. Some were participants from the earlier Open Academy Ulaanbaatar sessions 2008/09 with some newcomers in 2011. The primary motivation for coming together was for a collaborative learning experience.

The participants were:

Enkhbold (a.k.a. Boldo), artist with Blue Sun, previously teacher at Fine Art Institute

Ganzug (a.k.a. Zugee), artist with Blue Sun

Dorjderem (a.k.a. Derme), artist with Blue Sun

Tsetsegbadam (a.k.a. Tseika), student of University of Culture, art researcher

Oyunbileg, researcher in Art and Psychology

Gandulam, Fine Art Institute graduate

Chinzorig, businessman and ex-art student

Munguntsetseg L., (a.k.a. Mungun) artist

Elbegzaya (a.k.a. Zaya), cultural management student from University of Culture

Oyunzaya (a.k.a. Oyu), student of English and photographer

Uldisaikhan (a.k.a. Uldii), director of Design Park

Tsolmon, manager of Design Park

Munkhtsetseg (a.k.a. Muji), artist, member of Nomad Wave

Enkhjargal (a.k.a. Eya), artist, member of Nomad Wave

Elbegzaya, artist, member of Nomad Wave

Dulguun, fashion designer, member of Nomad Wave

Dalkh Ochir (a.k.a. Dalkha), artist, leader of Blue Sun group

Batbileg artist, trained in East Germany

Batzorig (a.k.a. Bazo), artist, present head of Blue Sun

Enkh-Erdene, young artist, fresh graduate of Fine Art Institute

Shijirbaatar, young artist, fresh graduate of Fine Art Institute

Amartuvshin (a.k.a. Amaraa), activist

Chu Chu Yuan, artist, researcher, PhD student with RGU, Aberdeen

Jay Koh, artist, researcher, doctoral student with KUVA, Helsinki

4.3.2 Articulation and presentation of research material in this case study

The work in Mongolia that is covered under this case study unfolded over a period of four years - from before I undertook the PhD research to after. Since Thinking Together took place

midway during my PhD, it provided an opportunity for me to test some of the insights that were emerging from the PhD research process. The documentation was also more attentive towards capturing learning points as 'orientating' and 're-orientating views' in the conversational exchange, interactions and activities that took place.

4.3.3. Imagining Possibilities

Imagining Possibilities, the precursor of *Thinking Together*, took place in *Let's Talk*, a public interactive event at the end of OAU Phase One in 2009. My collaborators and I set up a table with tea and coffee in a rather busy public walkway in Ulaanbaatar, and we invited pedestrians to do the following:

Imagine, then draw or write:

1 most beautiful Mongolian word

Where you would be in **10** years' time

What **100** Mongolians are thinking of at the same time

What **1,000** Mongolians can do to make a difference

What people in the world will remember about Mongolia in **10,000** years



Figure 17: Interactions during Imagining Possibilities

Reflecting on and clarifying the responses with others

As *Imagining Possibilities* took place in the last days of my presence in Mongolia for OAU 2009, there was not enough time to properly study or analyse the responses. It was in the June 2011 trip, for OAU Phase 2 that I was able to engage a translator to comb through the responses with me. The responses from *Imagining Possibilities* provided the initial orientation of ground for the Thinking Together project that ensued.

I invited interested participants from OAU 2011 to reflect on and clarify the meaning of the responses gathered from *Imagining Possibilities* with me. Beginning from 13th June 2011, for over 3 weeks, I met with groups of young artists and cultural enthusiasts (full list of participants was given in 4.3.1) to go through stages of discussions about the responses, with the aims of clarifying and drawing out certain orientations and alignments that would

support the *envisioning of ground*,⁵³ and generate further responses. These group discussions and interactions over a period of four weeks gradually built up - through durational involvement, relational responsiveness and calibrative interplay - material, ideas and collaborations which led to the visualisation and creation of the *Thinking Together* sculpture-installation and actions in public spaces in Ulaanbaatar in early July.

The emerging ground of Mongolian contemporary life: through contact, and immersive involvement

In iFIMA's work in Mongolia, the envisioning of ground was achieved through several layered, complementary relational responsive activities and processes over a period of time, which gets constantly adjusted and shifted with progressive interactions and contact. These began with our contact and relationships in 2006, which led to the OAU activities in 2008, 2009 and 2011, and our immersive involvement in the daily life of Ulaanbaatar during those periods. The posing of questions that triggers the imagination in *Imagining Possibilities* represented a concerted effort conceptualised as a distinct art process to capture the finer points of envisioning of ground through specific recorded responses given by people met during the public actions. *Thinking Together* continued the process by subjecting the responses through rounds of conversations, discussions and clarifications to take the process further.

Koh and I made repeated visits to Mongolia for durations ranging from 2 weeks to 2 months beginning from 2006. In 2008, for a period of one year, we rented an apartment in Ulaanbaatar where visiting artists could stay and which Blue Sun could use as their office space, where we also stayed for a period of 2 months each in 2008 and 2009. We worked closely with the Blue Sun artists on issues that cropped up during the year. In 2011, we rented another apartment for four months, where we stayed during OAU 2011. Staying in the apartments gave us an experience of residential life in Ulaanbaatar, the capital city, where thousands of Mongolians arrive at from the countryside each year (due to perishing of herds, extreme weather conditions and hardship). This enabled us to experience the problems of alarming pollution; poor infrastructure and public transport; crowding and congestion; bad plumbing, poor heating and poor quality of housing (cracks in our walls and floors and sightings of collapsed buildings in the city); nightmare drivers and traffic; huge income gaps; and homelessness; most of which were highlighted and resonated by the responses and conversations with the OAU participants.

⁵³ Please see analysis in section 4.3.10 for a discussion of the shift from Shotter & Katz's (1996) 'revisoning' to an 'envisioning' of ground in my method.

From conversations and immersive involvement, we learnt that Mongolia today is faced with unprecedented development, especially brought about by mining activities, which have been partly blamed for reduced and degenerating quality of grazing land for the traditional nomadic activities of herding. As mining creates a visible 'opening up' of the earth, concern for its implications on Mongolians' nomadic culture and nomadic knowledge was expressed by the artists and young people participating in OAU. For example:

"Mongolians believe that we are born with a connection to the sky and the earth. When I was a child, I made drawings on the ground. My mother scolded me and told me that it's the same as hurting our Mother's body. Nowadays, mining, construction and other activities are increasing in Mongolia. We are hurting our Mother Nature."

Ganzug, artist

"Today in Mongolia, we are studying the ways of our ancestors from 10,000 years ago. There are a lot of discussions about this in our society. Are we better off with sticking to traditional practices? Some say in the Mongolia of the future, there will be no more cities, but a return to nomadic lifestyles."

Dalkh Ochir, artist

Other than mining, the stress of modernisation can be seen in the grave pollution in the city and the aggressive driving manners of Mongolians, making accidents a common daily sight in Ulaanbaatar. The poor water, electricity and sewage systems, as well as poor quality construction of buildings, the invasion of property construction activities by Chinese and other foreign firms causing a stark increase in property prices in Mongolia, all show a lack of proper regulation and planning by the authorities.

Ger districts

With difficulties of life in countryside, many people have chosen to come to the city. While not being able to afford to live in apartments, they have set up their gers in districts all around the outskirts of Ulaanbaatar, creating what is now called 'ger districts'. OAU participants told me that there has been huge debate on the existence and problems posed by the ger districts to the city planning of Ulaanbaatar, as well as health, sanitation and pollution faced by the ger district dwellers due to improper facilities and poor construction, as well as the practice of the ger dwellers of burning coal, wood, rubbish and industrial waste like tyres (when they cannot afford to buy coal or wood) to keep warm.

My own research supported these claims. An article in The Guardian in 2010 states that whilst Mongolia is six times the size of the UK, it has 2.75 million inhabitants, and almost 40% of them live in Ulaanbaatar.⁵⁴ Of this figure, around 60% of urban families live in *ger* areas or ger districts. Harsh winters, diminished livestock or lack of work drive herders from the countryside to the capital. On arrival, most of them have no choice but to set up their ger in the city as they cannot afford to live in the apartments which are the main form of dwelling in the city. As they settle in, most would also construct an adjacent informal house that is generally built with minimal levels of insulation and high levels of ventilation heat loss, as there is a general lack of formal construction worker training and technical knowledge.⁵⁵ Due to poor planning, the haphazard nature of construction, plus a lack of regulations and services such water, electricity and sanitation, living conditions are very poor, as are safety and health. In addition to contributing to the problem of air pollution in the city, these districts are generally considered an eyesore in terms of the city's appearance and a source of crime.

The problem is further exacerbated by the fact that most ger dwellers hope to be able to leave the ger area and move into apartments in the nearest possible future, and therefore their motivation for creating a good environment for themselves in the ger areas is limited. One response in *Imagining Possibilities* hoped that “the government will build 1000 new apartments next year and my family can move into one of them.” Unfortunately, new apartments are being built by private construction companies, mostly foreign, and prices are generally beyond the reach of the average Mongolian.

4.3.4. The conversations: calibrative loops of communication and relational responsive exchange

The sequence of conversation below (reconstructed from notes) capture specific moments and points of exchange within a series of meetings and interactions over a duration of three weeks. What is presented here is a selection of the conversations; fuller notes of the various sessions are given in Appendix IV (CD Rom 1).

⁵⁴ Branigan, T. (20 July 2010) Mongolia: How the Winter of ‘White Death’ Devastated Nomads’ Way of Life <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2010/jul/20/mongolia-nomads-livestock-winter-poverty>. Accessed 20 Sept 2012

⁵⁵ Munkhbayar, B. (2007) Present Situation of Air Pollution in Ger Area, Mongolia in *The Current Situation of Ger Area in Ulaanbaatar City*. Ulaanbaatar: Building Energy Efficiency Centre.

1st meeting 18 June 2011

Chu: I have been studying the answers to Imagining Possibilities and I wonder why is it that most of the answers to the question "What can 10,000 Mongolians do to make a difference" are very broad and general, for e.g. "anything", "everything".

Uldii: Mongolians don't say things directly. We have to think deeply what it means. There are 3 main kinds of traditions of thought in Asia. One like the Chinese philosophy is based on method, it is pragmatic. Tibetan thought is closer to magic or mysticism, and Mongolian thinking is very broad, not specific. For example, we begin with the year then progress on to say the month and date, from big to small. Western way is from small to big.

If you want to get some specific ideas from Imagining Possibilities, then you have to rephrase the questions, go from big to small. It is a big problem for Mongolians to think small or concrete. The way your questions are phrased also leave a lot of room for interpretation.

Chu: The questions were kept broad so that they are not overly direct or intrusive and leave room for the imagination. How will you rephrase the questions? Perhaps we could try answering the questions now and see how we would rework them.



Figure 18: Interactions during first meeting of Thinking Together collaborators

We set to work on the questions.

Question one: "Imagine 1 most beautiful Mongolian word"

Answers given: Sex, fresh, love, universe, matter, echo, feelings

Question two: "Imagine where you will be in 10 years"

Answers: Everywhere, like the air. Married to a rich herder's wife. Home.

Uldii interrupted the activity: There's no need to say 'imagine', we have to imagine it anyway...

Question three: "Imagine what 100 Mongolians are thinking about right at this moment"

Derme: 100 is too small

Uldii: 100 is not small, if you think that our total population is less than 3 million. For me, I would instead ask 'What kind of Mongolian?'

Perhaps we can change the question to 'What is 100 persons like you thinking about right now?'

Derme: If there are 100 Mongolians like me, the world will come to an end.

Dalkha: We can't even know ourselves, how can we know others?

Chu: Anyway let's try to answer

Oyulbileg: Cooking... now it is 6 pm.

Silence

Chu: Okay, let's try question four, imagine what 1000 Mongolians can do to make a difference.

No answers.

Someone: Have to change the question. Is it a specific goal? In which area? The question is not clear enough.

Uldii: Organising some activity like teaching skills about how to decrease air pollution. Nomadic lifestyle is cause of air pollution. Ger wall is thin so its cold inside. To stay warm, people burn charcoal. Government is always focusing on issue of charcoal, but need to teach how to stay warm.

Derme: 1000 Mongolians can develop other urban centres or cities together, not only focus on Ulaanbaatar, so then it will be less congested. We need to open up alternative centres. There can be independent economies. Other answers: Build a building together. Plant trees or vegetables together. Clean something together. Run 1 km together.

Question six: Imagine what the world will remember about Mongolia in 10000 years.

Answers: Chinggis Khan. Ecological heritage. Nomadic lifestyle. Last nomadic nation before absorbed by the Chinese.⁵⁶ Traditional Mongolian custom and culture. Trying to revive old Mongolian culture of 10,000 years ago. Only Mongolian men are left in Mongolia, the women are all gone. Mongolia will be rich.

Derme: In future, there will be no boundaries between countries. In Mongolia, cities will be destroyed, we will have only nomadic lifestyle.

Uldii: In nomadic life, we do not have hospital, prison, school, but we are very happy. Schools made people more professional and technical, but we lost the general life.

Dalkha: I find this last question very interesting. I can go on thinking about this for days.

Chu: How can we connect nomadic thinking and practice with other practices in the world?

Uldii: Western development is too much, will come to point of destruction, so the point is to find balance.

Chu: Can we and how can we make nomadic culture and knowledge work within modern structures and systems?

Uldii: Nomadic culture is very flexible. We just need to know the weather by seeing the sky and honour iconic things and the household.

Koh: For example, if 1000 people want to practice living a nomadic lifestyle, but the mining companies now control the land. How will it work?

Analysis: emerging insights on ground, movements

i. *Ground: orientating towards the Mongolian way of thinking*

⁵⁶ Koh and I are both ethnic Chinese (Han). I am Malaysian in nationality and Koh is German. I have not perceived any resentment or tension towards us in relation to our ethnicity against the background of a perceived threat of Chinese imperialism in Mongolia. Perhaps this is because of a differentiation between Chinese nationality and ethnicity. Perhaps it is also because of the fact that Koh and my practised ways of life, values and behaviours can be described as 'multi-ethnic' as well as nomadic in many aspects. *Open Academy Ulaanbaatar* is also a programme and process initiated on the Mongolian collaborators' request, and according to their defined areas of interests and needs.

At the start of the conversation, I had asked why the participants' answers to the Imagining Possibilities questions tended to be very broad and unspecific, for example "anything", "everything". In clarifying why that is so, Uldii (director of Design Park) said that Mongolians prefer not to say things directly and need to think deeply what things mean. The Mongolian way of thinking begins by locating a thing in its broadest sense, before moving in to examining smaller details. He quotes as an example the fact that they write dates by first stating the year, then the month and then the day, from big to small.

ii. *Exploring Movement: from small to big; big to small; narrow to broad, broad to narrow*

The Imagining Possibilities questions were phrased and presented in a way that the numbers in each question progressed from small to big, in the hope of triggering a similar growth in the space of the imagination. For example, imagine 'one most beautiful word', was specific and yet broad. All the questions were broad in nature because of the possibilities the invitation to imagine can conjure up; I had conceived that the answers would act as orientation markers of the larger ground of what Mongolians were thinking and feeling at that time. I also intended the scalability of the numbers to encourage a sense of movement on that ground. The questions had begun with 'imagine 1' and ended with 'imagine 10,000'. Uldii suggested that since Mongolian thinking is very broad and general, we should reverse the sequence, so that the numbers proceed from big to small, if our intention is to find out something specific and concrete in the end.

If Mongolian thinking is abstract like Uldii said, the response 'we can do everything' makes sense. The others seemed to agree with Uldii, and expressed that this way of thinking creates difficulty for them to move forward, to make specific decisive plans and carry out concrete actions.

I suggested that the challenge would then be for us to think how we could move or translate these abstract comments into an 'actionable thought', and into concrete 'actionable' work or action? *Moving the responses from orientational thoughts towards actionable thoughts towards realising the actions or work itself* - this seemed to me to be direction we could pursue for public participative engagement to play a role in increasing people's sense of agency or negotiation of a particular situation.

The one question that got everyone excited was the last question, “what will people remember of Mongolia in 10,000 years?” Dalkha said it was a very interesting question and he’ll be thinking about it for days. Derme said in 10000 years there’ll be no borders, so they’ll be no Mongolia. I asked “Then who will be in control? There would still be forms of control.”

This buzz of excitement became a turning point for the discussion to shift to what they evaluate as the highlight or achievement of Mongolian culture, which many of them identify as nomadic life style and knowledge. However, the remarks were largely claims without detail on how it will work. Many claimed that nomadic culture and knowledge is the answer to today’s urban and global problems. Uldii said “During nomad times, we didn’t have hospital or schools but we were very happy”, without acknowledging that the issue of health care, sanitation and hygiene is the most urgent topic debated today in the *ger districts* of Ulaanbaatar (with higher population and denser habitation and other environmental factors like pollution and sanitation).

I then asked how does this knowledge work in interaction with the outside non-nomadic world and how does this work within city structures and systems? For example can we release control of a job, to have it floating and rotating in use and being taken up by different persons? Nature may have its way of balancing itself but cars and machines cannot, they need to be strictly controlled.

Koh asked how will it work out if Mongolia goes back to nomadic ways but doesn’t establish laws to prevent some outsiders from exploiting the nomadic thinking for their own profit? For example, foreigners come to Mongolia to live the romantic nomadic lifestyle, they buy a horse and go to the countryside, but they cause much destruction because they don’t understand or fully practice the whole Mongolian philosophy of nomadic life, they only practice what they like. Another example is that many Chinese companies are building new apartment and business blocks in city. This creates additional burdens on piping and the sewage system, which they do not address or try to solve. In nomadic thinking whose responsibility is this?

The discussion moved onto the idea of forming a learning and discussion club, like an informal academy of nomadic knowledge. I said we can start by asking the question: how does nomadic knowledge contribute to and work with modernisation? The group were supportive of this idea. This would be an ‘actionable idea’.

Ground, contact and movement: orientating and clarifying

What has been taking place, above, is that we were engaged in acts of orientating ourselves around the questions and clarifying our views and thoughts towards them. Interestingly, as the discussion progressed, the participants began to argue about what the questions were trying to find out *exactly*. This could be an effect from our concentrated collective effort of orientating and directing our thoughts, bringing about calibrations and re-alignments.

There was a myriad of responses that expressed attachments to and concern for the corrosion of Mongolian values. There was a need to create certain points of orientation and make sense of how we could move forward in order to address these concerns, and a need to find/establish *interconnections* between the contemporary challenges and solutions from within the Mongolian traditional practices and nomadic knowledge. A lot of problems of present day Mongolia were raised and there was a felt need to find connections or bridges towards how (and if) Mongolian traditional practices and nomadic knowledge could enlighten movement and the way ahead.

After a long elaboration on the inexactness of Mongolian thinking, the Mongolian participants began to find the questions themselves inexact. However, this may have been a correct approach; by being broad the questions generated a series of 'orientating views' of the ground, and invoked the participants' minds and imagination to orientate and find alignments in relation to their social and cultural issues and in relation to their fellow Mongolians. The layered progression (with the numbers as ordering device) in the questions was important, as by answering them progressively, people got warmed up by the earlier questions and became very focused when they came to the last question. The relational-responsive activity within the conversations involved multi-directional and multi-focal movement (roaming, broadening or zooming out, picking up certain points of focus, narrowing/ zooming in, assessing, make connections between the various elements) which worked to re-orientate, re-focus, clarify and fine tune *both* the questions and the answers. In responding to each question and each other, each participant was in the *active receptive* mode, which involved attentive listening, reading, and evaluating (e.g. weighing, scanning, sizing, comparing), orientating and drawing out alignments, as we agreed and disagreed with each other. Values and thoughts of others form the ground to manoeuvre a sense of possible alignments and orientations. This behaviour for me involves a roaming attentiveness, a mode of perception that Kester calls at once 'anticipatory and open', as well as 'intensely focused and attuned' (Kester, 2011: 152). These cognitive calibrations will continue to take place through the next rounds of conversation and interactive co-presence and exchange, and will

fine-tune the participants' sense of the problems, their sense of judgement in relation to the ground (e.g. when Derme said 100 is too small, and Uldii disagreed), and of possible actions to be taken and ways to move forward.

Moving forward

I suggested to the group to begin thinking about what questions we can pose to others about nomadic lifestyle/ knowledge in response to modern issues? In order to facilitate 'actionable ideas' I suggested that the questions should be specific and targeted at specific areas. They could narrow in on topics like the change in people's diet, housing and income or broaden out to issues about governance, management, structures and arrangements of modern life. I then planned to organise another discussion on how nomadic life can work with modernisation. I also began to think of developing a visualisation interface that could complement the negotiation of ground and movement.

2nd meeting 21 June 2011



Figure 19: Second round of conversations for Thinking Together

Chu: After the group discussion last Saturday, the topic that really interests me is 'how can nomadic knowledge work with modernisation? Can we suggest or develop some models for this? Perhaps we could create a project around this, where each artist or participant who is interested to connect with nomadic knowledge can make something and I have conversations with each person.

Ganzug: There is an Academy of Nomadic Life, we have to collaborate with them.

Uldii: There are contradictions between nomadic life and city development. If people are moving from the country to the city as they wish, and stay anywhere, just set up yard and fence, this will be difficult for city management. The city architectural committee organised a forum discussing about creating a separate area for the gers, and don't provide electricity or water to these areas, only hospital and emergency services.

Ganzug: But in nomad life, we don't have fence, blocks, walls. These are the reason why our thinking has become blocked. We have to collaborate more openly in Mongolian cultural life. The first step is to destroy those walls that are controlling our mind.

Uldii: An example is in Dahan City, where the residents of one area have destroyed their walls and share the whole area. The families combine together to make playground. The starting point of nomadic thinking is that we can share.



Figure 20: (From left to right) Gandulam, Mungun, Oyulbileg, Uldii in conversation

Koh: Imagination and knowledge need to work together. Thinking together will increase both our imagination and understanding.

Chu: Let's plan a public event for next week. Where should we do this? In ger district or apartment area? We could try to frame some questions and explore these questions from big to small scales, and from small to big, and from abstract to specific perspectives and from specific to abstract. We must always not assume that we know the answer, no matter what the question or how simple we think it is, we should always ask people the question.

Mungen: How about we don't chose to locate the event in any specific place but make it mobile?

Chu: We need to think about how to attract people to interact with us, how they can input their thoughts and ideas. I have made a work before in Poland where we make a mobile installation that function like a roundtable.

Ganzug: The problems reside in the ger districts, and they are related to both city and nomad life. People are thinking about problems alone inside their home. Where there is a problem, it is there that we have to go to meet the people.

Chu: We can do the action in a few places. We can move from ger to apartment areas. We need to think about how to show the connection between people? For example, Nomad Wave use connected sleeves to visualise that connection in their performances.

Oyulbileg: We can ask people to tell us about their dreams. I can make paper origami with them as we are talking. We can fold paper birds together and I could give it to them with a wish that their dream will come true.

Chinzorig: It will be a challenge to work in both the ger and apartment areas, because the people living in the ger district people hate the people living in the apartments and the people in apartments hate the people from ger district. It would be hard to get them to talk to each other.

4.3.5 Further envisioning of ground, refining contact and movement

In this round of conversations, tensions between ger and apartment dwellers were raised and discussed, capturing and re-orientating our thoughts around this tension. The group began to feel more comfortable discussing ideas together and moving forward towards ideas of collaborating on a joint activity together. The conversation continued to furnish the envisioning of ground with new, emerging and, at times, re-orientating and refining views. The interactions and sense of exploration of possibilities and movement in Mongolia are thus far the freest I have experienced compared with those in Myanmar and Galway.

4.3.6 Developing the Thinking Together sculpture-installation, working on thoughts from previous discussions

After the first two rounds of conversations, I began working on developing a visual component to the activities. I hoped for it to add to the conversations, in clarifying and carrying the ideas further. I thought of an idea of a spatial installation (later named as the Thinking Together sculpture-installation) that incorporates a ground for orientation, negotiation, and movement and that could respond to and incorporate what the participants have expressed as the 'Mongolian way of thinking'. It was also a way to reflect back to the participants what they have expressed, so that it could stimulate confirmations and/or disagreements, thus calibrating and fine tuning ideas further.

The participants have said that the Mongolian way of thinking is broad and deep. A space that reflects this breadth and depth could form a 'field-ground' that allows for the exploration and envisioning of different possibilities of movement. The 'depth' of the Mongolian way of thinking, as I understand it from the participants, is not the 'depth' as one would understand it from a western perspective, of investigating something very thoroughly, going deep critically. This depth is more like a depth into the past, an eternal quality. Uldii said that there are 3 main philosophical traditions in Asia, one is the philosophy of the method, which is pragmatic as practised for example by the Chinese; the second is based on myth and magic; the 3rd is more spiritually orientated, like the Mongolian way, which is, thinking in very broad and deep terms. This is reflected in Mongolians' deep connection with and veneration for nature's life force and providence. This is perhaps the reason why Mongolians feel very grounded, connected and secure in their lives. For example when they set out on a journey, they cannot discuss or plan the journey, or even turn back if one forgot something, as it is

considered bad luck, as if one does not trust one's connection with Nature and life force, therefore the journey would not be successful. We encountered a practical reminder of this issue in our later collective action (see 4.3.9 below).

In our discussion, the participants have said that this groundedness could also be the reason why they are not good with thinking of specifics, with thinking of planning (or is it even not 'correct' to plan?). Responding to this, I thought how I could work with people to 'orientate them' towards what I have termed 'actionable thought' – which I now need to modify to 'create a sense of movement' towards such. I thought that nomadic culture and knowledge is a very deep well, a rich resource, but unless we could tap into it, draw water from it to address the problems of city living and systems that Mongolia is facing today, it is not 'giving'. (Incidentally, during one of the workshop exercises, Chinzorig said Mongolia is like stone, it needs to become like sand, or like water, able to give and support life.)

Working with this input of broad and deep, I began to think how to develop a 3-dimensional ground. It should be shaped like a T, or like an inverted ger. The entire space would be charged with lines for locating a particular thought or idea, and to enable the exploration of the movements of that particular thought or idea by sliding it inwards towards something more narrow, or more specific, and from deep to shallow.

The horizontal axis would work as going outwards towards the holistic, and going into the centre as the specific. The vertical axis would work as going downwards to be more reflective, and going upwards to be more actionable.

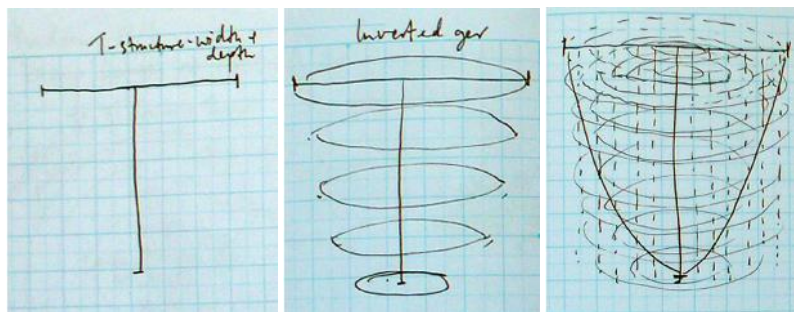


Figure 21: Sketches for developing the idea of the ground-space

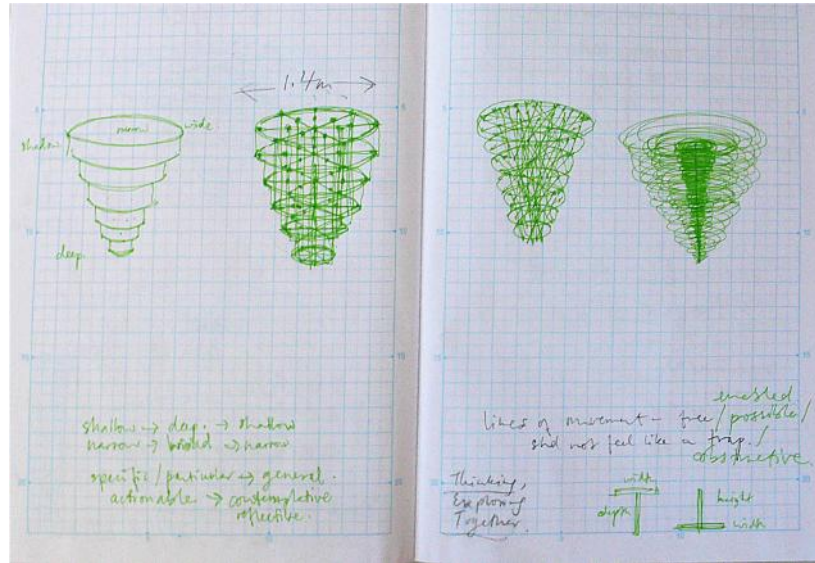


Figure 22: Sketches on the possible forms of the ground-space sculpture-installation

The installation carves out a field where ideas and thoughts are visible and located. Different persons then negotiate with this field and also with each other's ideas and thoughts. The different axes are each given a value, for example, the broad to narrow axis could mean from un-actionable to actionable? Or does it mean more spiritual to less? This 'evaluation' which involves judgement, is *not neutral*, not value-free. This judgement need to be made visible as being influenced by variety of factors – for example, our worldviews, orientations, emotions, and values. After this evaluation, each person is asked to relocate these ideas based on how they evaluate them.

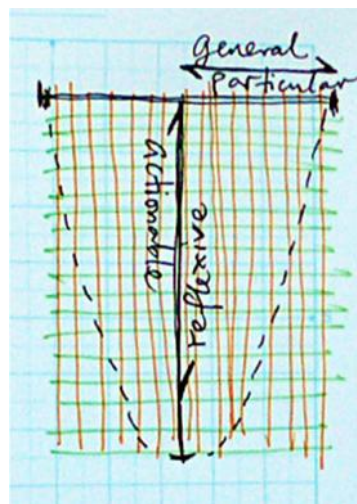


Figure 23: Preliminary idea for the values attached to the axis of the *Thinking Together* sculpture-installation

4.3.7 Third round of conversations

23 June meeting 2011, OAU apartment

Present: Ganzug, Oyunzaya, Tseika, Jay Koh, Chu Yuan

I began by showing those present some initial sketches that I have made for the Thinking Together sculpture-installation.

Ganzug: I like your sculpture very much. I think it reflects nomadic thinking, start from broad, then consider and put all the details in place.

Chu: The question I wish to explore is whether we can draw from nomadic knowledge to work together with or help us to manage the modernisation process.

Ganzug: If we are thinking of solving problems, we are going towards the modernist way. What we need to do is we have to create another city or field of life or habitat that is based on nomadic principles. A few families combine to live together, cooperate and then move away. We cannot have fixed structures. The 'city' needs to be always changing and moving.



Figure 24: Ganzug and Koh in third round of conversations for *Thinking Together*

Koh: So who will organise the throwing of the rubbish after the people have moved away?

Ganzug: In nomadic life, we don't have the kinds of disposable rubbish that comes with modernisation. Everyone has a cup, and everywhere we go, we bring that cup. All these modern things (points to his own hand phone) are destroying our life.

Oyunzaya: We have to teach the younger generation about nomadic way. Young people like myself. If I have to live in the countryside, I won't be able to survive or live there.

Ganzug: If you think you can't live there, then you should go away. In the modernised world, there are more powerful destructive things like winds, storms, earthquakes.

Oyunzaya: But it has always been that the earth is managing us. Human beings cannot manage the earth even though we think we are. We have to try to teach our children from young, from kindergarten level, to try to change them from young.

Koh: You can try to bring back some basic simple nomadic practices, for example, of everyone bringing a cup with them everywhere. This will reduce the amount of rubbish. Can also try to limit the amount of cars going into the city daily.

Chu: Ganzug, what you are saying is that we have to destroy and build anew, is there no other way to incorporate nomadic ways with modernisation? Does it mean we have to isolate Mongolia from the rest of the world, from globalisation?

Ganzug: Yes. The big danger is that Mongolian people destroy our own traditional culture. Every culture should be developing in their own way.

Chu: Is it possible to think of one model or system without having to think how it is also contextualised by and have to interact with the bigger systems and structures?

Koh: For example, capitalism uses human rights to enter and exploit other countries, under the pretext of freedom of movement, but human rights also ensure people's rights to protect ourselves.

Ganzug: I think you should ask people **how do you connect with the heavens or sky, and how do you reach to the ground or earth?** You will find that even though the city folks have been living in the city, but their thinking is still nomadic. That's why there are many contradictions in our practices.

Chu: What would be the aim of asking these questions? To get people to connect back to their nomadic thinking or mind?

Ganzug: **Their answers would show where their connection or orientation is.** Even if they are living in the city, where is their orientation? If you ask them these questions, they will think "this foreigner is asking very deep questions from me". The people know the answers, always thinking about it.

Chu: Is it better for foreigners to ask these questions to Mongolians or for fellow Mongolians to ask them?

Ganzug: It will be different. **Every Mongolian carry his/her own heaven over his/her head;** if living badly, heaven will be focusing on him/her. If doing bad, heaven will (exclude you, kick you out?).

Chu: Is this the same as what we call conscience?

Ganzug: **Every human's heaven is related with the order of the ancestors, history and all thinking ways. There is a deep connection between things.** Especially in nomadic training, the teaching begins when in mother's stomach. After born, we learn in home, in daily life and learning our connection with nature.

Chu: if a foreigner and a Mongolian ask you the same question, who will you answer in way that is more true?

Ganzug: Mongolian

Chu: Then it is better that Mongolians ask the question in our public actions.

*Ganzug: We can ask together. Actually Mongolian people, especially **the nomadic people, don't need to answer. We keep our secrets inside. It is very different to connect with nomadic people, we need to use 'big thinking'**. But now it is changing. We've been influenced by Buddhism, monasteries were built by Manchurians, and we had Russian Red Revolution. There is only one city – Karakorum – that's built by nomadic way, now it is destroyed. Now we are influenced by the world, we build big cities.*

Reflections on third round of conversations

This is one of the most significant conversations throughout the duration of the project, for what it sheds on the topics of (1) knowledge; and (2) negotiation.

(1) On knowledge and knowing: From what Ganzug says, it is not important for nomads to know (or say?) something precisely, that one can only connect to them through 'big thinking'. I think this means a sense of interconnection. I wonder what kinds of knowledge (or information) is deemed to be important for informing how one should act and in what ways and how does a nomad child learn them? Do they create and differentiate between categories and states of things, like western knowledge?

Within my own tradition, i.e. the Chinese tradition, the attainment of knowledge is for two purposes: one is a practical functional knowledge that increases one's *zhishi*; the other is for enhancement of virtues and builds wisdom and intelligence, one's *zhihui*. *Zhihui* connects with character, sustaining and informing our dispositions, behaviour and actions. This roughly corresponds to Aristotle's concepts of *phronesis* and *techne* (Aristotle 1999). Moral or virtuous knowledge is learnt through the exemplary behaviour of elders and teachers and codes of behaviour and conduct. It is attained through a disciplined and attentive pursuit of knowledge. The Mongolian way of thinking as expressed by Ganzug, particularly in the examples highlighted in bold in the conversation above, reflects a deep philosophy of life informing behaviour and conduct, and this seems to me to be a kind of virtuous knowledge,

akin to *phronesis*. A further analysis of the kinds of knowledge discussed here is conducted in chapter 5.3.3.

(2) On negotiation: Ganzug lived as a nomad up until his late teens when he came to Ulaanbaatar to study graphic design. He has been in Ulaanbaatar for more than 10 years, yet feels that his deepest connections are to nomadic culture. Oyunzaya grew up in the city. She is bright, speaks English and often attends arts and cultural activities organised by local and foreign NGOs in Ulaanbaatar. She is an avid photographer, likes to create images depicting liberated womanhood, and has been commissioned to produce a series of such photographs for a woman's magazine.

When Oyu said she would not be able to live in the countryside, Ganzug responded 'then you should go away'. Ganzug and Oyu are different in terms of age and background, one grew up nomadic and the other in city. Ganzug says there is a great need to relearn and re-embrace nomadic culture and practices and Oyu also acknowledges this, but says that this education needs to begin early, otherwise it is hard to convince a youth like herself as she would feel completely out of place in the countryside. Ganzug's response to Oyu's dilemma seemed somewhat dismissive and to indicate a wish to not engage with her.

Ava Abramowitz (2005) expresses that one of the prerequisites of negotiation is that "*You have to have something in common to negotiate*". She writes: "Usually that something is a scarce item – an item that one party has that the other party wants. Without that scarcity there would be no *incentive* to deal. Indeed the more scarce the item, the more the other needs that item, the greater the power and leverage its possessor will have in the negotiation" (2005: 91-92). This rationale is based on the older established buyer-seller *interest* model. There is another model to consider, based less on rational thinking, which is the two-religions model proposed by Avruch (2006)⁵⁷, where the difference stems from values, ideology, identity or positions. In Avruch's model, the child from the intercultural marriage represents a shared legacy for a future generation, which is the one thing that binds them in a negotiation.

In this situation there is no perceived need or crisis that prompts them to negotiate with each other. Both feel that there are many options and choices where each can be; what each can do;

⁵⁷ The two religions model questions how to solve the conflict posed by different religions of the parents on the choice of religion for their child. Avruch proposes this as an increasingly relevant model for today's conflicts, when he wrote about the need for a new heuristic for expanding the canon of negotiation theory and literature (Avruch 2006).

how each wants to lead his/her own life. It would seem impossible to force two persons with no interest in engaging with each other to negotiate, and I wonder if there is anything that the negotiation-as-active-knowing exercises could do to encourage engagement, and what would be the ethics of attempting this. Can negotiation-as-active-knowing become a way of finding or building common ground? There is another way to approach commonality which is Fromm's sense of *relatedness* that I discussed in the Myanmar case study. In that sense, the process needs to establish a sense of relatedness in order for engagement to take place.

Here, I am not trying to justify or explain away Ganzug's seemingly hostile action by positioning him and Oyu as cultural 'others'. However, the layers of complexity underlying any action caution one, as outsider, against making an immediate judgement without a relational expressive understanding of the ground. For example, although the participants in *Thinking Together* have all enthused about nomadic culture and nomadic life, in Mongolia, there is a conflicting discourse in and around the modernised 'cultivated' ways of city life and city folks, versus the backward and uncouth ways of country nomads.⁵⁸ Can Ganzug's dismissive action be seen as a kind of violence along gender lines? To what extent was Ganzug performing to or expressing his reactions against the city/country narrative?

This clarifies to me that negotiation-as-active-knowing is not primarily aimed at solving a problem, and cannot provide a rationale for binding participants to the need to negotiate. The process of negotiation-as-active-knowing acknowledges that one's values and beliefs greatly inform and instruct one's behaviour, making a person walk away from or not wish to engage others and otherness when that person doesn't feel a sense of relatedness to them. The process, however, seeks to engender a sense of relatedness or relevance, and of interconnections between persons from different orientations and backgrounds, so that they would know how to 'go on' (Shotter 2005) with the other and otherness.

Another realisation for the process of negotiation-as-active-knowing is that the process needs to create repeated new interactive and performative experiences that could connect back or converse with one's entrenched values and the knowledge that sustains one's dispositions. Ganzug and Oyu have very different backgrounds which have given them a stock of values and knowledge, perhaps best termed as *worldview*, a way of facing the world (from which to judge others and the world, informing their conduct, behaviour, and manners of speech). Worldviews are finely cultivated, it is a form of knowledge that sustains one's orientational

⁵⁸ One of the project proposals submitted for the Open Academy Grants which is open to all Mongolian artists, is one titled 'Attack for Civilised Culture' that is targeted at 'educating' the 'uncivilised' country people of 'civilised' city ways in Ulaanbaatar through the erection of public signage.

comportment or bearing, and would be considered a form of *zhihui* in the Chinese tradition. Worldviews are sustained by sets of values and judgements, which are encoded in social and cultural practices, literature, folk stories, mores and forms of representation; they are passed from generation to generation, in socialisation processes with others⁵⁹. When bias and assumptions exist, they would be reflected in and inform one's worldview. Ganzug judged Oyu immediately when she expressed discomfort with living in the country. (The calibration of co-negotiators' worldviews within negotiation-as-active-knowing will be discussed further in chapter 5.3.3.)

A dialogic approach that could be taken to mediate the harshness of Ganzug's statement would perhaps draw out the implications of the statement or judgement. For example, to point out to Ganzug that he himself is deeply concerned that the world is increasingly beset by problems that he feels nomadic culture can provide a solution for. Therefore, it is surprising that he does not try harder to persuade, or find ways to negotiate with persons holding different values and practices. The past-present-future orientation should be inherent in every Mongolian's thinking, if we study Ganzug's words: 'Every Mongolian carries his/her own heaven over his/her head'; 'Every human's heaven is related with the order of the ancestors, history and all thinking ways. There is a deep connection between things'. This points to a cognitive orientation and movement that is always operating along the past-present-future axis. Would thinking longer term into the future, about the legacy that will be left behind for future generations, be sufficient to convince him and Oyu of the desirability to negotiate with each other?

The Myanmar experience has shown me that rational dialogue alone cannot change people's entrenched worldviews and values. The process of negotiation-as-active-knowing and the Thinking Together ground-field installation that I was developing could work together to draw out in gradually immersive, orientational, relationally responsive and calibrative ways the implications of actions and behaviour, by encouraging a sense of imagination and movement towards the future, while keeping firm sight of the past. The process of negotiation-as-active-knowing could encourage or foreground this kind of past/future orientated process of creating and translating sight (direct experience) to insight (reflexivity). Ethically, however, I think the decision whether to negotiate needs to be left to each of the participants.

⁵⁹ Berger, P. & Luckmann, T. (1996) *Social Construction of Reality*. USA: Penguin Books. Berger and Luckmann study how our constructions of subjectivity are developed through our primary socialisation processes, through contact with significant others, supplemented by secondary socialisation processes. This area is studied by Jay Koh (2013) in his doctoral dissertation with KUVA Academy, Helsinki.

4.3.8 The way the installation facilitates negotiation

The first round of conversations (4.3.4) showed that while the group was very analytical at some points of the discussion, they fell back to generalisations and sentimentalising when it came to ideas of nomadic culture and I had wondered if this could be because of a lack of distance. After the third round of conversations, I began to wonder if it could also be that the Mongolians' deep connections to their past and ancestry and with nature's life force create a strong sense of identity and sufficiency that does not motivate a sense of explorative movement (which would be ironic given that Mongolian culture is nomadic). Although I am not able to answer these questions, I felt that they invited me to further investigate how my conception of negotiation as movement would play out on the ground of Mongolian culture and society.

The sculpture-installation I was developing could complement these conversations and interactions in visualising a field of ideas, thoughts and responses; considering where they could be located (which itself demands discussion, judgement and evaluation) and made visible to others; and facilitating a negotiation of orientation and movement with other people's ideas and thoughts located within this field.

Another two meetings were arranged to discuss the participants' responses to the sculpture-installation, how to use it and what questions to pose to members of the public and in the ger and apartment areas. The outcome was that four individuals and one group wished to propose questions, and they were Enkbold, Zaya, Nomad Wave (as a group), Chinzorig and Mungun. Time was short and we could only carry out two consecutive actions in one day, one at a ger district followed by a second in an apartment area. As I wanted to accommodate all of them in using the sculpture-installation, we discussed using five different colours to differentiate between the five different questions they were posing.

I decided that I would not pose any questions but would work with the Mongolian participant-collaborators in developing and framing the questions. I felt that my negotiations, durational involvement, relational-responsiveness and calibrative finetuning were more focused on the collaborators rather than the members of the public. After suggesting to them that the questions should incorporate a sense of movement, scalability or possibility, I left it to the Mongolian collaborators to take the lead in formulating the questions, as I thought this is way for them to take ownership over their experience of a process of negotiation with

others that could be complemented and facilitated by the *Thinking Together* sculpture-installation.

The sculpture-installation was constructed within three days with material that I found in a local market. It was a rather make-shift work. Due to practical constraints of construction, transporting (collapsed and transported by car) and setting up (free standing against the strong winds), its scale was smaller than ideal.

4.3.9 Actions in public spaces 3rd July 2011

I recount here an incident on the morning of the actions, which caused a delay to our start. The analysis of this incident will be picked up in chapter 5.3.3.

On the morning of the actions, a group of the *Thinking Together* collaborators had agreed to meet Koh and me at the OAU apartment at 10 a.m. to head out together to the site. Everyone had gathered by 10 a.m. and was waiting for an artist who was coordinating activities and duties for that day. At close to 11 am, we found out that he was not coming to meet us at the flat as agreed and that the exact sites for the actions were not yet determined. We then quickly made impromptu arrangements for the actions, i.e. decided to split our group into two cars, figured out how and where to meet the others who were going in two other cars, who were going in two other cars, who was to go with the *Thinking Together* sculpture-installation and who should go to pick up necessary table and chairs for the actions. The four groups finally got together at the first site for the actions at close to 12 noon.⁶⁰

Koh asked the group later why the planning could not have been made ahead of time. Tseika responded that they prefer for everyone to come together and inspect, look over the sites and consider things together before deciding. Koh responded by asking why this getting together could not have been arranged earlier. Tseika explained that for Mongolians it is not good practice to plan ahead of time. It means there was no faith in the journey and was a sure sign that something would go wrong. This was confirmed by Koh's previous encounters with Mongolians. In 1995, he had met a group of Mongolian performers in Europe who had only enough money to venture out of but not to return to Mongolia. We also heard of Mongolians making trips out to the desert with enough petrol only for the outward journey. Tseika said: "It is a Mongolian wisdom that we must not rush when doing things. We must think deeply."

⁶⁰ This incident reflects the OAU participants' *attitude* towards rational planning and management and how it is connected with a bigger worldview. It does not mean that planning and management do not take place. Things get done and activities and events do get realised. Processes and approaches vary in every culture.

It appeared that there was an innate belief that things would 'fall into place' when the people, moment and actions are all aligned 'in the right place'. Tseika's utterance resonated with Uldii's and Ganzug's on the deep connections between people, nature and events in the Mongolian worldview. It could be said that there is very deep immersive involvement and relational responsiveness between the people, events and things, to the point that they do not feel the importance of or need for rational planning, discussion and analysis. However, do the problems and challenges of rapid urbanisation and environmental pollution and degradation faced by Mongolia today necessitate the consideration and evolution of an alternative approach?

What are the implications of the incident above for the negotiation-as-active-knowing framework? I stress again that the framework is constructed as a basis for persons beginning from outsider positions in relation to each other. In this case, the Mongolians have gradually begun to be more immersed and involved in western forms of organisation as experienced through iFIMA and the four-year OAU programme of activities. Koh and I had, in a similar way, become immersed and involved in the Mongolian way of thinking and doing. The durational engagement created confrontations and opportunities for relationally responding and calibrating with difference. This discussion will be continued in the overall analysis in sections 4.3.11 and 5.3.3.

Two actions; two sides of a divide

Two actions took place, one in a ger district and the second in an apartment area. A then recent ruling by city authorities was in favour of cutting the ger districts off from all services – health, sanitation, water, electricity - with the hope of stamping out their growth and the further influx of newcomers. There were many vocal opinions on this proposed move, with one camp supporting it and another which felt that ger districts were the solution to Mongolia's dwelling and economic problems, and which has called for improvements to be made and ways to be found to evolve new forms of ger dwellings in the city. The participants thought that it is important to bring our action to both ger and apartment areas as they represent the two sides of the divide. As one of the *Thinking Together* participants (who lives in a ger district) states bluntly: "Ger district dwellers hate (and envy) apartment dwellers and apartment dwellers hate ger district dwellers".



Figure 26: The ger district seen from our site of action at the Dari-Ekh spring, a precious source of spring water that Mongolians believe to have special health properties as it is on sacred land.



Figure 26: Setting up the *Thinking Together* sculpture-installation at Dari-Ekh
(Photographs on left and centre by Ganzug)



Figure 27: Interactions at ger district (left) and apartment area (right). Photograph on left by Ganzug



Figure 28: Participants taking the time to really consider and respond to the questions



Figure 29: Enkbold (extreme left) and Chinzorig (extreme right) engaging with people at Dari-Ekh



Figure 30: Participants posting and reading the responses at the ger district (top) and apartment area (bottom)

(For fuller photograph documentation and notes on the 3rd July interactions, please see Appendix IV in CD Rom 1)

For the action on 3rd July, the *Thinking Together* sculpture-installation was used to facilitate questions and responses by 5 participant-collaborators who actively interacted and conversed with people from the ger and apartment areas. The questions were:

From Enkbold: Are ger districts necessary in Ulaanbaatar? If yes, why? What can be done to improve the situation in ger districts? If not, why?

From Zaya: How can we protect the spring water in Dari Ekh?

From Muji (representing Nomad Wave): Would you like to live in (or to return to) the countryside and why?

From Mungen: What will happen if 10,000 Mongolians move to the city tomorrow?

From Chinzorig: What can 10,000 Mongolians do to bring about happiness?

Although I knew it would have been better if we could have posted only one question at a time, we did not have the time for it. We initially only had 3 weeks to complete the project, which I had stretched to almost 4 weeks. With one question at a time, we would have been able to explore each question in greater depth and fielded follow up questions as responses to people's response to the initial questions.

People in the ger district interacted with us much more freely than in the apartment areas. This could be because the action took place at a communal area of the well. Many took the time to consider their answers well before writing their response on cards provided. During the actions, the collaborators wrote as a code 'O' on the back of each card to mark view expressed by ger dwellers and 'A' for those by apartment dwellers. Due to shortness in time and the very basic set up in public spaces, I had realised that we would not be able to create an atmosphere where each participant could linger and consider the responses from other persons, although I observed that apartment dwellers (who were generally more hesitant in writing their responses) were more curious to take a look at what the ger dwellers had to say.

On the day of the actions, the responses written on colour-coded cards were tied onto the installation at random positions due to the lack of time for reflection and discussions. I had planned for the collaborators to get together after the actions to negotiate the different responses, orientate around them, and negotiate with each other as to where each response should be located on the sculpture-installation. They would review all the responses together, discuss, clarify, evaluate and negotiate with each other, as well as with the ground that the responses raise and open up, and determine how they should be located within the metaphorical ground-space of the sculpture-installation. They would have to decide together how (with what criteria) they would evaluate the responses and how they would use them to create a field of related and relational views, placed in revisable relational positions with each other.

This would bring us full cycle right back to the activities that took place at the start of our four-week interactions, clarifying the answers, testing, relating, connecting (see earlier analysis of what took place), developing a sense of alignments and exploring possible actions from them (movement).

4.3.10 Post public action negotiation

On 4th July 2011, a group gathered together after the public actions to look through all the responses gathered, evaluate them and negotiate on their placement and position within the charged field that is demarcated by the installation. After taking down all the responses, the group discussed them together and decided on their positions, vis-à-vis how general or specific, as well as how reflective or actionable the thought or idea might be. I mainly observed and did not intervene.



Figure 31: Discussions in re-negotiating the responses from 3 July actions

After they had completed going through all the responses, I asked which of the responses they found most interesting and significant. Here is their selection:

To the question: Are ger districts necessary in Ulaanbaatar?

- Yes ger districts are necessary, because Mongolian people need to be touching the ground. However, ger districts need to be developed. Every Mongolian need to work together to develop this area.
- What are the problems? Cold and hot water, toilets and burning of coal.
- How can we develop the area? For example, we can make the area look more tidy and uniform, every fence can be in same colour, make it look nicer and influence the city planning.
- Yes ger districts are necessary because people should not live in the streets.
- Yes ger districts are necessary because people are poor and don't have money to buy apartments.
- In ger districts, there are problems of trash, air pollution, the streets are dark and bad things happen. Government has to solve the problem, make better lighting and have a police station nearby.

To the sub-question: What can be done?

- When people agree, they can combine to build one apartment block together.
- Its necessary because there are very poor people living in the tunnel (the underground sewage tunnels in Mongolia)
- Necessary because our tradition come from our ancestors, so we have to respect our tradition.
- Together we can do everything.
- In our ger district, we have to work to protect our mineral spring.
- Ger districts are taking up too much space and affecting air pollution.
- The public, the government, Mongolian society and the President should solve the problems because it is their responsibility.
- We need to be in apartments because ger districts are dirty and there are too many drunken people.
- Air pollution and city management is bad.
- We have to move ger districts to the south.
- People say there are too many cars in ger districts but they are everywhere too. It is not just ger districts that has air pollution.

To the question: How can we protect the spring water in Dari Ekh?

- Don't use pot to pull out water from the spring, don't leave trash. People can pick up trash and clean the well together.
- We have to keep our environment clean. If there is trash we should take it away.
- The most important thing is clean environment.
Mongolian president should protect the spring.
- We need to set up night watch. If any organisation leave their trash here, people should move the trash far from the spring.

Note: One of the winning proposals for the OAU grant is a project to build an elevation and some taps for the spring, so that people do not need to step down to the spring and use their pots and bottles to scoop water from the spring, leaving oil and other residue in the water.

To the question: Would you like to live in (or to return to) the countryside and why?

- No, in rural areas there are no job positions, so I have to be in the city.
- I want to live in the countryside, because of the fresh air and environment

- Of course I would like to return to nature.
- Yes, but because of life problems I have to live in the city, but if the provinces can develop like the city, I'd like to return.
- No, because life conditions there are bad.

To the question: What will happen if 10,000 Mongolians move to the city tomorrow?

- If 10,000 Mongolians move to the city, that would be the biggest tragedy because our Motherland is very big and it shouldn't happen.
- It's necessary for the Motherland that families stay together, then the liver is full (Mongolian phrase meaning completion).
- We have to manage the movement of people from the countryside.

To the question: What can 1,000 Mongolians do to bring about some happiness?

- Build a lot of apartments together.
- Encourage each other.
- Contribution of mind.
- Combine each person's 21,000 Togrogs from the government and buy something big. (Every Mongolian citizen gets 20,000 Togrogs as welfare payment from the government each month, roughly equivalent to £10)
- 10,000 people can combine together to give smiles and love.
- Have to make the orphans and the poor happy.
- We can make people happy in a lot of ways, for e.g. by mind, action and skill. We can create buildings, statues, plant healthy vegetables, plant grass in the desert, create forests. We have the power of holding the mountain and stirring the water' (Mongolian expression of great power).



Figure 32: Repositioning the re-negotiated responses onto the *Thinking Together* installation

After they completed their activity, we spent two hours picking up on and discussing ideas of what could be done about or in response to some of the thoughts and situations expressed in the cards. No concrete plans were made, but participants expressed they would like to continue working together and meeting up for discussions. I requested for Tseika to keep the sculpture-installation and make it available for anyone from the group who wishes to work with it. I encouraged them to develop their work and projects further. Since this was our last meeting together as a group, we ended it with a meal at a restaurant nearby.

Analysis and observations of the discussion/negotiations amongst the participant/collaborators

On the whole, there were some hesitations and discussions, and some arguments amongst the group, which were resolved by persuasion, but on the whole they were very quick in reaching an evaluation of each response. There were probably sentiments and expressions of their fellow Mongolians that immediately come across as clichéd or ‘standard’, and because of their familiarity with these expressions, they reached their judgement and evaluation of them in a very short time and were at times slightly dismissive of them. As an outsider, I pondered

and listened more carefully as I could not take my understanding of them for granted. Unfamiliarity made me *negotiate* them. Familiarity made us not pay attention, relying on pre-existing knowledge/ judgement about the thing in question. This is verified by my observation that while they generally agreed to what was 'general' and 'reflective', which was probably more easily recognisable for them due to closeness to qualities of what they ascribe as Mongolian way of thinking, there was some intense discussion and disagreement amongst the collaborators as to what constituted 'actionable' or 'specific', which was somewhat more blurred and unfamiliar territory that they had to negotiate.

The next observation points to a limitation of the project, in that I was seen as a mentor-teacher. Although I abstained from instructing prior to, during and after public actions, particularly during the post-action session, I sensed that they were fulfilling a task as outlined by the concept of the work and installation (like completing an assignment). They kept to the 'general to specific' and 'reflective to actionable' values that I had attached to the horizontal and vertical axis. It could, however, be due to lack of time as well.

The third point came during my own subsequent reflection of the project, and points to another limitation of the work – that the shortness of time over the 4 week duration of the project didn't allow for enough intervals for calibration between reflexivity and direct experience, conversation with self and with others.

However, the collaborators' own projects during and post OAU, revealed something else to me, i.e. what they took away from the *Thinking Together* experience. (This is elaborated in the following section 4.3.11)

4.3.11 The Thinking Together Participants' Projects

The *Thinking Together* participants' individual projects during and post OAU demonstrated to me the participants' deeper sense of connection and greater sense of certainty in knowing how to respond relationally to what they felt to be matters that concerned them and in knowing how to develop ways of contact with others and devise movement within the bigger Mongolian ground. I hope that their experiences of negotiation within my project, combined with iFIMA's Open Academy programme, has played a part in opening up their sense of exploration, agency, movement and possibilities.

'Taking Power into Our Hands' by Oyulbileg, public action, 2nd July, 2011

Oyulbileg studied art at a younger age, but later turned to sociology and psychology and had stopped making art for many years. In 2011 she worked as a researcher in art and psychology. In the third week of our interactions, she became very excited with an idea she had and discussed it with me. She wanted to ask people from the public to hold a mirror in their hands on the parliament square so that the parliament building is captured in the mirror and it represents the act of the people in taking power into their own hands. Although this was at a symbolic level, she hoped that people will begin to think about this possibility as a result of her action. As this was the first public interactive action she has undertaken, she was nervous and requested for my help to photograph the action and support from fellow *Thinking Together* collaborators and we all turned up to work with her.



Figure 33: Images from *Taking Power into Our Hands* by Oyulbileg. Photographs by Chu Chu Yuan



Figure 34: Images from *Alive Corner* project by Chinzorig Renchin-Ochir.

Photographs by Chinzorig Renchin-Ochir

Alive Corner Project by Chinzorig Renchin-Ochir

Chinzorig's question in the *Thinking Together* actions was "What can 10000 Mongolians do together to bring about some happiness?" He followed up on this line of thinking by carrying out a project in the ger district he lived in. He had expressed concern for the quality of food the poor are able to afford in Mongolia, and the general health and sanitation conditions of ger districts. His project, "Alive Corner" attempts to engage the residents awareness and understanding of health and food quality in his neighbourhood of ger-district. He created a model greenhouse, gave out plant seedlings, shared his knowledge of vegetable farming and formed an Alive Corner discussion club, in order to encourage and motivate healthy living practices in ger-district.

Creating a Social Space around a Well Project by Munguntsetseg L.

During the second round of conversations of Thinking Together, Mungun (pictured below) told the group that nomadic life is orientated around a water source:

“Nomadic life is closely related to water source. For herders the most important element is water. In my province there is a water well. Herders go there and gather in one area, to give salt to their animals and to rest. I would like to create a motor for the well, and a comfortable rest area for the herders.”



Figure 35: Munguntsetseg L.

The project eventually took place in Erdenesant Soum, Tuv Province of Mongolia, where she and fellow artists worked with local people to strengthen social relationships around a well and create a convivial, supportive environment for herders who come to feed their cattle. The activities included establishing a park and building a fence and sunshade around a well, a traditional focal centre of nomadic herders' lives. It builds on a nomadic traditional custom from ancient times: when a Mongolian household moves to a place, the herders at the place receive the household by providing hospitality, exchange of information and help to build their ger. She aimed for the park to strengthen historical and social relations in the area. The local people actively participated in the project and were highly motivated to realise a fully developed park in the future.



Introducing the art project to local people; working together to build the sunshade



Interacting with herders who stop by to water their livestock; building a wire net fence



Unloading gravel to level the ground; Munguntsetseg painting the roof of the sunshade



Shagdar making a table; finishing up the roof

Figure 36: Images from *Creating a Social Space around a Well* project by Munguntsetseg L.

Photographs and captions by Munguntsetseg L.

(For more detailed information on a selection of OA Grants projects, please see Appendix III in CD Rom 1. All of the grantees attended my workshops and all except one took part in *Thinking Together*.)

4.3.12 Overall analysis and articulation of increased learning from Myanmar/ Galway

The *Imagining Possibilities/Thinking Together* process began with proposing a set of initial questions that acted as a way of '*envisioning*' the *ground*. 'Envisioning' would be the present tense adaptation of Shotter's and Katz's (1996) 'revisoning' method that was used in the investigation and analysis of the Myanmar case study. The ground needs to be 'envisioned' in a nuanced manner - calibrated for orientations and alignments (adapted from Shotter's 'revisoning' method). These can be accessed through asking imaginative questions like 'what are 100 Mongolians thinking of at this moment?' The responses were put through rounds of conversations and discussions for clarifications and refinements to develop orientations and relational responsiveness to people's thoughts and feelings on the ground.

The work and installation in *Thinking Together* was my most direct attempt thus far to engage with my collaborator-other's engrained sense of the world or world view. The Mongolians did not have the sense of segregation like the Travellers did and were very open to engagement. I responded attentively to what they told me about the Mongolian way of thinking and used the *Thinking Together* as an interpretation of their expressions and to then reflect it back to them for further testing and *clarifications*.

On the surface there seems to be less friction and opposition between me and the collaborator-others in this project, however at a deeper level there are tensions and calibrative interplay at work. I would say that the main tension *underlying* the interactions and conversations, although not directly discussed, was probably between the 'skilful' and 'knowledgeable' ways of organising, planning and managing that iFIMA was trying to encourage through the overall Open Academy programmes, with the 'Mongolian' way and approach to organising, planning and managing things. This was made especially apparent in the incident of the morning of the actions (4.3.9). In this way, my persuasion for the exploration of movement, through the values I identified and pegged onto the axis of the installation, i.e. from general to specific; from actionable to reflective, was probably leaning towards identifying 'actionable and specific' – which participants acknowledged to be a challenging area for them. Their *negotiations* with me – I have established in the Galway case

study analysis that negotiation is motivated by unfamiliarity and being somewhat perplexed, intrigued, troubled or challenged by something – were very subtle, probably because I was in a mentor-teacher position and they tried to ‘accept’ as much as they could or at least respectfully consider what a mentor-teacher says. However, I felt that their main negotiations were with the ideas, concepts, ways and practices of ‘skilful’ and ‘efficient’ organising that was introduced and encouraged by the programme.

At the time of the project when I was in Mongolia, I had approached the installation as a functional tool, which I hoped could calibrate and orientate people’s imagination and investigations towards different possibilities, but in a concrete way, resulting in specific ‘actionable ideas’. On further reflections after returning to Aberdeen, I think it was a mistake to see it as such; as a ‘tool’ that could function in a precise manner. With further research, I adjusted my thoughts and felt that the installation worked not as a tool, but more in terms of providing orientating and re-orientating views and alignments which point to and lead towards but do not ‘work out’ the answer. My initial mistake caused me to realise the difference between cipher and clue, as Tim Ingold (2000) has distinguished. A cipher provides one a readymade answer, a clue demands that one ventures on a journey to find the answer. The *Thinking Together* installation, and negotiation-as-active-knowing by extension, acts more like a clue than a cipher. Clues encourage movement; ciphers dull it; just as taken-for-granted stock of knowledge and knowledge-as-formula stifles exploration and negotiation. Clues act in calibrative/ oscillative interplay between what the people already know and what they need to find out. I think that *Thinking Together* and OAU experience managed to provide clues that stimulated the participants’ orientations and re-orientations towards the ground of their movement, prompting them to find new alignments and to search for ways to connect/contact with their fellow Mongolians. In this way, concrete actions emerged, as demonstrated by their projects.

Through relational responsiveness, durational involvement with the activities, and the calibrative fine tuning that was ongoing throughout the conversations, the visualisations in *Thinking Together*, where thoughts and ideas that were different to one’s own acted as clues in leading one towards a journey of exploration, collectively constituted negotiation-as-active-knowing. The participants found ways to connect with others and ways to act in response to their context in Mongolia that expressed the connections between self, other and context, and began to develop concrete ideas of what they could do, how they could begin to address the issues that concern them.

Unlike our earlier work in Myanmar with Ayeed when iFIMA introduced transparent and accountable ways of working with inadequate negotiation processes (4.1), *Thinking Together* presented a durational negotiation *process* - encompassing conversations, active imagining, acting and responding, proposing and posing imagined scenarios,⁶¹ intervals, and a visual and interactive interstitial time-space – to negotiate with new and ‘alien’ ideas, values and practice within a durational process. For the Mongolian collaborators, this was to negotiate with and to *define* what is ‘actionable’ and ‘specific’ for them. For Koh and me, it was to negotiate ways of working and thinking that complicated our known and honed ways of organising via planning and rational analysis – our expertise – the basis on which we were invited to conduct OAU in the first place. It was the expressed aim of OAU, as identified by the first collaborating partners Blue Sun and Arts Council Mongolia, to increase Mongolian artists and curators’ capacity in arts management and international project organising. I do not defend or uphold that the skilful and efficient ways of organising that were introduced and discussed in the *Open Academy* are what the Mongolian participants needed to learn. It is to be decided by each participant what they wish to accept, reject and/or modify. The durational process of negotiation-as-active-knowing, I hope, is able to provide a time/space for facing difference, relationally responding to it, considering, evaluating and testing it (the process of which will also challenge one’s own assumptions, as it did mine); allowing each participant to calibrate and evolve their own ‘right’ way . It is a process for engaging with difference, which is what participants like Tseika and Uldii continue to have to confront as they now (in 2013) venture towards collaborations with Chinese art space/ gallery partners in Beijing.

Negotiation-as-active-knowing mitigates and challenges our taken-for-granted assumptions and entrenched, accepted and unchallenged knowledge. Encounter with difference shakes one out of complacency. However in order to engage someone in such a process, the challenge remains how to establish a sense of ‘why is this related to me?’ or ‘why should it concern me’ (Fromm 1959), which seems to be a pre-requisite for a desire or willingness to negotiate. I believe as Shotter (2005) says that in interactive exchange, there is a non-rational obligatory relational responsive behaviour between people, brought about perhaps by the chiasmic structures of our lives, and that this can somehow entice one to engage and negotiate-as-active-knowing, even though there may be no ‘rational’ reason to do so. The negotiation-as-active-knowing carried out within the process of a social art project and creative community arts, however, can increase a sense of relatedness, curiosity, imagination

⁶¹ The posing and re-posing of scenarios invite respondents to actively *imagine* their likelihood and the resulting consequences if they came true. They then lead on to the imagination and consideration of other ideas, other scenarios, as one tests and re-tests different possibilities. These constitute acts of *improvisation* (section 6.4 furthers this discussion).

and improvisation. These are encouraged and established through conversations, interactions, activities and conviviality within a project, all of which will contribute towards an interest and willingness to negotiate.

4.3.13 Conclusion

In chapter 4, insights from the three case studies have gradually built upon each other. At the end of the Thinking Together project, the articulation of the learning on the domains of practice produces the diagram below:

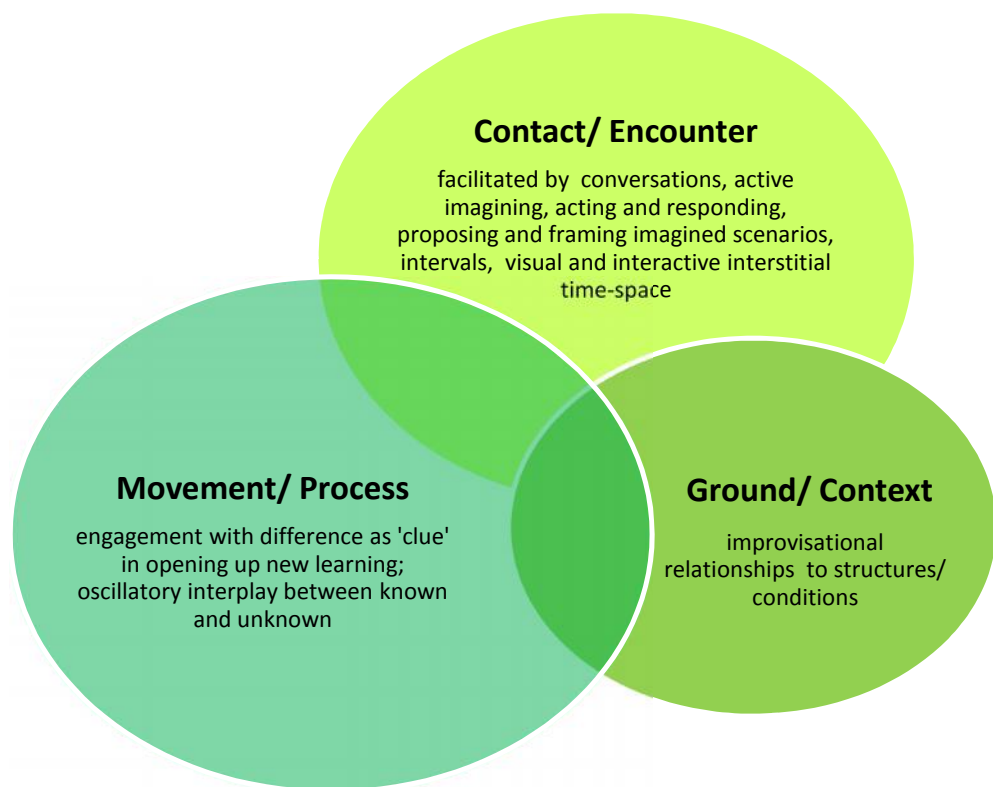


Figure 37: Point of learning within the domains of practice from the Mongolia case study

The encounter is facilitated by the use of imagination, the invention of scenarios and proposals to activate active imagining and a delicate engagement of co-negotiators' worldviews and knowledge that sustains conduct, actions and expressions. As the sense of movement and possibilities increases, a sense of exploration and improvisation increases.

The interactions resulted in an increased sense of certainty and knowledge on how to face and work with somewhat bewildering and perplexing otherness. It brought Koh and me to understand and re-orientate ourselves to the different ways of seeing, thinking and doing of the Mongolian collaborators. For the Mongolian grantees, I think it has resulted in more defined and sharpened knowledge of how to act upon their concerns and provided ways to establish contact with others and devise movement within the bigger Mongolian ground.

I will pick up on the impact of chapter 4's three case studies and draw together all the points of learning from them regarding the framework and domains of negotiation-as-active-knowing in an integrated analysis in chapter 5.

Chapter 5: Integrated analysis for negotiation-as-active-knowing

In chapter 4, I used the framework of qualities of negotiation-as-active-knowing to look at three domains of practice – ground, contact and movement - in relation to the three case studies in Myanmar, Mongolia and Galway, evidencing the interplay of these characteristics in the experience of the work. Their interplay is distinctive in each project, due to the specific dynamics of each context and my increasing sensitisation and awareness of working with and mining these concepts to reveal the tacit, underlying dynamics of negotiation.

The function of Chapter 5 is to integrate and interweave the specific insights from the three case studies, and commit them once again to a dialogue with literature for further interrogation and consolidation. I then draw some conclusions for the practice of negotiation within the conceptual domains of ground, contact and movement. I will finally articulate the adjusted negotiation framework as a 'poetics' of negotiation-as-active-knowing and make an adjusted definition of the qualities of negotiation-as-active-knowing.

The qualities of negotiation-as-active-knowing: *immersive involvement, relational responsiveness, and calibrative interplay*, derived from the literature review in chapter 2, were used as lenses to investigate the domains of an art practice, through specific incidents and interactive exchange within the three case studies. These began to reveal insights, initially through a method of revisioning (Shotter & Katz 1996) and later through envisioning, whereby experiential inter-exchanges between co-negotiators opened up 'orientating' and 're-orientating views' that continuously informed the interactions. The concepts from literature functioned as a meta-level framework to probe the experiences from a social art practice. The negotiations involved in such a practice are organised around a set of three concepts. The context of the work is experienced as a 'ground'; the encounter with others and otherness is experienced as 'contact' on the ground; and the evolution of the art process, ideas and artwork is 'movement'. The three case studies illustrate the incremental learning process that constituted my research. As with the act of negotiation-as-active-knowing, the learning within the research was gradual and delicately fine tuned through re-orientations, re-alignments and re-organisation of ideas, concepts and forms.

For the sake of clarity, I attempt below to follow a point by point analysis for each of the qualities of negotiation-as-active-knowing; however, at a certain point, the analysis overlaps, as the qualities are intertwined, mutually supportive and collaborative in nature. One cannot

practice immersive involvement without becoming relationally responsive and, by doing so, calibrative interplay is already set in motion.

5.1 Immersive involvement

5.1.1 Immersive involvement as way of understanding the complexity of the ground of negotiation

The character and form of Koh's and my immersive involvement across the three case projects differs from case study to case study. In Myanmar, we started out as facilitators, and ended up as heads of an organisation placed in a position where we needed to learn how to negotiate with the social practices, relationships, situation and conditions on the ground. In Galway we were commissioned artists on a public art commission by a city council who then proceeded to use a process of negotiation to open up engagement and lead towards an outcome that is desirable for the residents and acceptable to the city council. In Mongolia, we acted as mentors and collaborators of the artists and participants in an informal education programme, and within our interactions learned to work within a calibrative space where our own assumptions and practices are challenged alongside those of others in explorative movement.

The case studies revealed the finer points of immersive involvement as a way of understanding the complexity of ground, to show that it involves the working of following actions, qualities and concepts:

Anticipatory and open, active receptive mode of attentiveness

Immersive involvement on the ground (as well as relational responsiveness and calibrative interplay) is supported by a mode of attention that is described by Kester as 'anticipatory and open' and at the same time 'intensely focused and attuned, prepared but not projective' (Kester, 2011: 152). Bortoft (1996) argues that the *receptive* mode of attentiveness is more vital than the active mode, because of the plunging into sensorial experience that occurs in Goethe's way of science. I have argued in section 2.6 that both the active and receptive modes are necessary for negotiation-as-active-knowing. I have therefore fused the two modes into one, creating the concept of an 'active receptive' attentiveness. Such a mode of attention allows orientation and re-orientations to continuously take shape and for revisioning and envisioning of ground as discussed in the immediate points below.

Orientating and re-orientating markers and views; difference followed as 'clues' (Ingold 2000)

Immersive involvement allowed us to become familiar with and attuned our attention to specific *views* that would have been inaccessible otherwise. It enabled us to gradually come to recognise the chiasmic *interconnections* between structures and practices, the social ecology of a space, and its hidden narratives. Through the different experiences in the case studies, I have come to recognise that they gradually open up *orientating and/or re-orientating markers and views* to us. Orientating markers and views marks a development from Shotter's (2005) method of analysis for witness-thinking using 'frictive moments'.

We had to learn to respond to the pieces of puzzles that we see as markers within views that then become 'clues' for us which we learn to follow. Ingold (2000) makes the distinction between clues and ciphers. In the sensory education of novices of the Walbiri tribe in Central Australia, they are given 'keys to meaning', which Ingold argues act as clues rather than ciphers. Whereas ciphers provide access to readymade answers, clues allow novices to venture out in search of meanings 'that lie at the heart of the world' but which are 'hidden behind the façade of superficial appearances' (Ingold, 2000: 22). In Myanmar, people's differentiated public and private performances in front of authority, to perceived outsiders and unfamiliar publics and in private with family and peers, made us understand that ground is composed of front-and-back, public-and-hidden spheres which have their own paths and regulations for negotiations that enable movement. The secrecy and segregation of the Travellers along family and ethnic lines, brought us to understand how they have been shaped by historical circumstances and by perceptions of and resistances to power. As we become more attuned to the clues and views, more aspects of the ground, of that 'great relational landscape' (Wittgenstein, 1953) begin to open up as *legible* features to us. The attunement leads us to recognise new features and aspects which turn them from 'background' to foreground (Shotter, 1996). We begin to understand more and more how to respond and move alongside others, which then further re-aligns and fine tunes our negotiation with others and otherness.

Revisioning led to envisioning

The '*revisioning*' or 'redescription' (Shotter & Katz 1996 following Wittgenstein 1953) of ground in Myanmar, as a retrospective activity, was made through analysis of what Shotter (2005) identified as '*frictive*' or '*striking*' moments. *Revisioning* through its application in the case studies became more relevant as a retrospective method of research and analysis. It involved a method of *redescribing* incidents of people's utterances, gestures, behaviour,

activities and work by providing compelling accounts that capture the original feelings and experiences of people on the ground. For example, revisioning enabled us to understand closed, family-minded ways of association in a different light. However, in Galway and Mongolia, our processes turned into that of an *envisioning* of ground, as the orientating and re-orientating markers and views we encountered progressively drew out a clearer picture of the ground we were moving within. While revisioning is retrospective, envisioning is present and prospective. The markers and views, acting as clues, progressively and continuously informed calibrative interplay between our expectations, assumptions, ideas and experiences as the project unfolded. The process fine tuned our responses, leading to an anticipative sense of how we should and could move on in that particular situation. Envisioning became a more acutely present continuous and prospective way of connecting with the hidden dimensions of ground.

This new realisation reveals that negotiation-as-active-knowing with the quality of immersive involvement and relational responsiveness can work as a continuous prospective and accumulative process of learning, of knowing a situation and environment more fully, instead of a retrospective act of reflection and critique which later feeds back to action. Negotiation-as-active-knowing works as a continuous calibrative process, supported by envisioning.

Fluid exploration and calibrative interplay of clues in an interstitial time-space

The Thinking Together installation and the process negotiation-as-active-knowing by extension, performed more like a clue than a cipher (section 4.3.12). Clues encourage movement; ciphers dull it; just as taken-for-granted knowledge and knowledge-as-formula stifles exploration and negotiation. Clues act in calibrative/ oscillative interplay between what the people already know and what they need to find out.

Invoking imagination and connectivity in envisioning and orientating

In *Imagining Possibilities* and *Thinking Together*, questions were posed that invited acts of the imagination and making connections. My questions in *Imagining Possibilities* invited Mongolian respondents to think of words, activities and ideas associated with aspects of their lives and emotions and with Mongolia's past, present and future. These tapped into their deep sense of connection with their culture, history and fellow Mongolians. For example, 'imagine what 100 Mongolians are thinking about at this moment' at once invokes one's intimate knowledge of what may be gripping people's concerns and thoughts at that very moment, simultaneously invoking the thinker's own sense of deep connections and living participation

with her fellows, without which she would not be able to answer the question. Similarly the collaborator's questions in *Thinking Together*, e.g. Mungun's question inviting respondents to imagine what will happen if 10,000 immigrants arrived in Ulaanbaatar tomorrow, activates the imagination as well as the sentiments, emotions, memories and past experiences that our imagination hinges upon. Pondering the answers to these questions involves reflections on the *origins* and *consequences* of these imagined scenarios, evoking responses that are powerfully emotional as well as rational. The activity invites a sense of explorative movement from within immersive involvement and living participation along multiple trajectories, played out through different scenarios and consequences; not merely through rational discussion but through acts of imagination. The *Thinking Together* installation supported these acts by hosting and locating them on one common *field-ground* of exploration.

Through invitations to actively *imagine* alternative scenarios and views, the process of negotiation-as-active-knowing draws out the implications of actions and behaviour in an alternative way to directly confronting or resolving difference using dialogue. The dimension of imagination – invoking memory, emotion and deep connection - works in negotiation-as-active-knowing to open up and improvise with previously strange, unconsidered, untried ideas and practices.

5.1.2 Agency as sense of movement on the ground

The Ayed conflict prior to the Collaboration, Networking and Resource-sharing: Myanmar symposium (2002) in Myanmar intimated to me that conflict does not reside only between persons, but also relates to how we conceive of the bigger picture that frames us: our beliefs, values, relationships and the organisation of society; our sense of a *ground* that we are situated within, and our ability to *move* within it. *Agency is related to a sense of the possibilities of movement on a ground* – i.e. from gaining an understanding of and familiarity with the ground, to learning to read and judge it accurately in order to know how to respond and move on, as I did during the time at NICA. Conflict is extra-subjective, not confined to inter-subjective activity. Instead of just focusing on the inter-subjective communicative aspects of negotiation, it is also necessary to understand the different worldviews that people have, their sets of values, ways of seeing, thinking and believing. As the Mongolia case study reveals, negotiation then becomes a durational process of experiential engagement, whereby the direct experience interfaces with these established worldviews, values, and beliefs and gradually calibrates in search of re-alignments and possibilities of movement. (This is elaborated upon in section 5.3 below on 'Movement as calibrative interplay').

5.2. Relational responsiveness

5.2.1. Relational responsiveness leads to understanding the chiasm of practices and views on the ground

Re-framing the actions of ourselves and others as relational-responsive activity allowed me to see each action as interconnected with a people's practices, subjectivity, experiences, beliefs and worldview – how it at once informs and is informed by a set of beliefs and entrenched knowledge (which I will discuss and name as *practical embedded knowledge* in section 5.3.3). The secrecy and vigilance over each other's behaviour with outsiders exercised by the Traveller children reflected and reinforced the sense of protective segregation that had been developed in reaction to larger historical and cultural circumstances. Relational responsiveness builds on immersive experience and contributes further towards the process of envisioning of ground. It informed me of how I needed to *face* these practices of the children, and the *attitude* or *stance* with which to do so. Shotter (2005) identifies this as a problem of orientation in approaching other people or circumstances that are strange to us. In sections 3.4 and 5.1, I have discussed how Shotter and Katz (1996) develop Wittgenstein's (1953) *revisioning* as a method of research and analysis that involves an exercise of *redescribing* instances of people's utterances, gestures, behaviour, activities and work. This is done by attempting to capture a sense of the original feelings shaping people's experience, so as to make visible dimensions that were previously hidden or assumed. This is achieved not by way of providing explanations but *compelling* descriptions. In relational responsiveness, this is achieved using an active receptive mode of attention to face people's utterances, actions and behaviour without making judgements or creating interpretations in one's habitual way. This does not mean suspension of judgement but opening it up to relational responsiveness and not allowing it to close off the engagement. One needs to correctly inter-relate the experience of the strange practice, without adding anything, and then the explanation or understanding will follow.

Speaking in terms of the researcher's stance and that of others, Shotter writes: "In other words, the *Weltbild* in question is not an abstract terminus for our solving of *our* problems in *our* terms, but a point of departure for our development of a practice (perhaps of inquiry) in relation to them that we can conduct in *their* terms" (Shotter, 2005: 150). Relational responsiveness within immersive involvement enabled us to correctly orientate towards, inter-relate with and develop an 'expressive responsive understanding' (Shotter, 2005) of the practices and views both of the Travellers and the Mongolians.

Relational responsiveness also frames the action as a *reaction* – shifting the emphasis or lens of inquiry back onto my own action that may be the cause of a reaction; necessitating a reflection on my part of the possible impact, meaning and appropriateness of my action. This creates a re-orientation of my actions and behaviour in relation to the ground I am on. This re-orientation creates new alignments, generates new knowledge and skills in the encounter and interaction with others and enables movement on a previously alienating ground.

5.2.2. Relational responsiveness as way of processing and proceeding with ways of contact with others and otherness

In the case studies, relational responsiveness became the quality of negotiation that informed me of ways of contact and communicative exchange that are more attuned with the performative protocols of engagement, rituals, occasions, roles, mannerisms, use of language and bodily forms of expressions of the people with whom I am in contact, so as to produce new nuances of interactivity. In Myanmar, relational responsiveness taught Koh and me to perform in the way that Myanmar do, sending nuanced signals to different groups who were watching us. It adjusted our way of engagement with the Travellers, which then oscillated between intervals of active engagement and relative passivity or withdrawal.

Response-building-upon-response

In Myanmar, as seen in the step-by-step measures taken to realise the M-Project exhibition (section 4.1.4 Incident 2), contact proceeded as a *response-building-upon-response process*; others' reactions in response to our actions told us what our response or next move should be. Such a performance became especially inflected and heightened during the inspection by the censorship committee. Such an experience of relational responsiveness resonated firmly with the Chinese metaphor introduced in chapter two of crossing the river by feeling the river bed. This expresses the close and intimate moment-to-moment contact that turns our body and our senses into highly attuned and responsive instruments in contact with our environment and otherness.

Shotter (1999) builds on Bakhtin in defining his concept of relationally-responsive activity as taking place in a third realm which is neither under our control individually, nor wholly out of our control. This involves a central shift in the understanding of *actions* within interpersonal engagement, which cannot be categorised as 'behaviour' nor 'action' – and needs to be studied through *responses* and reactions that are always relational. If we think of it, many of our actions and behaviours are in fact responsive and relationally motivated, situated and

performed, whether or not we are directly involved within an interpersonal situation. Shotter states that he is not pointing out something new, but something previously neglected, taken-for-granted and relegated to what Wittgenstein (1953) describes as 'background'. It is by actively re-focusing on the relational-responsiveness of our activity that new insights and anticipations can emerge. To me, this distinction of relationally-responsive activity does not imply an end to the study of behaviour and actions in interactive dialogic activities, but calls for a re-definition through re-description and 're-visioning' (Wittgenstein 1953) of our understanding of such behaviour and actions.

5.2.3. Communicative interface: support, reiteration and feedback

As revealed in the Galway and Mongolia case studies, relational responsiveness and calibrative interplay within contact can be supported by an interface that affords reiteration, exploration, loop back and revision. The communication wall in Galway and the Thinking Together installation in Mongolia acted as such an interface, where different experiments with forms of communication took place. They took on a visual dimension and acted as interfaces which engaged the imagination, inviting exploration of movement in new or unfamiliar directions. They acted as a space for testing, exploring and considering new ideas and practices; for negotiation and improvisation. They also acted as a feedback loop, informing, shifting and adjusting the process of contact and communication.

5.2.4 Fluidity and relational character of power and conflict in orchestrating relationships

Our experiences in Myanmar and Galway taught me that the exercise of power within human contact needs to be understood and negotiated in a relational sense. The ownership and exercise of power is necessary for agency, while an un-negotiated, careless and unconditional exercise of it lead to abuse and oppression. My encounter with resistance in Myanmar, which entrusted me with the need to deal with that resistance, brought me to realise that, in a social collaborative process, tension, resistance and conflict should not be avoided or seen as destructive or unconstructive. Instead they must be negotiated, as they can be generative of power and agency. Without feelings of tension and resistance, there would be no impetus to act or negotiate. In a relational negotiation process, it is important to emphasise and nurture the sense of power in every individual, so that each has the capacity to negotiate the power of others, and can engage with the tensions arising from difference constructively and not destructively.

As the case of the headmistress in Myanmar (chapter 4.1.4 Incident 3) shows, the workings and dominance of power within a social art project is constantly active and shifting. Power is contingent on context (it does not remain constant when one crosses into different spaces and situations), and as Scott's infra-politics show, power can be exercised in various forms of resistance and attack (Scott 1985, 1990). No matter how much skill or expertise one has, one can still be rendered powerless and unable to negotiate in an alienating situation of otherness. The Galway case study shows that the imposition of a fixed regulation from a position of power (as in demanding the formation of a committee for the halting site in section 4.2.5) without undergoing negotiations is futile, producing friction and immobility. Immersive involvement and relational responsiveness allows one to see and recognise that both the 'strong; and the perceived 'weak' have powers at their disposal and exercise weapons of a different kind. Resistance of the weak can gain the strength to overthrow dictatorships, as events in the Arab Spring show. However, getting one's way through a destructive exercise of power will continue to build greater divides. Negotiation-active-knowing seeks to encourage the power and agency of self and other in a different manner, by strengthening the agility and resilience of the self and others in negotiation with one another.

5.3. Calibrative interplay

5.3.1. Calibrative interplay as nuanced way of exploring and realising movement

In chapter three, I outlined that the domain of movement is related to developing or finding the right methods, procedure, strategies, skills, knowledge and expertise of judgement, decision-making and problem solving in order to navigate and find ways to move on the ground. In chapter 4, the Burmese and Galway projects in particular show that human relationships are a messy and tricky ground to navigate. Solutions cannot be pre-determined from the outside and imposed as ready-made solutions. The process needs to be mindful of differences in values, beliefs and ways of thinking. I have shown how a sense of movement became possible through an *accumulative* process involving incidents of immersive involvement, relational responsiveness, and calibrative interplay between me and others as *co-negotiators* (consciously or not). Movement came from learning and insights that were catalysed from active calibrative interplay, involving continuous oscillatory movement, proceeding from what is initially perceived as negotiable/ non-negotiable, closed/ open, familiar/ unfamiliar leading gradually onto a greater sense of assuredness, familiarity and certainty.

5.3.2. Interstitial space established through growing familiarity

Just as actions and behaviours within interactions constitute a third realm of activity, when new or different practices come up against or collide into each other, a third interstitial space emerges from within interactions. This constitutes a new *ground* for negotiation-as-active-knowing, for oscillatory interface between *direct experience* and *reflectivity*, for conversation with self and others. Within the cooking sessions in Galway (chapter 4.2.9), the young adult sessions in NICA (chapter 4.1.4 Incident 3) and the convivial and trusting learning interactive environment in *Open Academy Ulaanbaatar* and *Thinking Together* (chapter 4.3), an interstitial space gradually emerged, built from a gradual development of familiarity and assuredness that made possible re-orientations towards new ideas and practices; i.e. to entertain, consider, weigh, assess and test them. Orientation is a kind of '*facing-towards*' that need to happen before consideration and gradual reverberations towards new possibilities can begin.

Fluidity

Fluidity is an important characteristic of such a space and it came about within the projects because of the degrees of certainty and familiarity established between me and the women in Galway and the young adults in NICA. Fluidity is necessary for the calibrative interplay and reverberation between existing and new ideas. Recalling Gene Sharp's (2003) observation that negotiation is not possible when positions become hardened, it is this sense of fluidity that makes negotiations possible at all.

Intervals and liminal spaces

The interstitial space also incorporates intervals and liminal spaces for testing ideas and generating feedback between self and others; old and new; new knowledge from direct experience and entrenched conceptual knowledge. The working of such knowledge in shaping our worldview, actions and judgement of others became very apparent in the Kantonens incident in Myanmar (section 4.1.4 Incident 4) and in the conversation between Ganzug and Oyu in Mongolia (section 4.3.7). Conditions of 'elasticity' and fluidity are necessary for a sense of movement to take place and for negotiations-as-active-knowing to work. An interstitial space that builds intervals between *proximity* and *distance* is necessary in order to engage with differences that contradict our worldviews and values. The space allows for an oscillatory movement between phenomenology's direct experience and Archer's (2007) human reflexivity. This works through internal and external conversations with the self and others in a calibrative process, thus feeding back to and possibly adjusting the

'embodied knowledge' (Shotter 1994) or *phronesis* (Aristotle 1999) that sustains our worldviews, conduct and judgment. This point is elaborated upon in 5.4. Re-orientation and shifts need to be created gradually through reciprocal exchange and relational responsiveness that will slowly produce re-orientations of cognitive perception and understanding so that more attuned process of communication can take place.

5.3.3 Autonomy of self and other in relational responsiveness and calibrative interplay

In the process of calibrative interplay discussed above, both Shotter's (2005) concepts of 'witness' and 'aboutness' thinking are catalyzed, indicating that the autonomy of self and other is intact and the space between self and other is not collapsed. However both these modes of thinking are taking place *within* a position of immersive involvement and participation, not as spectator from outside. Autonomy and the distance between self and others are thus not collapsed but exercised, massaged and made supple; strengthened in their agility to encounter and interact with others and otherness. This is more fully discussed in section 6.1.1.

5.4. Relational learning and the production of new knowledge

As stated above, within the interstitial space of negotiation-as-active-knowing, calibrative interplay oscillates between direct experience and the established worldview and values which inform our judgement of others and otherness, and which are intertwined with our sense of identity, of *who we are*. This judgement comes from a practical knowledge that Shotter (1994) calls 'embodied knowledge'; something that we do not need to recall or think about as we go about our daily lives. He discusses embodied knowledge in comparison with what Bernstein (1983) has called 'practical-moral knowledge' connected to Aristotle's notion of *phronesis* (Shotter, 1994: 2). Shotter states that Bernstein's 'practical-moral knowledge' is knowledge not detached from our being but determinative of what we are, "where who we are must, of course, accord with ways of being others judge as being morally acceptable. In being continuous with, and determinative of, who and what we are, rather than 'in our minds', it is more properly called *embodied knowledge*" (ibid).

Shotter states that such a kind of knowledge seems to 'call out' or to 'demand' various activities of us. It tells us:

"i) not just what will surprise us and what we and others will merely find familiar, ii) but also what we and they will find disgusting, frightening, iii) as well as delightful

and want to celebrate, what we all will count as objective and what subjective, what real and what unreal, what ordinary and what extraordinary, and so on” (Shotter, 1994: 2).

It thus determines what one would anticipate or expect from a social situation, and therefore how we judge other’s behaviour or actions within it. The young Burmese writer’s expression that the Kantonens’ way of presenting and discussing their work was a waste of his time, and the audience’s mixed reaction to the video showing Tynni Kantonen’s ‘accident’ with hot soup (4.1.4 Incident 4) indicates a set of judgements and expectations that comes with embodied knowledge which was constructed and formed through experiences and teachings that are culturally inflected.

While theoretical knowledge and technical knowledge “can be said to be disciplined and orderly, and sustained by systematic discourses”, Shotter asserts that embodied knowledge is by contrast “disorderly and undisciplined” (Shotter, 1994: 2). I disagree with this view. From my involved participation in my own and others’ cultures, I see a certain order and discipline to this form of knowledge, as I have recounted in section 4.3.7; it is deliberately cultivated in Chinese culture as *zhihui*. It informs our conduct: the way we act and react in social situations, what we would say, how we would say it, whether we open up towards or close ourselves to certain things and experiences. Admittedly behaviour in certain societies, as in Myanmar, is necessarily more vigilant, disciplined, regulated and self-regulating and scripted than others. The differentiation also comes to play in hierarchies of power and formality of the situations. Nonetheless, if from childhood, one is taught to fear the dark, or certain signs that are encoded as ‘threat’ or ‘danger’, it becomes a *practical* knowledge that will continue to influence the way we react to darkness or anything that is dark. Ingold (2000) states that such types of established, familiarised and accepted meanings are already encoded, *embedded* into our perception of the environment, so that we do not need to consciously recall them as cognitive concepts in our incidents of encounter. We do not need to, and necessarily *cannot* be aware of their workings, as it would be perilous to our day to day survival and the management of our lives. Heidegger (1962) expresses that we exist in the unreflective, ‘ready-to-hand’ mode of consciousness until something breaks down, which is when the analytical, reflective ‘present-at-hand’ consciousness kicks in. In a negotiation-as-active-knowing process, the encounter with strangeness is possibly the equivalent of something breaking down, when we become puzzled, bewildered or confounded. We become dis-orientated, we become momentarily immobilised.

For my discussion here, I would call such forms of knowledge – related to Aristotle’s *phronesis*, Bernstein’s practical-moral knowledge, Chinese *zhihui*, Ingold’s embedded knowledge or Shotter’s embodied knowledge - *practical embedded knowledge*. The way this knowledge works constitutes a hidden dimension in our everyday perceptive and cognitive activity. Bortoft (1996) calls this the *absent active*, using the analogy of reading words in interpretation of a whole text. The working of the whole escapes our awareness, nonetheless without it, we would not be able to grasp the meaning of the parts. Due to the absent active nature of our practical embedded knowledge, taken-for-granted assumptions and possible bias reside within it.

It is important for me to establish the concept of practical embedded knowledge because it is with this realm of cognitive activity that negotiation-as-active-knowing as calibrative interplay needs to engage and find alignment in order that it can find ways to bridge across values and beliefs. This is the challenge that Avruch (2006) has underlined as a prominent task of negotiation in contemporary times.

To illuminate the way that negotiation-as-active-knowing is able to engage with practical embedded knowledge, I bring in Bortoft’s (1996) concept of organising ideas that he states are at work in our act of perception below.

5.4.1 The organising idea (Bortoft 1996)

How can negotiation-as-active-knowing as calibrative interplay engage and interact with the workings of our practical embedded knowledge? How can the new perceptions and ideas harnessed from direct experiences from negotiation-as-active-knowing’s immersive involvement, relational responsiveness and calibrative interplay feed back to and mitigate our embedded conceptual knowledge?

Bortoft (1996) examines how new insights into the world around us come about through gradual shifts, even though they often appear to have just *dawned* on us in an instant, as an ‘aha’ phenomenon. He explains this phenomenon using the concept of ‘organising idea’.

Knowledge of the world is based on sensory experience, but knowledge is not the same as sensory experience. There is always a nonsensory factor in cognitive perception, whether it is everyday or scientific cognition (Bortoft 1996: 50 -51).

Bortoft continues by using the example of the figure reproduced below. Initially seeing only random patches of black and white areas, we need a bit of time to see further in order to 'recognise' that a figure of the head and upper neck of a giraffe emerges from the chaotic patches. Although it appears as though the giraffe has been switched on, like a light, the transition between not seeing and seeing in this event of recognition cannot be explained through sensory stimulus alone, as the pattern registered in the retina of the eye is the same whether the giraffe is seen or not (Bortoft, 1996: 51).

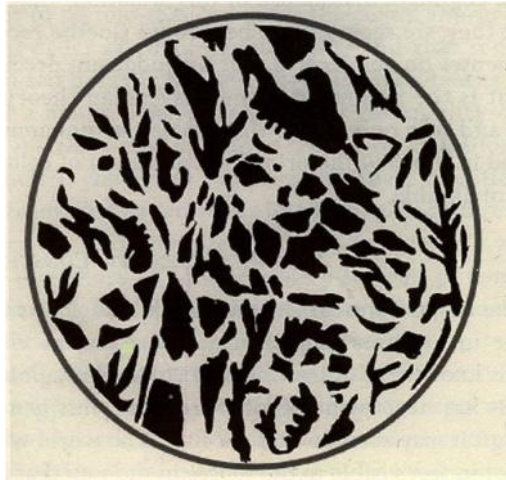


Figure 38: image reproduced from Bortoft, H. (1996) *The Wholeness of Nature: Goethe's Way of Science*. Edinburgh: Floris Books.

Bortoft then developed philosopher of science Norwood Russell Hanson's explanation of this phenomenon, which is attributed to the factor of organisation. Hanson suggests that organisation is not an element in the visual field, but "rather the way in which the elements are appreciated" (Bortoft, 1996: 52). When the giraffe is *seen*, the shapes take on a particular *organisation*. This necessarily involves non-sensory perception. Bortoft states that the "non-sensory perception of organisation... is in fact the perception of meaning" (ibid). He continues "... purely sensory experience would be a state of difference without distinction, diversity without differentiation" (Bortoft, 1996: 53).

In his explication of the organising idea, Bortoft establishes that the mind is the *absent active*, which means that we are not aware of its operation while it is in fact operating. Bortoft builds on the argument of Edmund Husserl's work in phenomenology, which established that when we confront the world, it is not an empty consciousness confronting an external world, it has intentionality (or that it is intentionality) and it is always a consciousness of (something).

Because there is this indissoluble unity between consciousness and the object of which it is conscious, the dimension of mind is transparent in the process of cognitive perception. It is always the object which occupies attention and not the act of seeing itself (Bortoft, 1996: 54-55). The mind, like health, is the absent active that is constantly operating without our noticing it.

The workings of the dimension of mind within the organising idea that makes sense of our acts of perception implicates the way our practical embedded knowledge is engaged in our act of direct experience of the world and otherness. By connecting with the organising ideas within our practical embedded knowledge, immersive involvement, relational responsiveness and calibrative interplay in negotiation-as-active-knowing are able to create opportunities for a reconsideration, re-orientation and perhaps gradual re-organisation of the established concepts within our practical embedded knowledge. This abstracted knowledge works as an absent active in our encounter with others and otherness.

As an example, I discussed in the analysis of the Mongolian project in 4.3.12 that the negotiation-as-active-knowing underlying my interactions with the collaborators and our activities was played out between two attitudes towards organising. One emphasised detailed advance planning, research, proposal development, allocation of resources, evaluation and monitoring, as encouraged within the *Open Academy* programmes. The other leaned towards a less precise and rationally planned approach, as expressed by Tseika following the incident on the morning of the actions (4.3.9). During our second round of conversations in the *Thinking Together* project (4.3.7), Ganzug expressed how they do not feel the need to think or say things precisely: “The way of Mongolian thinking is part by part, but not specific. For example, we say 100 pieces of wood, but we never count it. It is not specific. But if you ask any Mongolian, we will understand what is being said or asked, same as all other Mongolians.” In another previously unrecounted discussion, Enkbold said: “In my village, we just see the flatness of space and the horizon all around us. The days pass without us being aware of any concept of time.” These concepts of the lack of necessity for precision and the endlessness of time very likely informed – in fact, *organised* – the Mongolian collaborators’ experience and responses in our exchange and interaction. They produced a spontaneous, unhurried and improvisational stance towards everyday life which I personally admire but seldom get to experience in my life outside of Mongolia. On the other hand, Koh’s and my own practical embedded knowledge originated from a sense of the limitedness of time and resources which informed and organised our responses in the exchange and interactions. These organising ideas were made apparent, and subjected to reconsideration, calibration and fine tuning in

our relational responses to one another. This led to possible adjustments through the interstitial time-spaces of direct intersubjective exchange, imaginative activity, subjective reflexivity and conversations with self and others in the process of negotiation-as-active-knowing.

In such a way, the *accumulative* effect of the activities of negotiation-as-active-knowing may produce new relational learning and knowledge through a process of gradual shifting - a movement - towards the perception of different *organising or ordering ideas*. The orientating and re-orientating views that negotiation opens up to us then shifts our position, simultaneously changing our horizon of view; in this way we may open up new alignments with the negotiating other(s) from within the immersive interactions.

5.4.2 Negotiation and dissent

The incidents recounted in 4.3.9, demonstrating the lack of perceived need for rational planning in the Mongolian nomadic worldview, begged the question of the implications of this traditional attitude in addressing the modern challenges facing the country.

The qualities of the conceptual framework work from positions of difference. Applied within positions of similarity, they will very likely reinforce and strengthen assumptions and biases, instead of exposing and challenging them. However, it is very unlikely that two persons will occupy exactly the same positions on all matters. As I will discuss in section 6.9, exposure to, encounter and negotiation with positions of otherness is one important way for us to overcome our inherent 'blind spots', prejudices, limitations of knowledge and worldviews – for there is always a tendency and impulse for us as human beings to seek people, things and ideas that re-assure and re-affirm our own beliefs and values (Fromm 1959).

Negotiation with difference reveals to us things we previously did not know about ourselves. It is not reductive of differences, but fully engages our faculty of judgement, confronting us with dissent and throwing our views and values into sharp relief in relation to otherness. Yet, through calibrative interplay, negotiation creates the possibility to face up to and engage with those differences in ways that are unthreatening (which would close off engagement), non-adversarial and constructive.

It is not the goal of negotiation-as-active-knowing to resolve conflicts. When it does get resolved, as in Galway (4.2.10) it is an indirect outcome of the process. Our relationship with

a few of the Itta members from Myanmar has remained tense and conflicted for many years (and is unresolved until today). However, I believe that this tension has been productive. It continues to keep us in lines of sight and hearing of each other's work, and the 'negotiation' continues to take place from a distance.

5.4.3 Importance of duration

The gradual nature of the work in shifting the organising ideas within our practical embedded knowledge necessitates and stresses the duration of the process of negotiation-as-active-knowing. The various relational responsive activities firstly needs to gradually build familiarity, assuredness and a greater sense of certainty so that a fluid interstitial time-space can emerge that supports the gradual shifting of organising ideas. New realisations and learning can then be produced as a result of active durational and experiential negotiation.

5.4.4 Relational responsive knowledge

The new realisations discussed above are *knowledge produced in the space between self and others*, a form of *relational responsive knowledge* that is a fundamental feature of my socially engaged art practice. Working with and to produce such relational responsive forms of exchange and knowledge involves different demands on methods of art practice, such as strategies of visualisation and understanding of the production of art, compared with art practice that produces more directly representational art. I make a discussion of this in 5.5 below.

5.5. Visualisation as way of walking inside a strange phenomenon

In my art practice, when I encounter a captivating or puzzling expression, for example, Uldii's expression that the Mongolian way of thinking is broad and deep, I began to think of how to give this an aesthetic form. In doing so, I was not trying to represent or aestheticise the Mongolian mind, nor was I trying to explain their way of thinking, but I was trying to find a way for me to begin to access it, to find a way to move inside it, perhaps, to *walk* in it. In this way, visualisations are developed to cultivate relational responsiveness to the expression or phenomena using the *clues* that I have encountered, as a way of 'walking the ground' opened up by following these clues and making further deliberations, reflections and meditations on them. Visualisations can become a way of deliberation or exploration by 'walking' inside the ground of difference, offering opportunities of pacing, pausing, turning and returning, within

a sculptural or installation space or on paper.⁶² This is to achieve what Shotter (2005) expresses as to “find relational features or aspects within them, or between them and their surroundings, that will, as Goethe puts it, work to “*open up a new organ of perception* in us.” (Shotter, 2005: 150) (My emphasis)

Effectively, the development of the Thinking Together installation is such a ‘visualisation-as-walking’ exercise, which further hosts imaginative walking and explorative activities by the participants and co-negotiators in the project.

5.6. Conclusion and refined definition of negotiation-as-active knowing

The analysis in 5.1 to 5.3 shows that the qualities of immersive involvement, relational responsiveness and calibrative interplay operate within and cut across all domains of ground, contact and movement. However, upon reflecting on the analysis further and undergoing an exercise of organising and ordering the points for the proposal of a poetics for negotiation-as-active-knowing, a new sense of the organisation and flow of the process of negotiation-as-active-knowing materialised. This revealed that the sense of movement that effectively emerges from calibrative interplay becomes possible by building on a deeper understanding of the ground. This is gained through immersive involvement and having developed a way of progressing contact through relational responsiveness. The qualities of negotiation-as-active-knowing overlap, build upon, inform and feed back to each other. The initial perception of constraints, barricades and obstacles in ground and contact becomes softened by the increasing sense of possibility and assuredness of movement. ‘Movement’ feeds back into the domains of ‘ground’ and ‘contact’, infusing them with a greater sense of imaginative possibility; it makes the given and determined appear more yielding towards spontaneous responsiveness, improvisation, new relational responsive practices and expressive understandings. From the process of negotiation-as-active-knowing, one achieves a more refined, nuanced and calibrated knowledge and an exercise of ideas, activities, skills, methods, procedures, judgement and expertise that is more attuned in moving forward with others and otherness.

⁶² Various ‘visualisation-as-walking’ exercises were carried out during the course of this PhD, both by myself using the responses gathered from others (as a form of conversation with self) as well as exercises carried out with others in workshop situations. They are work that was carried out in parallel and as an appendix to the interactive work of the field-project, and therefore did not incorporate the physical dimension of the qualities of immersive involvement, relational responsiveness and calibrative interplay. They did, however, actively question and investigate whether these qualities could be approached, replicated or induced from within workshop exercises. However, there was insufficient time within this PhD to sufficiently investigate this. It will become a subject for post-PhD investigation.

An adjusted Venn diagram of the domains of practice depicting the effect of negotiation-as-active-knowing on the artist practitioner's domains of practice, subsequent to analysis of the case studies, is presented below. It shows that the process of negotiation-as-active-knowing significantly increases one's sense of possibility for movement around previously challenging terrain. This sense of movement then feeds back and infuses into the domains of contact and ground, possibly modifying and re-aligning the artist's and co-negotiators' previously held perceptions, positions and attitudes towards the practices of contact and the organisation of ground. It may also have calibrated, modified and/or fine-tuned each party's values, beliefs, ideas, and customary practices.

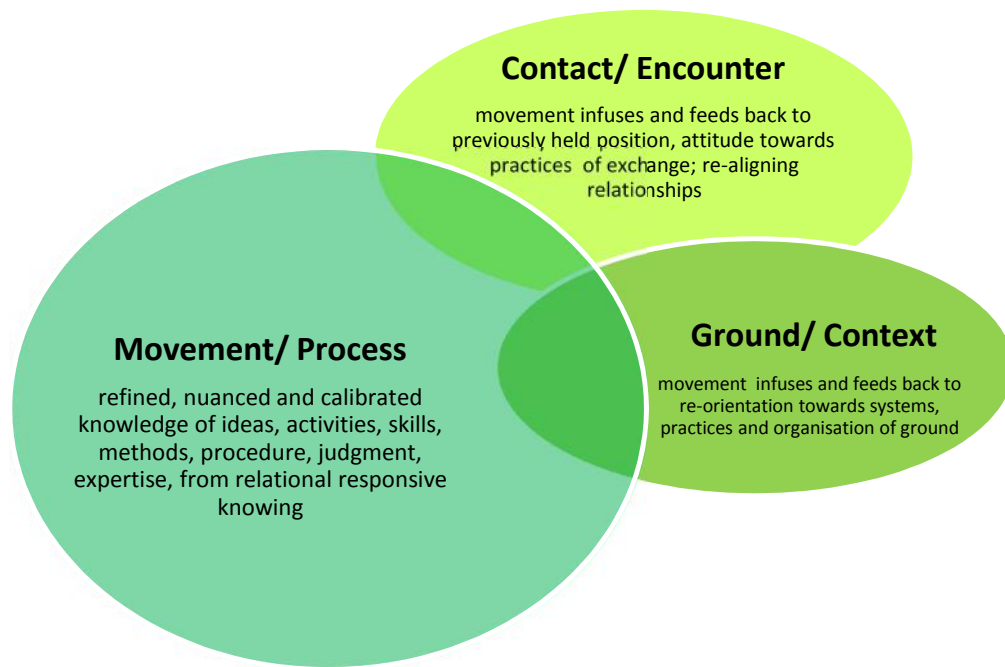


Figure 39: Adjusted diagram of the domains of practice, showing sense of movement that infuses, feeds back to and re-aligns previously held perceptions, positions and attitudes towards the practices of contact and the organisation of ground.

Finally in this chapter, I make a conclusive refined definition of negotiation-as-active knowing.

5.6.1 Refined and adjusted definition of negotiation-as-active knowing

Negotiation-as-active-knowing is a form of experiential *relational responsive* inquiry within a process of durational *immersive involvement* with other/otherness. Negotiation-as-active-knowing begins with positions of co-negotiators as outsiders to one another. The encounter with others and otherness provides the coming-up-against-ness that enables *calibrative interplay*. The process employs an *open, anticipatory* and *active receptive* form of attentiveness, where difference is followed as *clues*. Through acts of *imagination* - actively proposing, posing/reposing imagined scenarios, conversation with self and others and interfacing with a fluid interstitial time-space, orientation/re-orientation - re-alignments of positions and re-configuration of organising ideas take place. *Judgement* is exercised but subjected to relational responsiveness and calibration, taking care not to allow it to foreclose the engagement. The fluid interstitial time-space facilitates, hosts, buffers and reverberates amidst conversations between self and other, direct experience and reflexivity, producing acts of imagining new possibilities. *Improvisation* comes into play to test, experiment and evolve negotiated forms that depart from both the existing and the introduced forms of practices. It is effectively an active form of relational *knowing* as it engages and calibrates the practical embedded knowledge of co-negotiators. Within a social art process, the qualities of negotiation-as-active-knowing are further supported by visual communicative interfaces and 'visualisation-as-walking' exercises.

Chapter 6: Implications, limitations and conclusions

Negotiation-as-active-knowing aims at longer term sustainable practices

In my art practice and this PhD research, I am concerned with reconciling difference and evolving strategies for longer term sustainable practice as outcomes, not for short term tactical advantage. Recognition of this priority requires consideration of certain issues.

Firstly, does this contradict my own definition of negotiation-as-active-knowing? I established two definitions of negotiation in section 2.2.2: negotiation-as-active-knowing and the differentiated negotiation-towards-an-outcome. This is to draw out the difference in focus or emphasis, which then produces a different set of priorities and methods. It does not mean that outcome is not important or relevant in the pursuit of knowing (a point clarified in 6.1.1). In chapter 2.4, phenomenology established that consciousness has intentionality, and therefore directionality (Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy). Negotiation-as-active-knowing aims to find movement, and the act of knowing the world is to search for something.

Secondly, although I will state in 6.4.1 that negotiation-as-active-knowing is not viable as a method for conflict resolution, this is because it does not work quickly or in a tight time frame. However, I do believe that it can provide ways of resolving tension or pre-empting conflict. I support this through argument in sections 6.3.1 and 6.3.2.

The research priority is in advancing more equitable and reconciliatory practices; evolving ways of thinking and attitudes that are more agile and outward-orientated and less anxiety-forming, paranoid⁶³ or inward-orientated. I would argue this is the value and strength of negotiation-as-active-knowing as a methodology. However, this would also mean that there are limitations.

In the following I deliberate on some of negotiation-as-active-knowing's strengths and limitations as a methodology. I consider negotiation-as-active-knowing in relation to the power of the artist, role and relationship between artist and participant-collaborator,

⁶³ This does not mean to say all short term negotiation or forms of negotiation other than negotiation-as-active-knowing are paranoid. I am raising my concern at how certain methods around post-structuralism aimed at developing criticality may promote tendency of paranoia. For example, in a critical reading or deconstruction of a text conducted alone, one tends to feel that one is never critical *enough*. See Sedgwick (2003) *Touching Feeling: Affect, Pedagogy and Performativity*, Duke University Press.

autonomy of self and other (Kester 2011, Bishop 2004, 2006a, 2006c), improvisation (Douglas & Coessens 2011) and the public art commissioning process (Matarasso 1996, 2010). I consider negotiation-as-active-knowing against practices of public pedagogy (Freire 1970) and critical deconstruction, encoding and decoding (Derrida 1997, Hall 1980).

6.1 Implications for art Discourse, social art practice, public commission of art

6.1.1 Autonomy of self and other

As established in section 2.1, current views on autonomy and shared authorship that dominate socially engaged art practice involve a polarisation between autonomy (denoting critical functional subjectivity) and shared authorship (denoting compromised, co-opted or somewhat dysfunctional subjectivity) (Kester 2011, Bishop 2006a, 2006c)⁶⁴ which I think is not very productive in thinking about forms of engagement and negotiation with others. In addition to Gene Sharp's (2003) criticism of negotiation, readings from recent art historical discourse reveal scepticism towards negotiation. Kester (2011) contrasts a 'good' form of subjectivity, favoured by post-conceptualist and post-structuralist theory and defined as 'fluid, open, shifting and incapable of violence', with the antithetical form of 'bad' subjectivity defined as 'fixed, closed, coherent, and violently instrumentalising'. (2011:82) He demonstrates how 'good' and 'bad' subjectivity are linked in debates in political theory by Giorgio Agamben and Jean-Luc Nancy to a radical singularity that is seen as liberatory and a collective or communal identity that is assumed to be oppressive. Collective forms of identity, intrinsically needing to undergo negotiations, are seen as inferior to 'un-negotiated', and therefore more 'authentic', uncompromised, unadulterated forms of identity (although it is contentious whether or not such forms of identity can exist), a view that Kester contests (Kester, 2011:88). Kester goes on to argue that this has been a central structuring opposition between modernity and pre-modernity – the pre-modern artist (or person) is subordinated to culture and society, incapable of independent or critical thought, having to stay in tow with the collective; and the modern artist is liberated, alienated from and critical of his own society (ibid).

⁶⁴ See also discussion between Grant Kester and Claire Bishop in *Artforum* in 2006. Bishop, C (2006) The Social Turn: Collaboration and its Discontents. *Artforum*, February 2006, 179-185. Kester, G. (2006) Another Turn. *Artforum*, May 2006. Online resources: <http://www.couldyoubemorespecific.com/research/grant-kester-response-to-claire-bishop-%E2%80%98another-turn%E2%80%99/> and http://onedaysculpture.org.nz/assets/images/reading/Bishop%20_%20Kester.pdf. Accessed 15 May 2013.

A critical re-consideration and positioning of negotiation-as-active-knowing within social art practice would serve to reposition negotiation's value and role within the debates on artistic autonomy and relinquished or shared authorship, showing that a collapse of autonomy or adulteration of identity is not necessarily entailed by acts of negotiation with others.

Critical distance and liberated subjectivity

Kester's (2011) concept of calibrative interplay as tested, evidenced and refined by the articulation of the three case studies in chapter 4 establishes that there is always a continuous interplay of self or assertiveness and other or receptiveness in our relational-responsiveness with others and our surroundings. Negotiation with others does not collapse or dilute the position, values and expertise of the self, but subjects it to a calibrative exchange with others and otherness that produces possible re-alignments and new relational understanding. A shifting, oscillating cognitive and perceptive movement operates within immersive involvement, not outside of it. Distance is necessary for negotiation; through it criticality and reflexivity are exercised. Criticality is not abandoned. Negotiation-as-active-knowing's calibrative effect works on and creates transferability between intra- and inter-subjective positions, between direct experience, reflexivity and practical embedded knowledge (as argued in 5.4).

Strengthened sense of self and connectivity with others

The case studies show that the act of negotiating is closely linked with being able to intuit a sense of movement on a ground that is unfamiliar, disorientating and/or alienating. Great agility, flexibility and attentiveness are needed in order to actively sense and respond, almost simultaneously, to conditions and relationships with others, and to anticipate the next move. Kester states that contingent interplay with others involves oscillations between assertion and *dissolution* of the self: "Identity is always carried forward through a double movement, a diachronic oscillation, between the assertion and dissolution of self" (Kester, 2011: 82). This research outcome contradicts the act (even temporarily) of dissolution of self. Negotiation-as-active-knowing fundamentally strengthens one's sense of self and also deepens one's sense of understanding of and connectivity with others.

Withness and aboutness positions not binary oppositions

The case studies established that both withness and aboutness thinking, proximity and distance or positions of inside and outside are not binary oppositions but in calibrative interplay: that they are necessary to, co-existent with and contingent on each other. This research finding therefore modifies Shotter's (2005) critical positioning of the aboutness

position. In negotiation-as-active-knowing, both 'witness-thinking' and 'aboutness-thinking' are not mutually exclusive; negotiation-as-active-knowing needs to move and roam between the spaces, thinking and *positions* denoted by self and other, confronting emerging tensions and apparent contradictions. It does not involve a suspension of judgment and is not reductive towards its treatment of difference (this was discussed in 5.2.1 and 5.4.2). As co-negotiators we step into and out of positions of self and otherness. Through immersive involvement, relational responsiveness and calibrative interplay, we attend to a constantly changing contact and envisioning/revising of the ground and the world of otherness around us. There are points of tension produced and held in the interstices between self and other, points of uncertainty that always make us want to move towards resolution, and certainties that become very generative and productive in our negotiation of otherness and our world. This also establishes that within negotiation-as-active-knowing, an outcome that takes the form of movement towards a greater sense of certainty is at work. As stated in the introduction to this chapter, there is no binary or false opposition between active inquiry as process and outcome, but points of tension that are productive and generative. Active knowing co-exists with and is contingent on outcome.

6.1.2 Hyper-reflexivity and the artist's creative agency

In 2.1, I established that there is another pole to the discourse of socially engaged art where artists exercise a hyper-reflexivity and sense of responsibility towards the ethics of their actions and the imbalance of power relationships and cultural capital in relation to the marginalised communities they often work with. This is often the case in regeneration projects, possibly leading to a conscious withholding, control or suspension of one's creative interests and agency in facilitation of others' interests and agency.

The curiosity and interest in imagining and constructing new ideas and possibilities is inherent to any creative endeavour, and without the 'agency and power to exercise/execute one's ideas' - which is licensed by the concept of 'intervention' - this curiosity, interest and endeavour cannot be sustained. I have argued that in an engaged art process, power needs to be seen in a fluid, relational way that acknowledges the mitigating effects of contextual knowledge, relational structures and what are perceived as 'weaker' power positions, all of which are established as significant forms of power in the case studies (for example 4.1.4 Incident 4). Negotiation-as-active-knowing demands that all parties, including the artists, do not withhold or suspend their own creative agency, power, ideas and values, but subject them to active calibrative interplay and relational responsiveness with those of others.

The practice of negotiation-as-active-knowing calls for a new role and relationship between artist and collaborator/participants that is neither based on self-centred intervention nor other-centred facilitation but a reciprocal negotiation and calibration of difference.

6.1.3 Expertise of the artist

The repositioning the role of artist from artist-instigator and artist-facilitator to artist-negotiator called for above does not dissolve the catalysing, instigative or facilitative activities that artists have previously performed. It does not dilute the specific knowledge, commitment, perseverance and expertise of the artist. As someone who is more invested in the act than other participants, the artist plays an activating and driving role in negotiation-as-active-knowing. The artist's expertise is also especially valuable in, for example, establishing interstitial spaces and intervals for experiences of direct interpersonal engagement and reflexivity, conversation with self and others, communicative interface, visualisation-as-walking exercises and imagined scenarios within the process of negotiation-as-active-knowing. The expertise is however, geared towards inclusivity and living participation, not exclusivity and revered authority.

6.1.4. Improvisation within social art practice

Negotiation-as-active-knowing creates greater possibilities for sense of improvisation (Douglas & Coessens 2011) in engagement with others/otherness. In social art practice, when an artist goes into a project, many things are experienced as givens or perceived as constraints and heavy challenges and responsibilities for the artist to devise possible solutions and activities. I have stated in chapter 3.3 that one feels the need to negotiate in face of perceived constraints, whereas one feels the possibility for improvisation when there is more perceived freedom. Douglas & Coessens (2011) however asserts that improvisation is an interplay between givens and possibilities, determinate and indeterminate, in producing variations of practice.

In a social art project, the artist needs to develop a finely tuned and nuanced sense of the most appropriate tone, gesture and approach for contacting and negotiating with participants, partners, funders and communities, in order to devise movement on the ground, or ways to bring the work forward. The sense of movement and possibility that a process of negotiation-as-active-knowing creates may shift the perception of both artist and participants, and

provides a different relationship and different ways of seeing or facing conditions on the ground.⁶⁵ Structures, relationships and practices may become seen as less constraining, softening the boundaries and initial rigidity of the structures, thereby facilitating a sense of improvisational exploration. The activity of proposing imagined scenarios (4.3) activates a sense of improvisational relationship with social conditions, turning them into constructive grounds for active exploration and improvisation involving relational responsiveness and calibrative interplay with others and otherness.

The role of improvisation within negotiation-as-active-knowing is especially important when seen in relation to the need for evolving alternative practices that will work in the given context. The negotiated practice should not take the exact form of the old or the new. It is not a readymade solution imposed from outside through a rational process. It should not take on something tried and tested to work elsewhere. It needs to be improvised within the relationships, structures, practices and circumstances of the existing context of practice, and come out of these, in order to achieve applicability and sustainability in that context. The relationships, structures, practices and context of practice are the *ground* and the *support* for the negotiated practice. Without establishing and building interconnections among these through improvisations, the new negotiated practice cannot work. As I have stated in section 4.3.12, improvisation is sensed as increasingly possible with the perceived softening of constraints, increased confidence (built through the exercise of imagination) and proposal-making and response, which are acts of improvisation. They contribute to a sense of mobility within the ground.

6.1.5 Globalised art nomadism, capitalism, provincial neo-colonialism

Kester's (2011) analysis of the landscape of globalisation and development draws out a critique of institutional patronage, grants and commissions, as well as biennials, which have produced a wave of highly visible collaborative art practice. He describes this as an 'abbreviated, nomadic' way of working as a result of commissioning processes and the pressures of art world career development. It is in danger of becoming a form of provincialism that employs a 'generic set of creative solutions and a priori assumptions' that

⁶⁵ Irish artist Fiona Whelan's project Policing Dialogues involved a process that produced a new relationship between those who are regarded as 'youth-at-risk' and the police. I would argue that this re-orientation, this new way of facing these figures and 'signs' of authority, constitutes a tangible *outcome* for the work. It is crucial for generating future interactions, and enabling relationships that produce supportive conditions and structures on the ground for youth and the community. Whelan, F. (2010) The Policing Dialogues Review: Reflections on an Exploration of Neighbourhood Power Relations at THE LAB by WHAT'S THE STORY? Collective. <http://section8.ie/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2011/02/The-Policing-Dialogues-Review-2.pdf>

are either indiscriminately applied or changed with slight improvisations for each site (Kester 2011: 135). Such working conditions and arrangements do not allow the artist to fully enter into the complexities of the site, which Kester describes as ‘the resistance provided *ground* of practice’. This ground is constituted by the conditions, events, histories and predispositions of the site that challenge, contradict or subvert the artist’s consciousness, intentionality and autonomy (Kester 2011: 135).

The act and process of negotiation-as-active-knowing operates through its foundations in immersive involvement, relational responsiveness and calibrative interplay. These qualities operate across different levels and layers of conversations, improvisations, re-alignments and reflexivity. Together they can engender a nuanced and informed understanding of ground, contact and movement that can overcome the limitations posed by the globalised conditions of art practice.

6.1.6 Public art commissioning structures and processes

The same strengths outlined above also challenge the constraints of funding time frames and outcome orientated public art commissioning and evaluation processes. Koh and I often make our own financial contributions to our art projects (i.e. pro bono) due to the lengthy duration and challenging nature of the work involved. In the Galway project, we stretched the budget given to us for three months of activities to cover seven months of activities. Similar ‘improvisations’ with budgets and time frames have to be made with our international projects.

The selection of these projects is often based on predictable and well-defined outcomes. Matarasso (1996, 2010) has argued for the merits of uncertainty in evaluating and re-defining the values of social art projects. As argued in 5.1.1, the engagement within negotiation-as-active-knowing needs to remain open, anticipatory and fluid and not foreclosed towards specific ends. The challenge of being persuasive in funding applications when we are arguing for an indeterminate outcome from the projects means that our relationship and credibility with our funders has to be established over a substantial period of time and is reliant on the conceptual clarity of our methodology.

6.2 Public pedagogy and critical consciousness (Freire 1970)

In my narrative of the Ayed crisis in 4.1.2 I identified the failure of dialogue as negotiative procedure as a reason for the failure of the collaboration; i.e. the Ayed experiment towards a new form of collaborative working relationship resulted in discord due to the failure to produce a common understanding and set of commonly adopted practice. However, the ground of relationships is more complex than that. It became clear to me sometime after the crisis that there were other underlying tensions brought about by long standing struggles over status, power and mistrust of others caused by the conditions in Myanmar. Competition for respectability, and the recognition that resources and opportunities are constrained, produced competitive narratives of who were the 'real' or 'good' artists' amongst the artist communities. Some of these beliefs and behaviours were accompanied by less than ethical practices.

Experiential negotiation involves an oscillatory process of looking from different perspectives. It is important to remain open and not let one's immediate judgement of behaviour – made from one's established thinking and values –foreclose the learning process. Criticality and judgement is however not suspended but exercised within the journey of engagement. One needs to have a position in order to negotiate. Oscillatory movement needs to touch and bounce off positions of difference. However, one should adopt an open attitude to allow the interactive and relational-responsive exchanges to lead us to experience 're-orientating views' that can shift one's perception and create new insights for each party involved. This is the process of feeding back to one's practical embedded knowledge that was discussed in 5.4.

For the Myanmar people, covert, suspicious and mutually contentious ways of association are part of everyday practice. Such behaviour has become very entrenched. Due to their familiarity, they are taken-for-granted and rendered invisible in one's everyday mode of performance and cognition. They operate as the *absent active* dimension that Bortoft (1996) identified (discussed in 5.4). The Myanmar context shows the importance of developing a way of responding to otherness that can overcome paranoid mutual suspicion and deep seated bias. Negotiation-as-active-knowing suggests possibilities for addressing this. NICA's activities that were discussed in chapter 4.1 spanned the years 2002 – 2007. Since early 2011, the world has seen rapid change in Myanmar. However, when Jay returned to undertake a community education project with a Myanmar NGO in late 2011, he witnessed that power relations and ways of interaction and association remained largely the same. The Rohingya

violence that is currently unfolding in Myanmar's Rakhine state⁶⁶ shows that bias, paranoia and conflict between groups remains entrenched.

In Paulo Freire's (1970) liberatory process of *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, the critical attainment of realisation or insight is articulated as a liberatory instance. It is accompanied by conscientisation, a process whereby the oppressed realise the condition of their oppression and take steps to overcome it. The recognition or naming of the condition of oppression is of key importance to the process of attaining liberation. This begs the question: what is the place of 'conscientisation' in negotiation? Is conscientisation necessary for empowerment? And if not, does it then produce outcomes without real empowerment? Morrow and Torres (2002) state that "conscientisation describes the social psychological processes through which the dominated become aware of blocked subjectivities related to shared experience" (Morrow & Torres, 2002: 103). They explain that conscientisation involves reading the world and how society works rigorously. "This deeper reading of reality is identified with a form of critical consciousness that is revealed through praxis". The result is a form of demystification or demythologization, that implies the overcoming of 'false consciousness,' that is a 'semi-transitive or naïve transitive state of consciousness' (ibid). Freire's process of conscientisation involves awakening acts of knowing through 'codification' and 'decodification' exercises within which a person recognises oppression. Morrow and Torres state that "the crucial psychological process required is that of using new forms of language to get "distance" from the taken-for-granted realities of everyday life" (ibid). They continue: "...in the context of techniques for literacy training, Freire seeks to understand these processes in social semiotic terms in relation to the "codification" and "decodification" that accompanies the act of knowing as "critical revelation" (Freire, 1985: 167 quoted in Morrow & Torres, 2002: 104).

Jacques Derrida's (1997) deconstruction and Stuart Hall's (1980) encoding/decoding approaches are post structuralist activities that also involves processes of interpretation and re-interpretation, in awakening and attaining critical insight in the form of semantic activity. In negotiation-as-active-knowing, the *transparent* practical embedded knowledge, working as 'absent active' (Bortoft 1996) needs to gradually become apparent, revealed, brought to surface, by being pointed 'to' in the process of relational responsiveness and calibrative interplay. Improvisation then comes into play to evolve a properly negotiated practice that would be different from the existing one or the foreign one. I have argued in 6.4 on the

⁶⁶ BBC News, What is Behind Burma's Wave of Religious Violence? 4 April 2013. <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-22023830>. Accessed 15 May 2013.

importance of improvisation to produce an adjusted practice out of negotiation that can work with the contextual conditions and structures. Enacting exercises aimed at critical consciousness without the establishment of an interstitial process and time-space to reverberate new ideas and realisations with existing ones will not be adequate for evolving new ways of thinking that can be translated into practice, or new practices that can support new ways of thinking. This durational time-space for *experiential* calibration in *embodied co-presence* with others and otherness is crucial for the testing, exploration and evolution of a new understanding and adjusted practices. One could argue that the Rohingya crisis precisely points out the need for a process of negotiation-as-active-knowing to have been incorporated as an active part of everyday life. This is not possible given the existing tensions and separation between the buddhist Barmans and muslim Rohingya. However, rationally worked out and imposed readymade answers and solutions would not produce the shifts in orientations and practical embedded knowledge discussed in 5.4.

Critical consciousness (Freire 1970) and deconstruction (Derrida 1997) are hugely important areas of work, but the awakening of criticality alone cannot produce knowledge of how to go on, how to move forward. They would of course awaken the need and create the orientation needed for such efforts. Negotiation-as-active-knowing is *praxis* that addresses critical consciousness.

Another reason why critical consciousness awakened through semantic activity alone is inadequate to support change has to do with the *constitutive* nature of practical embedded knowledge in relation to our sense of well being and operativity in the world. As revealed in the exchange between Ganzug and Oyu (4.3.7) and the Mongolian collaborators' close identification with nomadic values, ideas and knowledge (4.3.4), it is extremely difficult to engage with such constitutive values and knowledge directly or discuss them rationally. I believe it can be damaging to one's sense of identity and wellbeing if these are dismantled without a proper process of evolving alternative or substitutive supportive structures for the new knowledge/practice. Such support needs to be relationally grounded and connected within the local circumstances and structures of organisation and relationships. (It is important to bear in mind that this discussion is on evolution, not revolution. However, the argument here would also reveal the limitations of revolutions in producing lasting change.) The process of negotiation-as-active-knowing is able to engage with practical embedded knowledge in its emphasis on *gradual* orientation and re-orientation, shifts, re-alignments and reconfigurations of organising ideas. In Thinking Together (4.3), the activation of the imagination (through proposing and answering of imaginative questions), the interstitial

time-space of fluidity established through familiarity, and intervals between cycles of conversations work together to facilitate the possibility of change. This time-space is required for a gradual process of discovery and coming upon 're-orientating views' that *reveal* embedded practical knowledge. This is gradually being pointed *towards* (as opposed to pointed *out*) and engaged with (with or without being made directly obvious or apparent). The act of singling out an oppressive act or thing as the root of a problem without understanding the embeddedness and implications of it within wider structures misses the point and would not be able to evolve a way forward that is workable or which can be integrated with existing circumstances. This is the difference between evolution and revolution.

If critical consciousness is a necessary pre-requisite of empowerment, then this would be a limitation of negotiation-as-active-knowing. I see the main implication and motivation for negotiation-as-active-knowing in addressing how to face and overcome the barrier created by the anxiety towards difference and the sense of impotence that comes from an inability to negotiate a disorientating situation. Conscientisation is important, but conscientisation without negotiation would become an activity that assumes ignorance of the other and that she/he is in need of being rescued by the superior self of the artist-intervener.

The Myanmar context shows the importance of developing a way of responding to otherness that can overcome paranoia and deep seated bias. Power replicates and implicates on all levels of society, from the very top to the bottom rungs. Conscientisation works when we can relegate the problems of self to the condition of being oppressed by an other. But it is always more difficult to recognise the oppressor in ourselves. In the same way it is difficult to see and recognise irrational fear and deep seated bias, as is happening with the Rohingya violence in Myanmar. What allows us to recognise this is perhaps in an unflinching face-off, engagement or confrontation with the other - perhaps the radically different other - as our equal; not as a threat or the cause of our problems, who we have to eat or be eaten up by. Negotiation-as-active-knowing can point a way forward in this direction.

I believe that the process of negotiation-as-active-knowing can awaken criticality in less explicit ways - both self and other orientated criticality that comes from a sense of movement and of distance that allows us to shift and see things from different perspectives. In Galway (4.2) and Mongolia (4.3), I established that the interstitial time-space can facilitate such critical reflexivity.

The dangers of overcoming fear of difference through persuasive discourse or rationalisation alone without confronting dissent and difference in a fully engaged embodied manner is that it produces mere tolerance or accommodation of difference: a reduction, caricature and generalisation of it, instead of real understanding. I have personally experienced this in my home country Malaysia.⁶⁷ It does not result in knowing how to be in a relationship with difference and how to move onward together.

6.3 Conflict and power

6.3.1 Ethics of negotiation: conflict/ resistance and power of the artist

Negotiation-as-active-knowing as an artistic methodology needs to actively acknowledge and be centred on conflict and difference, and negotiate issues of power. As I have stated earlier, the conflict/resistances that I (as an artist working to facilitate the interest of others) have encountered in Burma for example, led me to question the assumption inherent in socially engaged art practice that artists working with any community, but particularly the marginalised, underprivileged, or oppressed, can assume that we occupy a position that is not in conflict with those we work with, based on the fact that the artist is 'doing good' for the people with whom s/he is engaging.

Without falling into a position of paranoia and phobia about the exercise of power, I agree that power needs vigilant observation and mitigation against abuse. However, as I argued in section 6.1.2 above, conceptions and understanding of the power of the artist need to be re-considered in relation to the powers of others. An important shift in understanding which negotiation-as-active-knowing produces is our changing attitude towards conflict and resistance as we encounter them as responses to our work and ideas. As I have argued in 5.2.4, in a social collaborative process, tension, resistance and conflict should not be viewed as destructive or unconstructive. Instead they must be negotiated as dynamics generative of power and agency. In a relational negotiation process, the power in every individual should be emphasised and nurtured, so that each has the capacity to negotiate the power of others, and can engage with the tensions arising from difference constructively and not destructively.

⁶⁷ The unity and peace in multi-racial Malaysia is upheld through a creed of mutual 'respect' and 'tolerance'. A read through of any newspaper in the country will reveal the hypocrisy and limitations of such an ideology of tolerance. See *Malaysian Insider* <http://www.themalaysianinsider.com/>. Accessed 6 May 2012

Balance of power; dangers of neo-colonialism

There are ethical questions around iFIMA's work, particularly with NICA, and will continue to be. Did our work constitute an intervention and did we have the right to intervene in the situation in Myanmar? We exercised our responsibility for the wellbeing and safety of our staff, trainees and collaborators very seriously, taking every precaution we could to create a safe space for NICA's work (including being careful not to gain visibility on international activist platforms that would affect our work inside Myanmar)(4.1). As the articulation of the case study shows, we consciously intend and made efforts to expose, highlight and subject our differences in views, actions and ideas to be actively challenged, tested and negotiated by others. However, in the initial stage, I have shown how we did not have adequate knowledge of how to properly negotiate.

This PhD research has repositioned negotiation within the social art process, as the Mongolia project shows, drawing out ways, activities and processes whereby our views, values and assumptions are exposed, challenged, tested and calibrated alongside and by those of others described as collaborators and 'participants'.

Negotiation-as-active-knowing cannot ensure equitable conditions and outcomes

The balance of power in a collaboration or working relationship will influence and underline who is the party to give in or 'lose out' more in the event of unresolved differences within the process, or who needs to re-orientate and re-align more, for example, an artist or a funding organization. Negotiation-as-active-knowing is aimed at cultivating sensibilities and attentiveness. It suggests proper process and supportive mechanisms for a way to understanding difference, however it cannot guarantee equitable outcomes from negotiation-as-active-knowing.

Fundamentally, I do not think that any theory or method alone can ensure the ethicality of action or outcome of a negotiation. This is why a nurturing and cultivation of the power and agency of all co-negotiators that supports the exercise of dissent is of primary importance in a negotiation process.

Danger of relational responsiveness as act of the blind leading the blind

Active negotiation with difference and dissent, as way to calibrate and adjust our understanding of one another, is also a way to address the danger inherent in a methodology informed by and constructed through immersive involvement and relational responsiveness: that of the blind leading the blind. As a methodology aimed at co-negotiators who begin from

positions of *outsiders* to one another, negotiation-as-active-knowing creates a conscious and *deliberate shift* into a position of ‘witness’ with others. However, as human beings and organised communities and societies, we seek the comforting assurance of things and experiences that affirm our established values and identity. Coherent ideological groups and communities are organised around the *reinforcement* of established values and relationships (through immersive involvement and relational responsiveness), not around *challenge*, which is provided by engagement with *difference*. I believe that as people we each have blind spots and need negotiations with many *different* others (different others to ourselves and different others to others) to make us aware of them and find ways to address them.

6.3.2 Negotiation as ethical practice

Ethics of negotiation: equitable process and outcome

Can negotiation-as-active-knowing be practised in an ethical manner to effectively calibrate differences in positions, values and concerns? As I have pointed out in chapter 2.2, negotiation can be practised as manipulative arm-twisting by the powerful or as circumvention by the weak, particularly within positions of marginalisation and oppression. I concede that circumvention may be necessary at some point of a negotiation process, but should not be practised as an end.

Moving sideways as opposed to circumvention

In Koh’s and my work, we have had to constantly explore and improvise alternative ways of movement when the original does not work. For example, in Galway, the obstruction to interactivity posed by the secrecy and distancing of the Travellers was resolved via our work with the children, which could be considered as a detour, a movement ‘sideways’. This movement sideways was a result of exchanges and negotiations within immersive involvement and relational-responsiveness with the Traveller community at the halting site. It began with their acceptance of our presence and assigning us a certain role within their everyday lives. Without this process, the outcome would not be the same. Moving sideways to get over an impasse may be a necessary measure within a particular point in time of the process. However, in following the process through, I believe that negotiation-as-active-knowing should not avoid or circumvent the important issues of difference that are at the heart of tensions. A temporary detour may be necessary, but in the end it is important that the actions create a softening of the ground, and the differences themselves are grappled with to produce new understanding, and are not merely avoided or circumvented.

6.4 Conclusion

6.4.1 *The centrality of negotiation as experience in everyday life*

If we think a little more about how we go about our daily lives, we will find that negotiation as a way of knowing and exploring our world, making our way through it, is an activity that is always with us. In this sense, negotiation is like what Bortoft (1996) describes as ‘absent active’ - things we don’t notice unless they are absent, for example health, as they are in the background but are of operative necessity for our daily existence. Negotiation-as-experiential-knowing is somewhat like that - as long as we are engaged with the world, and the beings and things in it. Even though we are more accustomed to thinking about negotiation more in the sense of negotiation-towards-outcome, we will see that, for negotiation-towards-outcome to turn out well, it needs to be supported by negotiation-as-active-experiential-knowing, which grounds it. Negotiation-as-active-knowing builds familiarisation, intimate knowledge, confidence and a sense of certainty, which are important factors towards outcome.

Terms of engagement rather than terms of agreement

In a world with increasing gaps of difference, where strangeness has become threatening to one’s sense of security and a source of anxiety,⁶⁸ challenge and conflict, it is necessary to come up with more positive and convivial pre-emptive approaches towards conflict, connected to the way we learn about or get to know the world around us. Our way of knowing the world and others is an experiential process that uses our whole body, not just the mind, beginning with experiences and encounters in early childhood. In American classrooms, negotiation and mediation training is beginning to be taught to children at the level of primary education, in response to increasing cultural differences and incidents of violence, bullying and racism in schools,⁶⁹ which result from not being able to deal with cultural difference. I think what is required is to find a way of developing a relationship with difference and otherness so that it is no longer seen as threatening, and we can begin to *face* it {orientation} and engage with it on constructive terms. Rather than seeking to come into *terms of agreement*, as in Hoffman’s description of ‘settling’ difference, I think we should be looking for *terms of engagement* with

⁶⁸ A report by Nick Robinson, “How has immigration changed Britain?”, reveals that in Peterborough 10% of households have no-one at home who speaks English. A person interviewed in the Peterborough market, Ian, who runs the shoe-repair stall, tells Robinson that his house is for sale as he no longer believes his son will get a good education in the city; and his father does not visit him anymore because he doesn’t feel safe in Peterborough. *BBC News*, 30 April, 2013. <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-22339080>. Accessed 30 April 2013

⁶⁹ <http://www.negotiationtraining.com.au/articles/school-education/> (Article titled ‘Negotiation Education and Learning in the Classroom’).

others and otherness, as part of a longer term strategy for relationship building, exchange and creating understanding across values and beliefs.

Negotiation-as-active-knowing is not targeted to function as a tool that produces precise outcomes, nor is it aimed as a method for conflict-resolution. However, it can be pre-emptive of conflict. Negotiation-as-active-knowing actively confronts and engages with positions of tension and dissent to bring about renewed understanding that may pre-empt conflict. Tensions, dissent and resistance exist whenever there is difference and disagreement, whenever there are boundaries of inside and outside. If we believe, as Shotter does, in the interconnected nature of human life, then we have no choice but to negotiate with others and otherness. I believe that it is by negotiating with others and otherness that we can in some measure address a concern voiced by Scottish psychologist RD Laing:

The range of what we think and do
Is limited by what we fail to notice
And because we fail to notice
That we fail to notice
There is little we can do
To change
Until we notice
How failing to notice
Shapes our thoughts and deeds

(Quoted from Zweig & Abrams, 1991: xix)

6.4.2 Summarising important findings

I make a final summary and reiteration of the important findings of the research:

Negotiation-as-active-knowing is negotiation as experiential process. There is no denying that an outcome is always expected and desired out of negotiation. But perhaps by paying more attention to the *experiential* process of negotiation, it is able to bring us towards a more desirable, sustainable and equitable outcome.

The process of oscillating calibrative movement is facilitated by the contact or encounter with others and otherness. It provides the coming-up-against-ness, the contact and exchange that gradually reconfigures the organising ideas in our practical embedded knowledge which inform our values and conduct. This may happen in hardly noticeable ways. When we exercise active receptive attentiveness in acts of perception of new experiences, our 'organising idea' is continuously and gradually subjected to possibilities of being shifted and re-configured. We thus are moved towards being able to face (orient) ourselves towards difference in a different way, and imbued with an anticipatory sense/knowledge of how to carry on with otherness, to build a constructive path with it.

Movement is the most important quality of negotiation, in the cognitive, perceptive, experiential, directional and physical senses of the term. Through immersive involvement, relational responsiveness and calibrative interplay, elements previously experienced as 'givens' in the domains of ground (systems, organisation, practices) and contact with others (protocols, performances) came to be experienced as more open for manoeuvre and less determined.

Negotiation-as-active-knowing is a dynamic calibrative interplay between self and other, of existing knowledge and practices with different/new knowledge and practices. It grounds and emphasises the interconnections between a more resilient and agile self and other within the ecology of society.

Crossing the river

The process that is negotiation-as-active-knowing can be likened to the metaphor of crossing a river by feeling its bed (2.3). In this experience, our senses are fully engaged. We are proceeding slowly, shifting our feet, pausing, feeling, gently turning. New sensations come. We take time to react, to take them all in. We pause, move, pause again, allow the incoming impulses to calibrate, adjust and fine tune where to next find our footing. Incoming and outgoing impulses are able to 'meet'. We orientate, venture out again. When doubt surfaces, we decide to return, retrace our steps, gain our composure and venture out again.

Negotiation-as-active-knowing is this process for the engagement with difference. It is a way of walking - of crossing - inside difference.

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Appendix I

Reading Allan Kaprow's 'Success and Failure When Art Changes' for insights on negotiation

Even though negotiation is very central and implicit in a wide range of contemporary art practices, it is seldom directly articulated, elaborated upon, examined or exemplified in detail as to how the negotiation unfolds and the details of how it works. In order to evidence this fact, I do a closer reading of an artist's text, Allan Kaprow's (1995) 'Success and Failure When Art Changes'.

Writing in the 80s, Kaprow was reflecting back on activities which he and Herb Kohl, an educationalist, made in the 60s, called Project Other Ways. They had been working in schools with the belief that art can help students do better in maths and language. In this text, there are a few instances where we encounter implied acts of negotiation. Kaprow recounted the participation of a group of school children who were streamed as poor illiterate learners. They began to show interest in literacy and writing through engagement with graffiti found in the city's public and restaurant toilets. It had not been easy to instruct them to read and write directly, yet the graffiti made them interested to begin writing their own stories onto papers pasted on the walls of the project.

Kaprow wondered if the school children's turn of performance was due to the fact that they were paid an unusual amount of attention in the project. I think it was more than that. The experience of reading the graffiti about gangsters and 'shady' figures from their own neighbourhood, brought the whole exercise of writing into the realm of their everyday lives, made it relevant to their lived experience. They became very responsive because the stuff they are writing and reading began to make sense – become related and relevant – to their lived experience. They gained affirmative assurance that their stories are valid and good enough as material to be discussed and placed into a more shared public sphere.

During the project, Kaprow and Kohl managed to get hold of discarded outmoded Dick and Jane early reader books, and decided that it is a good idea to get the small group of school children to 'rewrite and reillustrate' the characters in order to depart from their stereotyped narratives, to see if a different narrative could emerge. I think the re-invention of the textbook characters and replacing them with real life ones from their lived experience activated their imagining of scenarios and possibilities. These acts were important in their

negotiation with the existing stories and characters in search of alternatives. There would have been oscillatory and calibrative interplay between what the children experience in real life, what they see in the books, and possibility what they fantasise could become real. The rewriting and reillustration gave them a sense of power and agency to imagine, propose, and realise their ideas.

Kaprow wrote:

“Our assumption was that the kids’ sensitivity to these biases (the majority were black or Hispanic) would provide us the *openings* for *frank* discussion, and would make attractive the prospect of wholesale revision of the texts. We were right.

Dick and Jane were transformed into monsters with wildly coloured hair. Images were cut out and replaced with drawn ones. Pages were *reordered* to create time *reversals*. And the text became a parody of “Run, Spot, run!,” as “Run, man, fuzz!” seemed suddenly more *real*. (1995:154) (Own emphasis)

The description of the activity suggested that negotiation thrives on open exploration. The children explored what could and could not be expressed. Kaprow and Kohl suspended what was regarded as ‘acceptable’. Norms were re-configured – through the acts of re-looking, re-ordering and reversals of materials and processes described.

There were also other negotiations alluded to in Kaprow’s text: between the kind of experimental activities he was making and the art establishment; and between such experiments with education and trained teachers. According to Kaprow, this ‘new arts’ was bewildering for the art as well as education establishments, and that the intent to merge the arts with things not considered as art, shared two conditions:

“One was that the *borders* between the arts and the rest of life were *blurred*. The other was that their makers wanted them to be still known as art.” (1995:155) (My emphasis)

Kaprow’s view suggests that negotiation is possible only when boundaries and positions are as yet unclear, and therefore still malleable, or when a blurring occurs, allowing space for movement. Kaprow always insists on placing strong emphasis on ambiguity of identity and purpose of a work or activity. For him, this lack of clarity has an agency.

Appendix II: Concept for iFIMA's *Open Academy* and history of *Open Academy Ulaanbaatar*

The Open Academy in iFIMA's 'organisational' practice of creating alternative structures

Imagining Possibilities and *Thinking Together* were produced within the *Open Academy* framework of activities. *Open Academy* is carried out as part of iFIMA's work in 'organisational' practice. Since 1997, iFIMA has been organising and curating projects involving intercultural exchange. During this time, we have become acquainted with experiences of disempowerment due to inequality, isolation and marginalisation. Knowledge has increasingly become the subject of our focus as an important factor contributing to and maintaining inequality, as identified by Thomas Luckmann in *The Social Construction of Reality*.

Open Academy is conceived to create learning that would contribute to the building of appropriate organisational structures to address the learners' needs and concerns. The second aim is to find ways of mediating intercultural and inter-subjective exchange and understanding.

Open Academy becomes a platform to explore and experiment with alternative systems and structures that could be set up, where local participants could identify and name what they wanted to learn in order to strengthen their positions. The *Open Academy* is a semi-structured programme; where learners/participants identify and influence the content of the programme, and are encouraged to develop their resourcefulness and ability to see and imagine their environment in different ways, to identify unexplored opportunities; and evolve and develop collaborative actions and structures from the ground up.

In a globalised world, the *Open Academy* programme encourages a redistribution and re-employment of resources (e.g. skills, expertise, knowledge, energies) by connecting organizations, institutions and self-organized groups from different countries and contexts to develop networks, exchange and collaboration. Through this process, we hope that ideas and knowledge can be deepened through exchange and the skills, knowledge, expertise and resources that are deemed of little value or use in one place may in fact be of great value and use in another.

To date, *Open Academy* programmes have been run in Myanmar/Burma (in Yangon/Rangoon and Mandalay), Vietnam (Hue and Hanoi) and Mongolia (Ulaanbaatar). The artists, curators, cultural workers and educators who have been involved in the exchange of ideas, resources,

skills and knowledge have come from countries as diverse as Singapore, Thailand, Malaysia, Cambodia, USA, Sweden, Switzerland, Finland, Austria, Germany, China, The Philippines and Bangladesh.

The history to Open Academy Ulaanbaatar

iFIMA's work in Mongolia began from an invitation extended by Ariunaa Tserenpil, the director of Arts Council Mongolia (an NGO) whom Koh met in a conference for the forming of The Intra Asia Network (IAN) in Taipei in 2005. She was sufficiently impressed by Koh's presentation to invite us to Mongolia for an initial research trip to understand the cultural and art situations in Mongolia.

In October 2006, Koh and I made our first trip to Ulaanbaatar accompanied by Davide Quadrio, then the director of BizArt Shanghai, who was managing the *Compass Project* funded by Prince Claus Fund⁷⁰ from which the funds for the research and networking trip came out of. We conducted lectures and research in Ulaanbaatar coordinated by Arts Council Mongolia (ACM), as well as met and spoke with the heads of various organizations such as the National Gallery, the Union of Mongolian Artists and Gallery, the Fine Art Institute, Blue Sun Artists Group and with the Ministry of Science, Culture and Education.

During the 12-day visit, our observations and conversations convinced us that it was better for iFIMA and BizArt to work with an artist group like Blue Sun as a main partner and collaborator. ACM would continue to be involved in a different capacity. Relationships became slowly established leading to iFIMA being requested to become Blue Sun's adviser and to assist Blue Sun in various activities such as the initiation of an intercultural exchange or residency programme and the publishing of the first art magazine in Ulaanbaatar to be named "Creative World".

After that trip in 2006, with a better understanding of the situation, problems and needs in Mongolia, the proposal for a 3-year Open Academy Ulaanbaatar (OAU) programme was drawn up by Jay Koh and me. In 2007, funding was approved by Prince Claus Fund for the first year of the project to begin in 2008, with possibilities of further funding for the 2nd year and 3rd year. In 2008-09, BizArt gave considerable organisational support in the form of input into the selection and partial funding of the curators and artists for the OAU sessions. From 2010, after Quadrio left BizArt, iFIMA continued to work with Blue Sun to develop OAU. Quadrio's new organisation Arthub Asia continued to support OAU 2011.

⁷⁰ The Compass project grew out of Prince Claus Fund's aim to encourage collaborations and exchange between fellow '3rd world' countries or 'same-zone' aligned countries.

Appendix III: (CD Rom 1) Programme and activities for the *Open Academy Ulaanbaatar* Phase I (2008/09) and Phase II (2011), including OAU Grantee projects

(All photographs by Chu Yuan and/or Jay Koh unless otherwise stated)

Programme of activities for Open Academy Ulaanbaatar Phase I (2008-09)

Open Academy Ulaanbaatar Phase 1 (2008-09) introduced a range of new practices in the arts: from an overview of contemporary art practices, curatorial practice, new media, web design, ways of articulating, presenting and developing one's art practice, project development, proposal writing, funding opportunities and applications. Mongolian artists and students collaborated with visitors to realise a few events, Pearlman, Guth, Koh & Chu. The various workshops communicated to the artists, art students, curators and art managers that contemporary art opens up different ways of engagement and art-making.

Coordinator in Ulaanbaatar:

Yondon Dalhochir (a.k.a. Dalkha), Blue Sun Artist Group

Workshop facilitators:

Chu Chu Yuan (Malaysia/Singapore); Jay Koh (Singapore/Germany/Ireland); Deng Dafei (China); Liu Xi Xiang (China); Robert Guth (Australia); Li Zhenhua (China); Zheng Yunhan (China); Ellen Pearlman (USA); Jiang Jun (China); GeGe (China); Gabriel de la Cruz (Spain)

Sites of Activities:

Fine Arts Institute, University of Culture of Mongolia and Blue Sun Art Centre, Ulaanbaatar.

Period:

September 2008 to May 2009

Sponsor:

Prince Claus Fund, The Netherlands

Open Academy Phase I (2008/09) Activities:

1. Activities conducted by Chu Yuan (Malaysia/Singapore) and Jay Koh (Singapore/Germany/Ireland) from 28 September – 13 October 2008:

Chu Yuan and Jay Koh kicked off the Open Academy programme with workshops for artists and students of the Fine Arts Institute from 28 Sept to 13th Oct 2008 with workshops on Introduction to Contemporary Art Practices, Professional Art Practice and Arts Management



Chu Yuan with students during one of Jay Koh and Chu Yuan's lecture at the Fine Art Institute



Presentation on 'Contemporary Art Practices' at Blue Sun Artspace



Discussions with students for (left) their outdoor performance and (right) indoor project work



Students' group performance around a public monument



Left: Students at the Fine Art Institute creating their own hand signals for an artwork; right: Mongolian artist Enkhbold practising how to make an artist's presentation

2. Activities of Deng Dafei (China) and Liu Xi Xiang (China), 9th - 24th December, 2008

Dafei and Xi Xiang conducted workshops on web design for students of the Fine Art Institute. This led to the student creating their own personal websites. Dafei is part of the Utopia group in China, who has produced a series of very interesting public participative performances and engaged art interventions in various “institutionalized” spaces in China, for example in an old folks home, in private spaces of Christian worship, in a small and crowded immigrant workers’ living quarters etc. Together with Xi Xiang, they conducted talks on public and participative art practices from China for the artists in Blue Sun Artspace using their own works such as the “Family Museum” series as case studies. They also introduced art works of Chinese artists to the Mongolian artists.



Photographs by Deng Dafei and Liu Xi Xiang

3. Activities of Robert Guth (Australia), 4th - 30th March, 2009

The Fine Art Institute workshops:

Robert made presentations and held discussions about Photography and Performance Art. Beginning with students of the Fine Art Academy, who were mainly Painting majors, Robert conducted workshops which were fitted around students’ regular classes. The first two sessions were large and general but by the third session it had settled down to an interested core group. Robert felt that the students were rather submissive and obedient to rules and regulations set. This reflects the wider Mongolian attitude towards culture and society. He felt that they need to receive greater encouragement to be expressive and open: “They were not as forward as other groups I have worked with. They seemed happy to limit contact to the workshop times that were set.”

The Blue Sun workshops:

Robert made presentations and held discussions with Mongolian artists at the Blue Sun Artspace. Most of the participants in this workshop were practicing artists in painting, sculpture and design fields. The young artists were in their 30’s and many were full fledged practising artists. Robert participated in many performative activities with the Mongolian artists in Ulaanbaatar as well as in the countryside (please visit website link to see images of these various activities and engagements). He however felt that language was a barrier to a deeper exchange of ideas between himself and the Mongolian participants.

Photos gallery - <http://picasaweb.google.com/robert.guth.aust/Mongolia1#>



Photographs by Robert Guth

4. Activities of Li Zhenhua (China) and Zheng Yunhan (China), 5th - 21st April, 2009

Zhenhua's and Yunhan's workshops in Mongolia were aimed at exposing local participants to research work from a curatorial position. They shared their experiences and knowledge on their own research work which are based on their curatorial work that engages with archeological concepts, leading to multiple representations of ideas, concepts and histories of 'modernity'. This concept shares common ideas with archeologists like Jack Whaetherford (*The Making of the Modern World*) and is related to a contemporary art development. Zhenhua defines his research material into categories such as archive, dated architecture and future projects with multiple archeologies.

For more more information on Zhenhua's and Yunhan's work, please visit www.msgproduction.com

Zhenhua and Yunhan also conducted various interviews and research on Mongolian art when they were there. The video documentations of their interviews and activities in Ulaanbaatar can be viewed at: <http://www.bjartlab.com/read.php?97>

5. Activities of Ellen Pearlman (USA), 23rd April - 5th May, 2009

Ellen Pearlman conducted lectures at the Fine Arts Academy, workshops at Blue Sun Art Centre as well as made visits to various artists' studios, a private art school and the Xanadu art gallery.

She gave three lectures at the Fine Arts Academy. The first was on 20 years of contemporary Chinese history as seen through the eyes of Chinese women photographers. She discussed three distinct phases; the political, social dislocation and urban fragmentation, and finally the impact of advertising and eroticism. This lecture was presented showing the ability of female artists to enter the art world on a level equal with men.

The next lecture at the Academy was on contemporary Tibetan Art. Tibetans face some of the same problems as Mongolians, but are grappling with different issues as well. Both cultures have been dominated by outside Communist states, and both cultures have had their language taken from them. She showed examples of the Gendun Choephel School in Lhasa, Tibet which formed in 2003 as well as works by Tibetan artists in exile.

For the third lecture in New Media, Pearlman showed the students her own video in progress, "Beijing Boogie Woogie" and examples of Chinese artist Cao Fei's "China Tracey" series in Second Life from the Chinese Pavillion at the Venice Biennial. She also discussed examples of her work that is planned for the SIGGRAF Asia '09 in Japan.

With the Blue Sun artists group, she conducted a computer based portfolio review and professional critiques. From her interactions, she sensed that the artists needed support and encouragement to go beyond their normal art practices and to engage in activities they had never experienced. They were introduced to the New York based performance artist "Reverend Billy" and his choir of the Church of Stop Shopping, and learnt about contemporary artist's strategy of appropriating actions and roles from real life in their art practice, such that Reverend Billy was doing, taking on the role of a reverend, and running as the Green Party Candidate for Mayor of New York City.

Pearlman conducted a brainstorming session with the Blue Sun artists on creating a fictitious political "Art Party", a response to the real Presidential elections which were only 3 weeks away from then. The artists were inspired to carry out their own art actions, and within two days, had organized everything. First there was a planning meeting at Blue Sun constructing "Art Party" hats from newspapers. The "Art Party" jumped into action with guerrilla style tactics of putting up posters and handing out flyers to often perplexed onlookers. The next day Blue Sun held an art opening, and with Pearlman's encouragement, the artists had called the local TV Station, Channel 25, which turned up to cover the event and the candidacy of the "Art Party", and had it aired on Mongolian national TV.

(Above text extracted from a report submitted by Ellen Pearlman to iFIMA)



Photographs by Ellen Pearlman

6. Activities of Jiang Jun (China) and GeGe (China), 6th - 19th May, 2009

Jiang Jun and Gege came to participate in Open Academy Mongolia on the recommendation of Arthub. Arthub opined that Jiang Jun's editorial and publication background including knowledge on urban research and experimental studies would benefit the programme. He replaced Defne **Alyas??** who was scheduled to conduct a workshop on curatorial practice. The Blue Sun group had in the past attempted to produce an art and cultural publication, the plans of which has been stalled. Jiang Jun's work with the Blue Sun group was therefore to share his knowledge and experience on publishing and assist them to begin their publication project.

Jiang Jun is a designer, editor and critic, and has been working on urban research and experimental study, exploring the interrelationship between design phenomenon and urban dynamic. He founded Underline Office in late 2003 and has been the editor-in-chief of Urban China Magazine since the end of 2004, in the mean time working on the book <Hi-China>. He is now teaching in Guangzhou Academy of Fine Arts.

7. Activities of Gabriel de la Cruz (Spain), 2nd - 14th August, 2009

Gabriel is a media and animation artist currently attached with the Fine Art Academy in Helsinki, Finland and he is the only one from the Open Academy programme who had joined the Blue Sun Annual Summer Art Camp, which began in 2004. He took part in the programme of the Summer Art camp and created a work that incorporated the presence and movement of insects found in the mountain. He also gave a workshop and presentation of his animations and moving graphic works.



Photographs by Gabriel de la Cruz



Photographs by Gabriel de la Cruz

8. Activities of Jay Koh and Chu Yuan, 31 Aug – 15 Sept 2009

This second round of activities that Jay Koh and Chu Yuan conducted in OAM is targeted at engendering reflexivity on the past year's programmes, to gather feedback on participants' thoughts and experiences of the year's programmes, to ascertain what are their changing learning needs and interests, to brainstorm for ideas on the next year's programmes and activities as well as to conduct a workshop on public and participative art, bringing the Mongolian artists into the practice through carrying out some participative art activities in public spaces in Ulaanbaatar, and seeking members of the public's input, feedback, consulting them on their ideas and inviting their collaboration for future projects.

Activities: Critique and feedback on OA programmes, discussions on what is public and participative art, brainstorming and planning for joint actions in public spaces, interviews with various participants of Open Academy Mongolia, identifying future collaborators and coordinators for the programme.



Brainstorming for collaborative public art activities with artists at the Blue Sun Artspace



The *Let's Talk: Artists<->Public* public participative art project was held 3 days per week for 2 weeks in Ulaanbaatar, at 2 public venues, so that members of the public can have repeated exposure and interactive opportunities with the artists, to develop the familiarity to get acquainted with the artists and the concepts of public participative art, and to develop interest to participate in future public participative art projects. It enjoyed very warm response and participation from numerous members of the public and was a fitting end to the first year of workshops and lectures held under the Open Academy Mongolia.

Participants (artists and collaborators) include: Bolortuvshin, Yondon Dalhochir (a.k.a. Dalkha), Dokjderem, Hothbor, Enkhbold, Ganzug, Odgerel, Enkhtuya, Agnessa Tseika, Jay Koh and Chu Yuan



Bolortuvshin's research on people's wishes as public performance



Dalkha consulting with people from the public on painting Mongolian public monuments blue



Jay Koh setting up a communication and exchange network



Dokjderem a.k.a. Derme's underwater portraits with members of the public

Underwater portraits copyright of Dokjderem



Chu Yuan's *Imagining Possibilities* project

Open Academy Phase II (2011) Activities:

In order to build on from the learning and interest generated by OAUB Phase I, OA Phase II continued with and emphasised practical training targeted at facilitating the development of contemporary art practices in Mongolia. The foreign workshop leaders were reduced to 4 in number, who conducted workshops around 5 themes, and a large portion of project resources was set aside for projects to be carried out by Mongolian participants, with mentorship provided by senior Mongolian artists and iFIMA. This was made possible through a re-granting process, titled the Open Academy Ulaanbaatar Grant (OAUB Grant), which was also an opportunity to transfer knowledge to Mongolian participants on international granting procedures, as well as practical training in running, managing, monitoring and evaluating their own projects. We receive 11 proposals for the OA Grant, out of which we selected 6 grantees. More information will be given in the section describing the OAUB Grant Projects.

The five thematic workshops were:

Workshop 1: Developing discursive and critical thinking skills by Jay Koh (2 workshop sessions, 2 mentoring sessions)

In the first part of this workshop, Koh introduced World Café and Open Space technology as 2 methods for peer group discussions. The participants found these methods to be very conducive for discussion although they had some difficulties in finding issues to kick start the Open Space sessions. This is due to their Nomadic culture which does not promote open and concentrated discussion. This workshop session introduced different perspectives to look at local and foreign issues; to figure out how to actively respond to local contexts and resources in order to support ways of working in Mongolia; to reflect on recent developments such as the animal husbandry issue that has emerged due to the expansion of mining activities.





**Workshop 2: Connecting with the local historical through cultural research: focusing on environmental and social ecology by Jay Koh
(2 workshop sessions, 2 mentoring sessions)**

In the session on environmental art (which was originally to be conducted by Reiko Goto who could not attend due to care-giving to an ill family member), Koh used the works of the artist group *Dialogue* from India and a project by Reiko Goto and Tim Collins titled *9-Mile-Run* to demonstrate different research approaches and methods on environmental and ecological issues.

In India, *Dialogue* initiates collaboration between urban and rural artists in a durational project that engages the local council to work on creating an improved environmental reconditioning of local water sites to increase their hygiene and people friendly aspects. This project also promotes the gender empowerment of women in India in the creation of public social spaces for women to gather, interact and share with each other around the water sites. *9-Mile-Run* is a durational project to redevelop the landscape of industrial waste in Pittsburg, USA, working with city planners and neighborhood community groups to regenerate contaminated water shed areas.

After conducting these 2 workshops in the initial 4 weeks, Koh continued to work and connect to individual artists and groups to provide mentoring support and to develop durational projects and activities



Workshop 3. Evolving appropriate organisational structures and working methods by Chu Yuan (4 workshop sessions, 4 mentoring sessions, 1 workshop project, 2 public actions)

In the first week of this workshop, artist and PhD researcher Chu introduced a method that can assist participants in investigating and articulating their position within and connection to their own local contexts and needs. This is done by exploring ways of looking at things from big to small or from small to big perspectives, either beginning with the bigger picture of society and working towards the individual, or the other way around. Chu likened it to looking at things under zoom lens, one can zoom in and out. When one zooms in, one sees more detail and zoomed out, one can see the relationship between this and other parts of the whole structure, systems, or field. One can also look at them applying particular considerations, which work as layers, e.g. what are my concerns? How can I make it work? What is the project plan? How to communicate

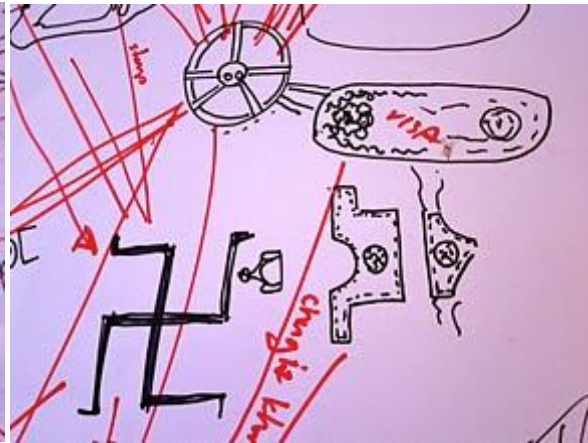
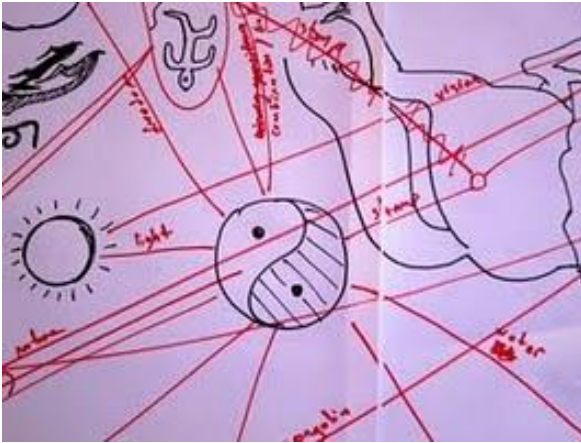
organisation in the Mongolian context. Participants were also introduced to styles of organisation that are conducive for collective learning.



Workshop 4: Curating and evaluating contemporary art projects by Defne Ayas (1 workshop session, 1 group work session)

On the first day of her workshop, Defne Ayas, a curator and educator specializing in new media and visual art performance, presented and discussed several projects that she has organised. In the discussions, participants are pointed towards approaches of working cross-culturally and internationally in terms of curating and organising events across cultural domains, scales and media; developing concepts, presentation formats and platforms, acts of representation and interpretation in the field of contemporary art and culture. Of prominence is the project *Blind Date*, which dealt with the theme of traces or 'remains' of the peoples, places and cultures that once constituted the diverse geography of the Ottoman Empire (1299-1922). Taking the break up of the latter's complex history as a point of departure, and considering the subsequent formation of nation states throughout the region, the project attempts to explore the effects of various forms of ruptures, erasures as well as (re)constructions of contemporary diasporic and transnational cultural experiences. Ayas also showed and discussed "*The Making of the Silk Roads*," which she co-curated with Arthub's Davide Quadrio.

Ayas initiated a workshop activity around the creation of an alternative "*Secret History of Mongolia*" by way of revisiting Mongolian symbols. This was originally intended to be an exploration of Mongolian art history according to the Internet, however due to the instability of internet access, Ayas assisted by Burak Arian improvised by converting the exercise on paper through an analogue approach, which turned out to be more joyful and informative exercise for all involved.

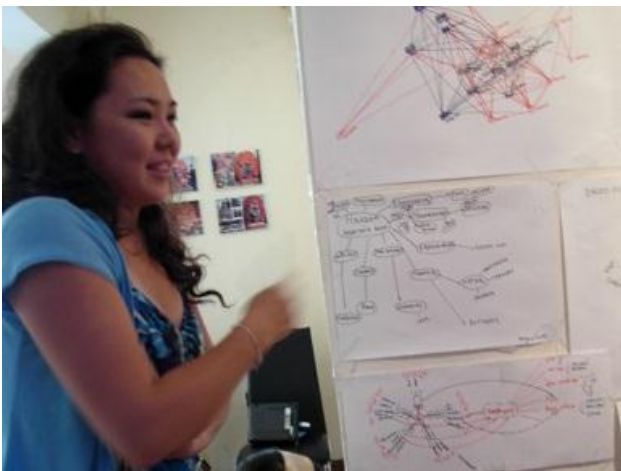
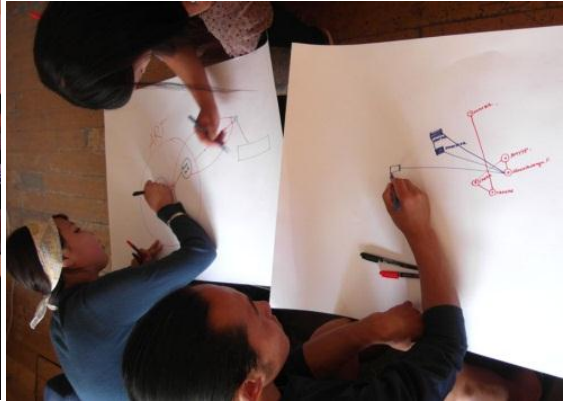




**Workshop 5: Web-based network mapping by Burak Arikan
(1 workshop session and 1 group work session)**

This workshop focused on the design and understanding of complex networks through mapping and visual analysis. Starting from hands on simple drawing exercises, participants gradually build complex compositions on paper which could later be transferred onto the computer. Participants learnt about network topology, relationship types, information modelling as well as visual analysis of relationship clusters and centres of activities and by extension power. Each participant had a chance to present their drawings, giving further opportunity to learn through listening to their peers and participating in the discussions.

Arikan also introduced Graph Commons, a software programme he created which can be used for the mapping exercises, and for the further sharing of network information with others. Participants learnt that network mapping can be a highly creative medium which can also be adapted and applied in various ways, for example for curatorial and exhibition-making purposes. In the group work session, Ayas and Arikan brought participants through a discussion of exploring and developing exhibition themes and presentations by turning the mapping exercises into three-dimensional sites of exploration



The Open Academy Ulaanbaatar (OAU) Grants: a Re-Granting Process

The OAU Grants were established based on the idea of leading the participants to experience an actual granting process by international standards; understanding the funders' expectations, fulfilling the granting criteria, contracts and responsibilities. In order to provide grantees with experience of international funding procedures, the processes and regulations of PCF was used with some adaptation to local specificities. These include more dialogical exchanges and mentoring sessions in all stages of the grant processes, including distance monitoring and mentoring via e-mail exchanges.

Altogether we received 11 proposals. The selection was made by a committee of peers comprising of 3 Mongolian artists from Blue Sun and Fine Arts Academy, the curator-director of Xanadu Gallery, and 2 directors of iFIMA. A total of 6 projects (featured below) were officially selected as grantees, with 2 other projects receiving support and facilitation which are the Design Park-Art Zone's seed grant for an International Artist-in-residence Programme and the Blue Sun's website construction project, which will feature documentation of all Open Academy Ulaanbaatar activities.

THE OPEN ACADEMY GRANTS PROJECTS by Mongolian participants:

(The following project texts are extracted and/or summarised from reports submitted by OAU grantees)

OA Grantee Project 1: Creating a Social Space around a Well Project

by **Munguntsetseg L.** at Erdenesant soum, Tuv province

The project is a public project which took place in Erdenesant Soum, Tuv Province of Mongolia. The artists worked with local citizens to strengthen social relationships around a well and create a convivial, supportive environment for herders who come to feed their cattle. It includes the establishment of a park, building a fence and sunshade around a well, which is traditionally a focal centre of nomadic herders' lives. This project strengthens historical and social relations.

There was a nomadic tradition among Mongolian from the ancient time the tradition is in case of Mongolian household moves to the place, the herders at the place received the household hospitality and exchange their information and the herders at the place help members in the household what moved there to build a Mongolian gerr. We built a park based on relation of the hospitable tradition with local citizens Participation of the people is active and whose future imagination to have park is more than ever.



Area to establish sunshade



Introducing the art project to local citizens



Started to build a sunshade



Work performance



Overall structure of the sunshade



Interacting with herders watering their livestock



Building a wire net fence



Unloading gravel to level the ground



Making a table /Shagdar



Painting the roof of the sunshade/Munguntsetseg



Finishing up the roof



Finishing the making of a gate

All photographs and captions by Munguntsetseg L.

Outcome/results:

1. Herder's style has been changed depended on social and periodic change. Before this time, herders watered their animals from this well in spring and autumn. They moved to place with lakes and river with their animals in summer. But they don't move far from this well and spend their time around the well in summer and watered their animals from the well in spring, autumn even summer. It became a central well where people and animals are centralized. Based on the central well, establishing the park is a **well-timed activity** for herders.
2. As a result of we built the park near the well, it brings **the most convenient environment** for the herders who wanted to water their animals. Herders used to stop all hot day for watering their animals and they can sit under the sunshade and talk about more things in convenient surrounding.
3. There was no any tree in here, so there will be created **a park with more trees. A partial environmental change** will be created at wild nature.

Response by participants:

Shagdar, a keeper of the well: "When I have worked for the well for 15 years I tried my best for creating a good condition for herders. I have tried to locate a water-basin at various locations. But I couldn't find a good location for the water-basin. There was an old cement water basin firstly near the well, the old water basin was broken down many years ago, a new iron water basin installed on the base of the old cement water basin. Land around the well was deteriorated by the water; there was a huge sized deep on the ground. Project participants filled up and smoothed a huge sized deep by gravel and stones around the water basin. I am very happy for it."

Magnai, herder: "The well is a very nice well. Governor's Office of the soum has never paid attention on it. I am pleased that establishing a park around the well. I really appreciate that I work for environment improvement around the well with other participants."

Artist's learning process by Mungentsetseg:

I found out more knowledge and practice and experience. Also I found out that herder's lifestyle depended on nature, climate conditions and herders lives being in a good relationship which is what animal husbandry is. Herders need to be in contact with the governor's office closely and explain about their demands and they need to be a social activist in a creative way. I learnt that cooperative activity is very important for creating anything. The good result of the public participative art work depended on the people's participation, as well as a good study of different material usage, and deciding on the selection of the most possible or best options. It is very

important if we can discover the essential demands or needs of the people, then the people will cooperate for it actively. We are very happy for making this project, for it is a historical part of local sociality, people and territory.

OA Grantee Project 2: Ger Door Project by Erdene bileg Enkh Erdene

Aug – Nov 2011

Mongolians respect the door of their ger dwelling since time immemorial. Therefore Mongolians pay special attention to their doors. The project's main goal was create a public art project that consults with and reflects the ideas and opinions of families who dwell in gers in ger districts, which face a variety of environmental, sanitation and planning problems. The project team obtained a permission from the khoroo administration to visit the households and have visited 15 households. Each of them has different opinions and perspectives. In general people accepted it is hard for them to make drawings on their ger doors. When we meet the families we respected and noted down their unique opinions, their lives, history, and their hopes for the future to them. People showed us their ger doors during the visit, and some of them gave us sketches of what they wanted to have on their doors.

The participating families would make suggestions and talked to the project team while they were drawing and painting on their doors. While painting, we introduced ideas about public art to them, who then told about our project to other families. Some of the paintings took 3 to 4 days to complete. Upon completion, the participating families expressed happiness on the result. According to the families, they will always want to save this picture on the door.



Some selected stories

1. Ger door of Lama household

The lama painted the picture on the door together with project crew. Two dogs symbol facing each other were drawn on his door, as expressed as his wishes on our first meeting. He said 'it belongs my religion and past life also will connect with my future'. He thought before that every door is the same, but after this project the dog symbol that was in his mind appeared on his door. 'This is very nice', he said.



2. Ger door of Munkhtsetseg's household

Munkhtsetseg wanted to have a painting of a dragon pattern. Munkhtsetseg is a tailor she tailors traditional clothing for living. She learned to tailor from her mother when she was small. Up to now she has made many traditional clothing and hats. She told me if I had a traditional pattern which can be used on *deels* (traditional garment). She said it would be nice if we painted this because she would be able to look at it when she is



stitching.

It represents two dragons around a circle looking at opposite directions. The colour is blue but it transfers from one colour to another. This dragon pattern is stitched on uphold sleeves of *deels* (a kind of traditional clothing). It takes time to stitch and it is complicated too. She was happy to be included in the project. She helped every details to draw outset and did all of preparation to ready to draw. She repaired and painted her ger door. She always sewn many kinds of small outset on to *deel* and she liked to see big dragon outset on the door.



She said 'drawing was interesting and she didn't imagine it would be nice'. And she also said 'if I would move to different ger, I would take my ger door with me. I m happy to included in the project'.

3. Ger door of Gombodorj's household

Gombodorj wants to see fast horses on his door. This year his son's trained horse came the first place in the province's naadam festival and he wanted to draw his son's horse on his door. He moved in from countryside and he is 60 years old, a horse herder and horse trainer, all of his life connected with to train horses and herd them. During the painting process, he showed many photos of horses and he always helped and suggested how to correctly paint the form and figure of a horse. Eventhough he is already old age, he attended very actively. He said that it is very nice to saw his son's race horse on his door and he would always see it.



4. Ger door of Baltav's household

Baltav used to live in countryside, engaged in livestock husbandry. Most of his life was spent in countryside with livestock husbandry, however due to harsh winter several years ago he lost all his livestock and decided to live in town. He has now profession. Livestock husbandry is the only thing he can do very well, he says. He misses the countryside, and he likes livestock, so he wants to have a drawing of horses which is called 8 horses of happiness. It symbolizes high spirits and efficiency of works. Therefore if he has this drawing on his door he would remember his years passed in countryside he explains.



All photographs by Erdene bileg Enkh Erdene

OA Grantee Project 3: Alive Corner Project by Chinzorig Renchin-Ochir



5 July- 5 October, 2011

“Alive Corner” project is a response to the lived experience of a ger-district. Ger (yurt) is the Mongolian traditional house which is easy to move and comfortable for living. The ger is perfect architectural solution of a nomadic culture. In Ulaanbaatar, many people have moved from countryside and erect their gers around the edges of the city, thus creating what is now called ger-districts. Now it is estimated that around 70% of families in UB live in ger-districts.

However, people who live in ger-district really want to move into apartments, because there are some problems of water, sanitation, toilet and sewage in ger-district. Most of them think they are only temporary residents in ger-districts. That is also the reason why the majority of residents of ger districts do not put their heart to maintaining the cleanliness, orderliness and pleasant environment of the area. They are living in dirty and messy conditions with trash in their yards and streets.

Our project aims to change comprehensions of local people who live in bad conditions in ger-districts. We need to give encouragement and motivation on how to live clean and well, through our ‘Alive Corner’ discussion and activity club.

Alive Corner Activities:

1. Created a model greenhouse

Nowadays, vegetable is an important food for Mongolians. The traditional Mongolian diet is meat, flour and milk. But meat and flour are now getting very expensive for Mongolians. Seventy percent of Ulaanbaatar citizens live in ger-district which is the poorest area of city. Since they have lost the ability to herd animals in the city, vegetable is a good food alternative as it is easy to grow and very suitable food in ger-districts, because most families have own grounds and fences. We tried to get people to understand that planting vegetables is easy and enjoyable work.



2. Activities in public space

In addition, we also did some activities in public:

i. Gave seedlings of tomatoes to project participants

We gave tomato seedlings to participants for developing their actives and to express our wish to meet again. Some people have never planted any vegetables and plants. It was good for them to learn new things and being active to discuss things together. Through planting vegetable together, we can build good relations between people.

ii. Organised an event of informing people about Open Academy, and the Alive Corner project in the area of the public well.

In ger-districts, there are some water wells for the public. Some families have private wells in their fences. But most families bring water from public well, which is the most public area of ger-districts. During this event approximately 80 people participated. The local people were much interested about how they can participate.

We also posed questions to the public such as:

☑ How can we living clean? ☑ What things you can do?

Most people loved to answer our questions and they tried to contribute their help.

Some people said that:

-We can clean our streets once a month. It would be a Cleaning day. We can organise that day, before the trash

car will coming. (The trash car comes to bring every families' trashes once a month.)

We invited people to participate in our project's next activities. We needed to more discussion and meetings, because if we combine together for making change, we can make it happen. People took some energy from our activities and information.

3. Happy Change event



During this event, participants came to visit the model greenhouse. We worked together to clear the vegetables from weeds and took some harvest. Afterwards, we made some salads and talked together on how we can work together. After eating, we shared ideas about how to create Alive Corner in the streets. How can we work together, and how can we make change by arts in our environment? How? Some participants discussed problems such as: water, toilet, trash, ashes, ice of streets in wintertime, and danger of dogs etc. Amongst participants' suggestions on things we can do together to create change in our ger district environment are: ☑ We need lights in the streets. ☑ Need to dig drainage for dirty water ☑ Create benches in well area ☑ Plant trees and flowers in yards of families ☑ Not burning woods with nails anymore. Because people burn wood with nails, then they put the ashes to the street, and this destroys car tyres. ☑ Create a paved road for walking ☑ Fix the road of streets



All photographs by Chinzorig

Those open activities hope to stimulate the imagination of people by spreading ONE question: *'What you can do?'* We wish to encourage people's skills. It is very important *'who can do what?'* because people use their initiatives for creating something. Also, we will co-operate with the local area's committee council. We hope our project will raise comprehension of healthy and clean living in ger-district, as it is the basis of living comfortably and creating change. We can hopefully gradually solve the problems of ger-districts.

OA Grantee Project 4: Water Jewel Spring Head Project by New Century Art Association, July – Sept 2011

The artists aimed to restore and furnish a spring water area involving the local citizens in a ger district. The "Dari-Ekh spring" is located in territory of 16th precinct, Sukhbaatar district of the capital city. During our project-implementation, many people expressed their thanks for restoring this spring as the water from this spring is believed to have curative powers used for treatment and they said that it is necessary to use clean water closet to ensure health and hygienic requirements.

Project activities and accomplishments:

1. Improved hygienic condition of spring water for consumption of citizens

We have changed the previous appearance of the spring in a way to continue the stone faucet around the water head and connecting it to the restored bridge. We dug deeply under the bridge on the side of the lower flow so that it is possible to take water by pail. On this part we have built a reinforced fundament with inlaid stones. This makes possible for people to take water on the down side of the bridge that protects the water source from contamination by different dishes or pails.

2. Renewed spring water environment enhancing its natural beauty

We built new bases for four columns in a bower design with stone and made a covering with stone embedment around the spring which was previously covered by gravel. All these restoration works made an exclusive environment to this place. Two dustbins are placed on the fence ends surrounding the spring to maintain a clean environment here. All these things are elements within the site-specific art work, our "Public Art" project implemented for public needs.

3. Protect a natural priceless wealth of spring water from drying up and danger of disappearance

Currently, we have improved on the comfortable environment for the citizens to take water for their daily consumption while protecting the spring water head against pollution. More can be done in the future to protect the spring from drying up by planting trees around it.

4. Promote the value of protecting nature for citizens

In implementing this project, we have paid more attention to attract the citizens of local area and provided encouragement to cherish the spring water head as apple of one's eye and how to collect correctly the water from this water source, placing the notion of protecting the water source in their minds. This is the most significant result of our project work.

Appearance of “Dari Ekh Spring water” before restoration



Appearance of “Dari Ekh Spring water” after restoration

Work process:



The participants and their impression

Norovbazar has been working as a caretaker of the spring for 8 years. During our co-working, he gave us much useful advice also assist us himself. One of his important offering is that many pits for building of houses on



upper side of the spring have negative effect on the spring water. Therefore, he said it is necessary to stop this action. We have discussed this matter with local governor's office, governor, and authoritative persons.

Some of the people who come here regularly to take water never think about future of the spring, however most people believe that this project is a great deed and assist us to protect spring water head. Moreover, outside of the fence it is necessary to plant many birch trees that cause spring water to accrue and protect it from being dried up. If we will have a chance to continue this project, we will implement this idea in reality. When we enlisted opinions of the old people this is a historical place for drinking water since the period of the Mongolian king Bogdo and his queen Dondogdulam. Therefore the people know this spring by name of Dondogdulam spring.

All above photographs by New Century Art Association

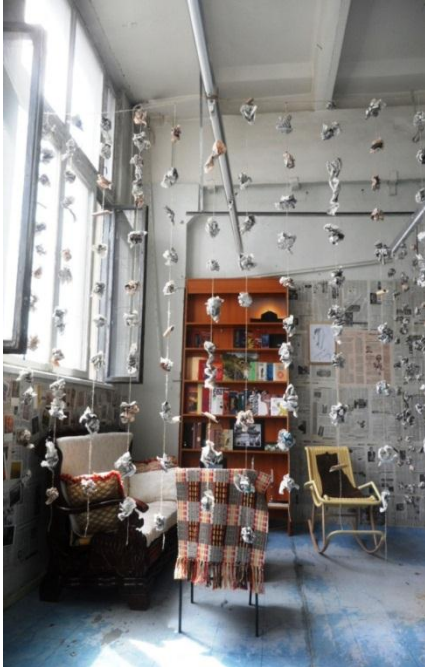
OA Grantee Project 5: Art Book Mark Project by Tsetsegbadam Batbayar

From 15th Aug – end Nov 2011

Art bookmark project aims to bring people together to learn about contemporary art, studying with each other and working together to spread contemporary art in Mongolia. The project is based on workshops, open discussions, reading of contemporary art books and interviews with Mongolian contemporary artists. We will also produce "contemporary art handbooks" and exhibition of participants' artworks in response to what we have learnt together.

Most Mongolian artists graduate from Fine Art Institute (FAI), and that process will keep well into the future. FAI's facilities are badly in need of improvement and knowledge about contemporary art is poor. Art Bookmark project includes building up a contemporary art library which would work as an open frame for creativity, exchange, knowledge sharing and learning - a flexible and sustained engagement with contemporary art. It will organise specific activities as reactions to certain themes of contemporary art.

Design Park-Art Zone is chosen as the space for implementing the interactive activities of this project. It is a good site as it shares the building with a garment and food factories. DPAZ has large spaces for use for workshops and exhibitions, as they occupy 2nd and 4th floors of the building. The space includes exhibition hall, meeting hall, studios, long corridor and walls which we can use. The library that has been set up would also act as an information center of contemporary art for everybody.



Photographs by Tsetsegbadam Batbayar a.k.a Tseika

Project activities:

- **HOW presentation** 15th August, at 4:30 p.m, in Design Park (art studio #209)
- **LET'S DEVELOP TOGETHER** lessons about Contemporary art to 22, 24, 26 August, at 12 pm - 3 pm in Design Park Art Zone
- **PRODUCE ARTWORKS** by participants, September 2011
- **JOINT EXHIBITION** Oct, 2011
- **GENERAL COMPREHENSION OF CONTEMPORARY ART** handbook targeted to be ready for publication in Nov 2011

OA Grantee Project 6: 'Little Sun' Project by Nomad Wave group

From 15 Sept – end Nov 2011

The “Little Sun” project aims to introduce artistic activities to children and women cancer patients and their families, with purpose of helping in their healing process. “Little Sun” Project started on September 15th, 2011 at the Mongolian Cancer Study Center with 9 kids and their parents, and 7 women patients.

The project runs every Monday and Thursday at 2pm at Cancer Study Clinic’s Children’s Department hall. The clinic’s authority welcomed Nomad Wave group to run the project at the clinic for two months. We have consulted with clinic’s psychologist about how to run the project and their suggestion was to teach women patients how to make small objects for sale as they are unable to work and earn for their living, medical expenses etc. We have taught the women how to make souvenir dolls, painting on silk – which they can use for themselves or to sell, also different style of handbags using different kinds of materials. Further, we are planning to teach them how to process wool and make felt, which will be followed by teaching the making of felt souvenirs and other items, making of different accessories for themselves or for sale. These will help uplift the women’s psychological wellbeing. During these classes not only are the women patients curious to participate, but also women who are looking after sick kids.

Including patients’ families bring enormous benefit to “Little Sun” project. We talk about their problems they face, art and possibilities to sell goods they make. In the future we are also planning to provide a day for make up and fashion – here we have talked to patients, clinic’s authority and magazine “Wonderful Life” about having a photo shoot day and take some interview from patients who are successfully fighting against cancer. All three parties are willing to accomplish it.

“Little Sun” project’s children are happy to take part in the project. We have opened separate files for each kid where they keep their drawings and other works. Depending on difference of age we are working with them on person-to-person basis. 16 year old guy Batkhuu is especially interested in drawing. On the very first day he brought paintings he painted before, which are mostly in black and white. We have found him to be quite talented, and he wants to be a painter, so we will teach him individually basic art in more professional way. With other smaller kids age 4 – 8 we are working to encourage them to draw and paint and to talk about each creation. We encourage them to paint their dreams and people whom they love. We have also worked on making figures with coloured paper and souvenir dolls. Drawing together on one big sheet and preparation of handmade books is also on process. One thing we have noticed is that because the children don’t go to school or kindergardens, they are not adept at working as a group. So here we also pay attention to get them to work as a group and create together.

Collection of books for a small “Little Sun” library for the clinic has already started in late August. About 40 percent of total books for the library has been collected by the end of October 2011.

Open Academy Ulaanbaatar Activity Project: The Power is in Our Hands by Oyulbileg

This activity which took place in the Parliament Square of Ulaanbaatar was executed during the period of the OAU workshops. Chu Yuan worked with Oyulbileg, a social psychologist who had previously trained in visual arts, to develop her ideas and also to execute them as a public action. Members of the public hold a mirror to capture the reflection of the parliament building, which in effect reflects that the power is in their hands.



Appendix IV:
Photograph documentation and journal notes for
Imagining Possibilities/Thinking Together 2009/11

*Compiled from journal notes written
during and immediately after the
Thinking Together project, June – July
2011*

Building on past project:
Imagining Possibilities

Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia 2009

The research question in 2009: How to use skills and knowledge as artist to devise ways of imagining and visualisation?



Imagining Possibilities, Mongolia 2009 – Open Academy Ulaanbaatar





Responses

1 most beautiful Mongolian word:

Motherland, Mongolians proud of their motherland, love to earth and motherland, 'mountain-rock' (compound noun referring to Mongolia's natural environment), love your motherland, protect and love mother nature, eternal sky

Mongolia, Mongolian people have to be Mongolian, Mongolia of thousand years, our Mongolia

Energy, light, health, humanity, mother, mother's love, win, beautiful, beautiful life, good life, power, thank you, live well, nice, rich, wish, development of body, happiness, happiness of life, making correct your first step in life, every human being always eternal, good living from good thoughts, if thoughts are positive, destiny will be the same, encourage each other, honour the household, person with brothers will have collar, Mongolian customs should be forever, we can do this, prosperity, if we have peace we are strong, don't lose your kind heart, honour your brother like 'ald' and honour your siblings like 'delen'

Where will you be in 10 years?

I will be living happy with nice children

In Mongolia; Only in Mongolia; Always in Mongolia; Mongolia;

Living positive in developing Mongolia

I will be living in Mongolia, there will be no unemployment and there will be developed industries

I love my Mongolia

Living well in Mongolia and doing more

In next 10 years, Mongolians will be living in a green land and in gardens

In clean city, water and air will become clean

Living in a double storey house

On the top (government), they will find their chairs (know what they are doing, know how to lead), in the under (the people) they will find their running (find their way, know how to live)

In a relaxation place (nature camp), in hospital and caring hospice, in Mongolia and abroad, maybe in heaven

Might be in America; Living in America; I want to go to America, but I will be in Mongolia

What are **100** Mongolians thinking of right now?

Stepping towards success; Living well without worries; Happiness, money and development

Increased activity; Improving Mongolian society and economy

Getting the contract of Oyutolgoi (top Mgn mining company)

Chinese go out from Mongolia

Right now, maybe not only 100 but a few thousand Mongolians are thinking about the outcome of the Mongolian presidential election and the changes for Mongolian people's lives

Thinking that the government (people on top) are becoming rich, but they are destroying Mongolia

Wish for more peace in the main roads and apartment areas

Wish to be like horse – have job and money and living in motherland

Be like the sky, sky, the blue sky

Having dinner with the children

Just be honest

Living well with intelligence and good manners

What **1,000** Mongolians can do to make a difference

Build friendship

Create more job positions; Build new heavy industry factories; Produce cars in motherland

Cleaning the environment

Making Mongolia distinguished in the world

Feeling peace together in Mongolia

Developing motherland is like destroying mountains and swirling waters – change is hard but necessary

Doing activities for changing way of governance;

Create open activity for self-development of adults in free time

Mongolians can create everything

Like Mongolia's famous mountain, we are powerful together

Combining our peace and power; Power of togetherness; If we have peace, we can create anything; Combining our wishes and interests, we can create anything; If we only want we can do everything; It can be everything

What people of the world will remember about Mongolia in 10,000 years

Chinggis Khan history, Mongolian lives, Mongolian badness, nature, art, our death, our success

Our trying efforts in developing our motherland

Mongolian sports

Mongolians as very noble and intelligent people

People will see Mongolia as one of China's followers

People will know that we are children of Chinggis Khan, military hero, knowledgeable about nature, respect earth, parents, family (household), an amazing people

Mongolian people's body power is very high; High IQ, Nomadic culture; Traditional art and culture; pride of being Mongolian, Chinggis Khan's descendants, member of United Nations, champion of Olympic games

People will remember that we could solve our heavy and poor situation in a short time; Impressed by Mongolia's development

Chinggis Khan's descendants, always peaceful

Very big territory, polite people and war

Activities in June – July 2011 are a continuation of Open Academy Ulaanbaatar (OAU) & Imagining Possibilities 2009

The activities that I was involved in are:

1. The Open Academy Phase 2 workshops and grant competition, selection and disbursement process
2. The Thinking Together project

Overview of 2011 research and activities in Mongolia

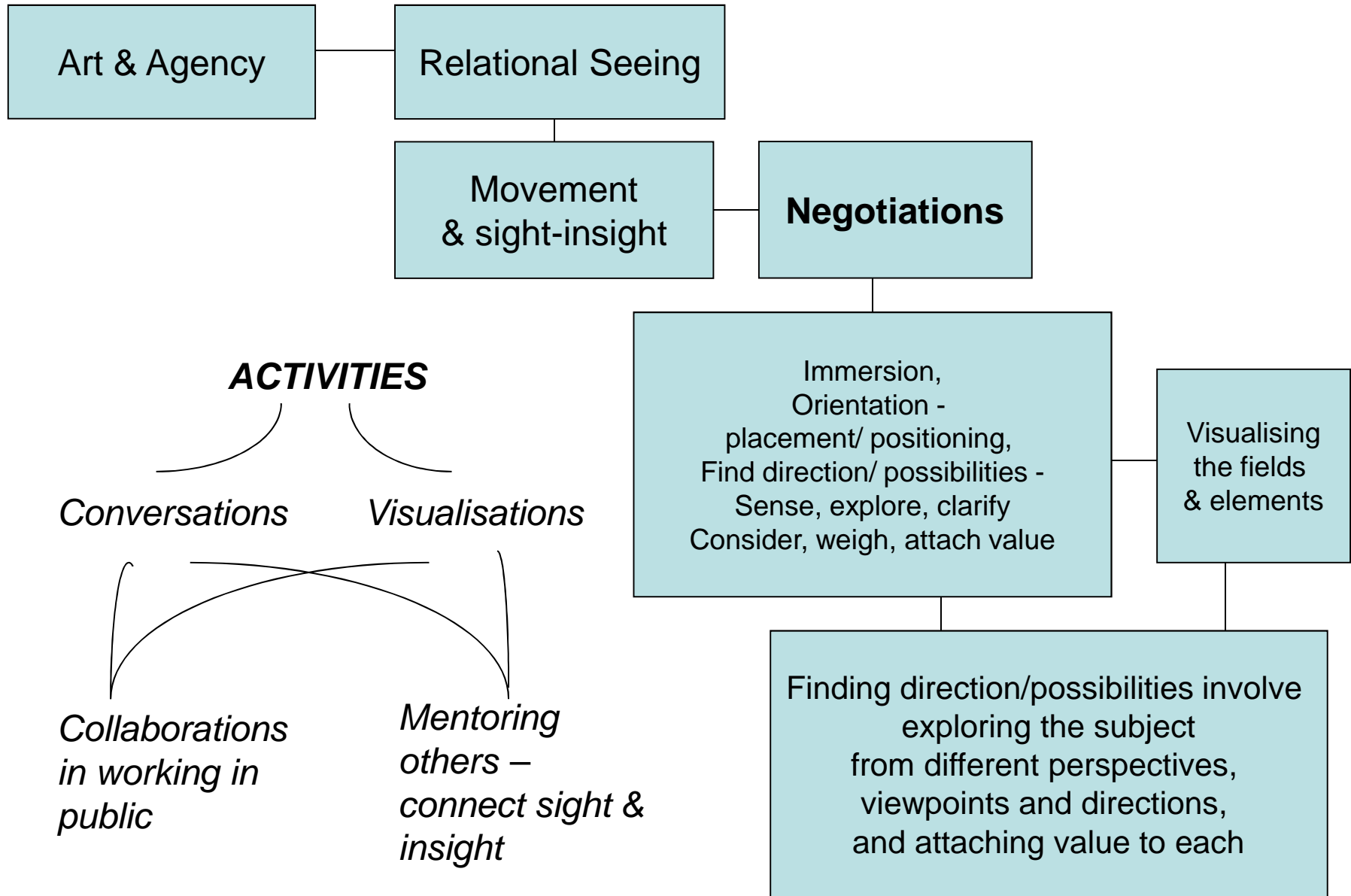
(**Note:** Abbreviations are used throughout this journal/document, for example MGN for Mongolian, UB for Ulaanbaatar and so on. In most cases, the context informs what the abbreviations stand for.)

Here, I provide an overview of the research work and how the activities in Mongolia connects with the overall research scheme. My practice over the past 12 years has been about connecting art and agency. In my research, I propose that a key aspect of how agency can be experienced and exercised is linked with relational seeing, being able to have a sense of one's own relational position vis-à-vis what one regards as important or significant people, relationships, entities, systems and environments, how one orientates oneself and negotiate around them, as ways of imagining one's own movement around them.

I think this 'relational seeing' (which enhances one's ability to negotiate) requires a movement, a shift, a stepping aside, however small, for even as when one begins to think: "I am happy", one has already moved a certain distance from the actual immersion in the experience of 'happiness'. It also requires a correlation of sight and insight, for this 'seeing' involves a deeper understanding and realisation. In my present work and research, as with the work in Mongolia, I engage in activities of visualisation and conversations in order to create situations where this relational seeing can happen, where sight can generate insight.

There are 2 main groups of activities I have been engaged with in Mongolia, in which I employ both conversations and visualisations. One consists of initiating collaborations for work in public spaces, and the other consists of mentoring artists and young persons interested in art and culture. Beginning from 13th June, for over 3 weeks, various workshops, mentoring meetings, group discussions gradually built up material, ideas and collaborations which then led to the creation of the Thinking Together sculpture-installation and actions in public spaces in Ulaanbaatar in early July.

Overall Research and Activity Scheme



ACTIVITIES

Conversations

Visualisations

*Collaborations
in working in
public
(Thinking
Together 2011)*

*Mentoring
others –
connect sight &
insight
(Open
Academy UB)*

Engaging with the bigger contexts in Mongolia:

Mongolia today is faced with unprecedented development, especially brought about by mining activities. New big savvy cars are filling the roads and banks line the streets of UB, opening even on Sundays. Mining activities have been partly blamed for reduced and degenerating quality of graze land for the traditional nomadic activities of herding. As mining creates a visible 'opening up' of the earth, what does this mean for Mongolians when we consider this against what some artists and young people participating in OAUB have telling me about nomadic culture and nomadic knowledge:

"Mongolians believe that we are born with a connection to the sky and the earth. When I was a child, I made drawings on the ground. My mother scolded me and told me that it's the same as hurting our Mother's body. Nowadays, mining, construction and other activities are increasing in Mongolia. We are hurting our Mother Nature."

Ganzug, artist

"Today in Mongolia, we are studying the ways of our ancestors from 10,000 years ago. There are a lot of discussions about this in our society. Are we better off with sticking to traditional practices? Some say in the Mongolia of the future, there will be no more cities, but a return to nomadic lifestyles."

Ochir Dalkha, artist

Other than mining, the stress of modernisation can be seen in the grave pollution in the city and the aggressive driving manners of Mongolians, making accidents a common daily sight in UB. Few persons have remarked that Mongolians drive as if they are riding horses, they think that the horses will know how to evade and avoid crashing into each other. The poor water, electricity and sewage systems, as well as poor quality construction of buildings, the invasion of property construction activities by Chinese and other foreign firms causing a stark increase in property prices in MG, all show a lack of proper regulation and planning by the authorities.

With difficulties of life in countryside, many people have chosen to come to the city. While not being able to afford to live in apartments, they have set up their gers in districts all around the outskirts of UB, creating what is now called 'ger districts'. There has been huge debate on the existence and problems posed by the ger districts to the city planning of UB, as well as health, sanitation and pollution faced by the ger district dwellers due to improper facilities and constructions, as well as the practice of the ger dwellers to burn coal to keep warm.

Persons involved in the Thinking Together project

Enkhbold (a.k.a. Boldo), artist with Blue Sun, previously teacher at Fine Art Institute

Ganzug (a.k.a. Zugee, artist with Blue Sun

Dorjderem (a.k.a. Derme), artist with Blue Sun

Tsetsegbadam (a.k.a. Tseika), student of University of Culture, art researcher

Oyunbileg, researcher in Art and Psychology

Gandulam, Fine Art Institute graduate

Chinzorig, artist

Munguntsetseg, artist

Elbegzaya (a.k.a. Zaya), student of University of Culture

Oyunzaya (a.k.a. Oyu), student and photographer

Uldiisaikhan (a.k.a. Uldii), director of Design Park

Tsolmon, manager of Design Park

Munkhtsetseg (a.k.a. Muji), artist, member of Nomad Wave

Enkhjargal (a.k.a. Eya), artist, member of Nomad Wave

Zaya, artist, member of Nomad Wave

Dulguun, fashion designer, member of Nomad Wave

Dalkh-Ochir (a.k.a. Dalkha), artist, leader of Blue Sun group

Batbileg artist, trained in East Germany

Batzorig (a.k.a. Bazo), artist, present head of Blue Sun

Enkh-Erdene, young artist, fresh graduate of Fine Art Institute

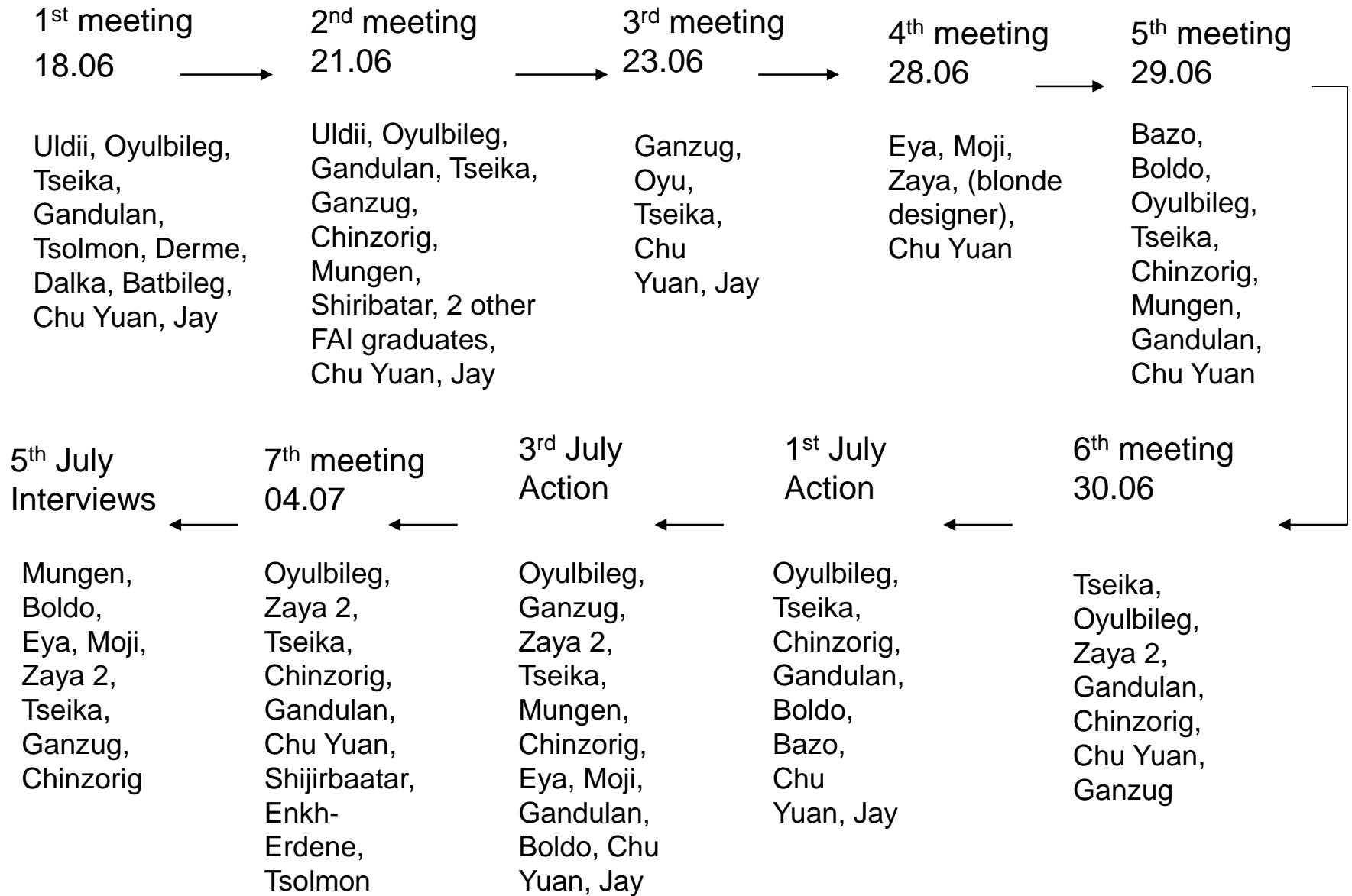
Shijirbaatar, young artist, fresh graduate of Fine Art Institute

Amartuvshin (a.k.a. Amaraa), activist

Chu Yuan, artist, researcher, PhD student with RGU, project director of iFIMA

Jay Koh, artist, researcher, post doctoral student with KUVA, director of iFIMA

Collaborations for working in public



Mentoring

Workshop 1
part 1, 13.06

Expanding participation and collaboration in art projects. Introduction to the POINT negotiation tool

Workshop 1
part 2, 14.06

Clarifying POINT – difference with Mind mapping, concept mapping; viewing some examples of participants work

1st small group mentoring, 16.06

2nd small group mentoring, 17.06

Developing on participants' ideas for OAU Grant and project ideas

Workshop 2
part 1, 20.06

Evolving appropriate organisational structures and working methods. Organisational and group learning; Kolb, Freire and Argyris – linked with public collaborative approach

Workshop 2
part 2, 21.06

Working methods: developing on and visualisation of ideas, working with situations, relationships, institutions and everyday material

Re-Granting process

Review all applications; Interviews and final selection; Workshop for grant recipients

Meetings and discussions to initiate
and develop collaborations for
working in public

Notes on significant exchanges and insights

1st meeting 18 June

Chu Yuan: I have been studying the answers to *Imagining Possibilities* and I wonder why is it that most of the answers to the question “What can 10,000 Mongolians do to make a difference” are very broad and general, for e.g. “anything”, “everything”.

Uldii: Mongolians don't say things directly.

We have to think deeply what it means. There are 3 main kinds of traditions of thought in Asia. One like the Chinese philosophy is based on method, it is pragmatic. Tibetan thought is closer to magic or mysticism, and Mongolian thinking is very broad, not specific. For example, we begin with the year then progress on to say the month and date, from big to small. Western way is from small to big.

If you want to get some specific ideas from *Imagining Possibilities*, then you have to rephrase the questions, go from big to small. It is a big problem for Mongolians to think small or concrete. The way your questions are phrased also leave a lot of room for interpretation.



CY: How will you rephrase the questions? Perhaps we could try answering the questions now and see how we would rework them.

Answers to Q1 “Imagine 1 most beautiful Mongolian word” from the group:
Sex, fresh, love, universe, matter, echo, feelings

Q2: “Imagine where you will be in 10 years”

Uldii: No need to say ‘imagine’, we have to imagine it anyway...

Answers: Everywhere, like the air. Married to a rich herder’s wife. Home.

Q3: “Imagine what 100 Mongolians are thinking about right at this moment”

Derme: 100 is too small

Uldii: 100 is not small, if you think that our total population is less than 3 million. For me, I would instead ask ‘What kind of Mongolian?’ Perhaps we can change the question to ‘What is 100 persons like you thinking about right now?’

Derme: If there are 100 Mongolians like me, the world will come to an end.

Dalkha: We can’t even know ourselves, how can we know others?

CY: Anyway let’s try to answer

Oyulbileg: Cooking... now it’s 6 pm.

Silence

CY: Okay, let’s try Q4, imagine what 1000 Mongolians can do to make a difference.

No answers.

Someone: Have to change the question. Is it a specific goal? In which area? The question is not clear enough.

Uldii: Organising some activity like teaching skills about how to decrease air pollution. Nomadic lifestyle is cause of air pollution. Ger wall is thin so its cold inside. To stay warm, people burn charcoal. Government is always focusing on issue of charcoal, but need to teach how to stay warm.





Derme: 1000 MG can develop other urban centres or cities together, not only focus on Ulaanbaatar, so then it will be less congested. We need to open up alternative centres. There can be independent economies. Other answers: Build a building together. Plant trees or vegetables together. Clean something together. Run 1 km together.

Q6: Imagine what the world will remember about MG in 10000 years.

Answers: Chinggis Khan. Ecological heritage. Nomadic lifestyle. Last nomadic nation before absorbed by the Chinese*. Traditional MG custom and culture. Trying to revive old MGN culture of 10,000 years ago. Only MGN men are left in MG, the women are all gone. Mongolia will be rich.

* Elsewhere, e.g. in Chinzorig's proposal, find Mongolian resentment of relying on China for goods and for food source. Also, Amaraa told us of skinheads who go around attacking and harassing Chinese and Korean businesses.

Derme: In future, there will be no boundaries between countries. In MG cities will be destroyed, we will have only nomadic lifestyle.

Uldii: In nomadic life, we do not have hospital, prison, school, but we are very happy. Schools made people more professional and technical, but we lost the general life.

Dalkha: I find this last question very interesting. I can go on thinking about this for days.

CY: How can we connect nomadic thinking and practice with other practices in the world?

Uldii: Western development is too much, will come to point of destruction, so the point is to find balance.

CY: Can we and how can we make nomadic culture and knowledge work within modern structures and systems?

Uldii: Nomadic culture is very flexible. We just need to know the weather by seeing the sky and honour iconic things and the household.

Jay: For example, if 1000 people want to practice living a nomadic lifestyle, but the mining companies now control the land. How will it work?

- From responses to the Imagining Possibilities project I found 2 responses particularly interesting.
- One wrote about honouring one's elder brother like a *delen* and one's younger brother like *ald*. (Delen and ald are units of measurements in old Mongolian way. Delen is the width of 2 outstretched arms and ald is one arms' length, as Derme illustrates to me)



- The other says a person without a brother is like being without a collar. (For Mongolians, collars are very important. A coat with a collar is a respected item and would not be placed by the door. Also Mongolians honour their hats and bags and would place them on the floor.)



Tsolmon, Oyulbileg and Uldii demonstrating ways of greeting one's older and younger siblings

Fuller account (with reflections) of discussion:

The group first went through the responses from IP 1. CY then asked for group's response to the past participants' responses. CY explained that the initial questions are meant to draw out some broad orientations of MGNs. From the 'broad strokes', we work towards extracting some elements that become striking or catches our imagination and develop from there. CY then related what impressed her from the responses. She found the responses to be rather broad and general.

Tsolmon said that Mongolian speech is very broad, and need to think what exactly the meaning is. Uldi adds that MG people think in broad and abstract ways, not in pragmatic ways like the Chinese. The questions are also phrased in very broad and indirect terms. CY explained that the reason for this is that they seem less intrusive and leave more room for people to say what is on their mind.

CY said she hopes to develop these ideas further until we come up with some ideas for some concrete action we can do together. The next action could comprise of going back to the public with some ideas or proposals from the artists.

The group find it hard to select some particular points from the responses to develop further. Uldii suggested that since MG thinking is very broad and general, we should do the questions the other way round, from big to small, if the intention is to find out what specific concrete thing we can come up with in the end.

CY then suggested that the group try to answer the questions ourselves. Group found it hard to answer the questions. To question 1, all MGN answers were nouns, whereas CY's is a verb. CY jokingly remarked that perhaps this confirms what Uldi was saying that MGN thinking is more abstract than philosophical, whereas the Chinese are more action-oriented?

In this sense, the responses that 'we can do everything' makes sense, but how can this translate into an 'actionable thought', and into concrete 'actionable' work or action? *Moving the responses from orientational thoughts towards actionable thoughts towards realising the actions or work itself* - this seems to me to be direction we should be pursuing if this public participative engagement can play a role in increasing people's sense of agency or negotiation of a particular situation.



Interestingly, arguments then came up on what the questions trying to find out *exactly*. Questioning the questions themselves would constitute what Chris Argyris would term as '2nd loop learning'. In the negotiative process, I think this is the important part of clarifying, refining and exploring the issues. After a long elaboration on the inexactness of MGN thinking, they went on to finding the questions themselves inexact. However, this may exactly be the reason why it was right approach in pitching the questions.

Derme asked why 100 MGNs? Is that too small or too big a number? Derme felt its too small, we should ask what 10,000 MG thinking or what half the population, i.e. 1.5 million is thinking. Uldii thought 100 is a big number because MG has a relatively small population of 3 million. Uldii asked if the question should be refined to “100 MGNs like u”, Derme joked that if there’s 100 like him, the world will be destroyed. Dalkha said he doesn’t even know himself how can he know what 99 other MGNs are thinking.

CY said the aim of the questions were to get a sense of the people’s preoccupation or concern at that particular moment, for example if the elections are coming, what will people be thinking about, or if prices are going up and times are getting increasingly hard. People should not think too hard about the questions, the answers should come quite spontaneously. By phrasing it as “99 MGNs like you” will raise even more questions about the question itself. It would not work, unless that was the aim of the exercise.

Jay felt that the question should address people’s sense of individual autonomy and the need/desire for connection with others. To which CY asked “Should the question then be: “Imagine what you and 99 other MGNs will agree and disagree on?”

Still, nobody except for Oyulbileg could come up with a response, she said “now its 6 pm, so 100 MGNs must be thinking about what to make for dinner”.

The one question that got everyone very involved in talking to each other was the last question, “what will people remember of MG in 10,000 years?” Dalkha said it was a very interesting question and he’ll be thinking about it for days. Derme say in 10000 years there’ll be no borders, so they’ll be no Mongolia. CY asked “Then who will be in control? There would still be forms of control.”

The discussion shifted to nomadic life style and knowledge. The remarks were largely claims without detail on how it will work. Many claimed that nomadic culture and knowledge is the answer to today’s urban and global problems. Uldi said “During nomad times, we didn’t have hospital or schools but we were very happy”, without acknowledging that the issue of health care, sanitation and hygiene is the most urgent topic debated today in the *ger districts* (this will be discussed later) of UB.

CY asked how does this knowledge work in interactions with the outside world and how does this work in city structure and systems? For example can we release control of a job, to have it floating and rotating in use and being taken up by different persons? Nature has its way of balancing but cars and machines cannot, they need to be strictly controlled.

Jay asked how will it work out if MG goes back to nomadic way but don’t erect laws that prevent some outsiders to exploit the nomadic thinking for their own profit? E.g. foreigners come to MG to live the romantic nomadic lifestyle, they buy horse and go to countryside, but they cause much destruction because they don’t understand or fully practice the whole MGN philosophy of nomadic life, only practice what he likes.

Or for example that many Chinese companies are building new apartment and business blocks in city. This create additional burden on piping sewage system, which they do not address or try to solve. In nomadic thinking whose responsibility is this?

The discussion moved on to the idea of forming a learning and discussion club, like an informal academy of nomadic knowledge. CY said we can start by asking the question: how does nomadic knowledge contribute to and work with modernisation?

As the group was supportive of this idea, CY will work on this as an 'actionable idea'.

Further reflections

During the discussions, the group was becoming very analytical when focusing on the phrasing of each question, but when it came to expressing affiliation with nomadic culture and way of life, they fell back to generalisations and sentimentalising, e.g. no hospitals but we are happy, making claims like “In future there will be no cities in Mongolia, only have nomadic lifestyle. Why? This could be because of a lack of *distance*. When we are closely attached with something, we lose the distance in order to examine it further.

The group got emotional and excited when it came to Question 6, which happens to be the biggest and broadest phrased question. Is it that the MGN imagination kicks in when the scope is broad enough? Or perhaps the question strikes at a core concern of MG’s heritage - the (gradual erosion of) nomadic lifestyle.

Eventhough Uldii and Derme commented that the questions are not precisely phrased, I think in a way it has worked in getting them to orientate themselves in relation to their social cultural issues and in relation to other MGNs. The layered progression was important as by answering them progressively, people got warmed up by the earlier questionss and got very focused when they came to the last question.

If MGNs thought broadly, then it would not have been good for me to address the questions directly, even though Tseika and Uldii remarked that it is an honour to address someone specifically.

Perhaps the next phase can begin by drawing out all these generalisations and opinions about nomadic culture, like an architecture of the slogans, or statements. So that they can constitute the 'field' for us to start asking questions and orientating ourselves.

What are the questions we can begin to pose to get people's statements and ideas about nomadic lifestyle/ knowledge in response to modern issues?

Perhaps start with general and basic topics like the change in people's diet, housing, income then go to bigger issues about governance, management, structures and arrangements of modern life. The questions should be specific and located directly in a particular situation.

Will organise another discussion on how nomadic life can work with modernisation, and also think of the 2 way progression of going from big to small and from small to big. I think its useful to find something that can allow this negotiation of ideas to happen.

2nd meeting 21 june

CY: After the group discussion last Saturday, the topic that really interests me is 'how can nomadic knowledge work with modernisation? Can we suggest or develop some models for this? Perhaps we could create a project around this, where each artist or participant who is interested to connect with nomadic knowledge can make something and I have conversations with each person.

Ganzug: There is an Academy of Nomadic Life, we have to collaborate with them.

Uldii: There are contradictions between nomadic life and city development. If people are moving from the country to the city as they wish, and stay anywhere, just set up yard and fence, this will be difficult for city management. The city architectural committee organised a forum discussing about creating a separate area for the gers, and don't provide electricity or water to these areas, only hospital and emergency services.

Ganzug: But in nomad life, we don't have fence, blocks, walls. These are the reason why our thinking has become blocked. We have to collaborate more openly in Mongolian cultural life. The first step is to destroy those walls that are controlling our mind.



Uldii: An example is in Dahan City, where the residents of one area have destroyed their walls and share the whole area. The families combine together to make playground. The starting point of nomadic thinking is that we can share.

Jay: Imagination and knowledge need to work together. Thinking together will increase both our imagination and understanding.

CY: Let's plan a public event for next week. Where should we do this? In ger district or apartment area? We could try to frame some questions and explore these questions from big to small scales, and from small to big, and from abstract to specific perspectives and from specific to abstract. We must always not assume that we know the answer, no matter what the question or how simple we think it is, we should always ask people the question.

Mungen: How about we don't choose to locate the event in any specific place but make it mobile?

CY: We need to think about how to attract people to interact with us, how can they input their thoughts and ideas. I have made a work before in Poland where we make a mobile installation that function like a roundtable.

Ganzug: The problems reside in the ger districts, and they are related to both city and nomad life. People are thinking about problems alone inside their home. Where there is a problem, it is there that we have to go to meet the people.



CY: We can do the action in a few places. We can move from ger to apartment areas. We need to think about how to show the connection between people? For example, Nomad Wave use connected sleeves to visualise that connection in their performances.

Oyunbileg: We can ask people to tell us about their dreams. I can make paper origami with them as we are talking. We can fold paper birds together and I could give it to them with a wish that their dream will come true.

Chinzorig: It will be a challenge to work in both the ger and apartment areas, because the people living in the ger district hate the people living in the apartments and the people in apartments hate the people from ger district. It would be hard to get them to talk to each other.

Discussion ended with suggestion that the group meet again on Thursday with one set of questions, working from big to small, or broad to narrow.

Ganzug: The way of Mongolian thinking is part by part, but not specific. For example, we say 100 pieces of wood, but we never count it. It is not specific. But if you ask any Mongolian, we will understand what is being said or asked, same as all other Mongolians.



Mungentsetseg: Nomadic life is closely related to water source. For herders the most important element is water. In my province there is a water well. Herders go there and gather in one area, to give salt to their animals and to rest. I would like to create a motor for the well, and a comfortable rest area for the herders.

Developing the negotiation sculpture-installation, working on thoughts from previous discussions

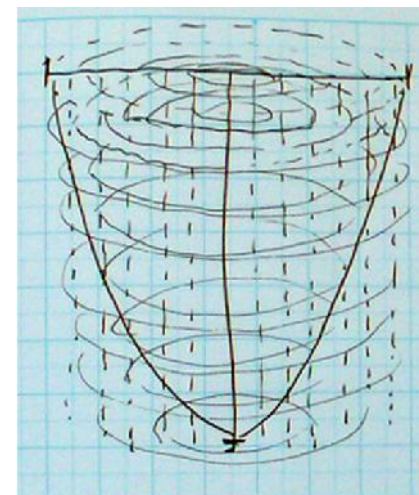
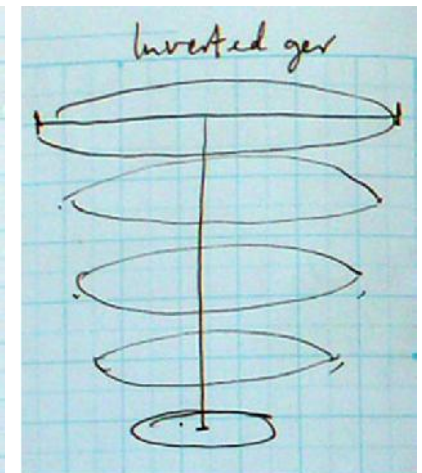
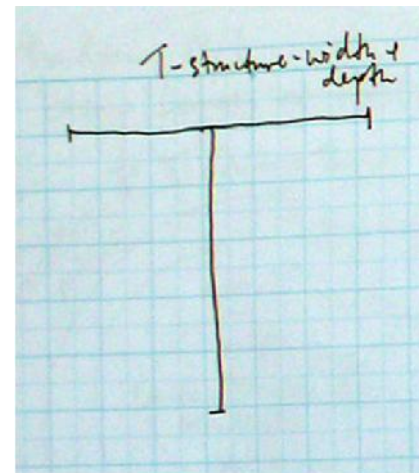
The orientation and negotiation tool need to respond to the Mongolian way of thinking, which the participants say is broad and deep. This 'depth' as I understand it from them, is not the 'depth' as one would understand it from a western perspective, of investigating something very thoroughly, going deep critically. This depth is more like very deep into the past, of eternal quality, as I intuited from the book *The Eternal Dialogue* by Dr Ashgood.

Uldii said that he thinks there are 3 main philosophical traditions in Asia, one is the philosophy of the method, which is pragmatic as practised for example by the Chinese, the second is the Mongolian way, which is more spiritually oriented, thinking very broad and deep; and the 3rd is based on magic.

Which is perhaps why, Mongolians feel very grounded, connected and secure in their lives. For example when they set out on a journey, they cannot discuss or plan the journey, or even turn back if one forgot something, as it is considered bad luck, as if one does not trust one's connection with Nature and life force, therefore the journey would not be successful. For example, the Mongolians would go out on a trip to the desert with enough petrol only for one way of the journey, or they would venture out to Europe with only enough money for going out and not return.

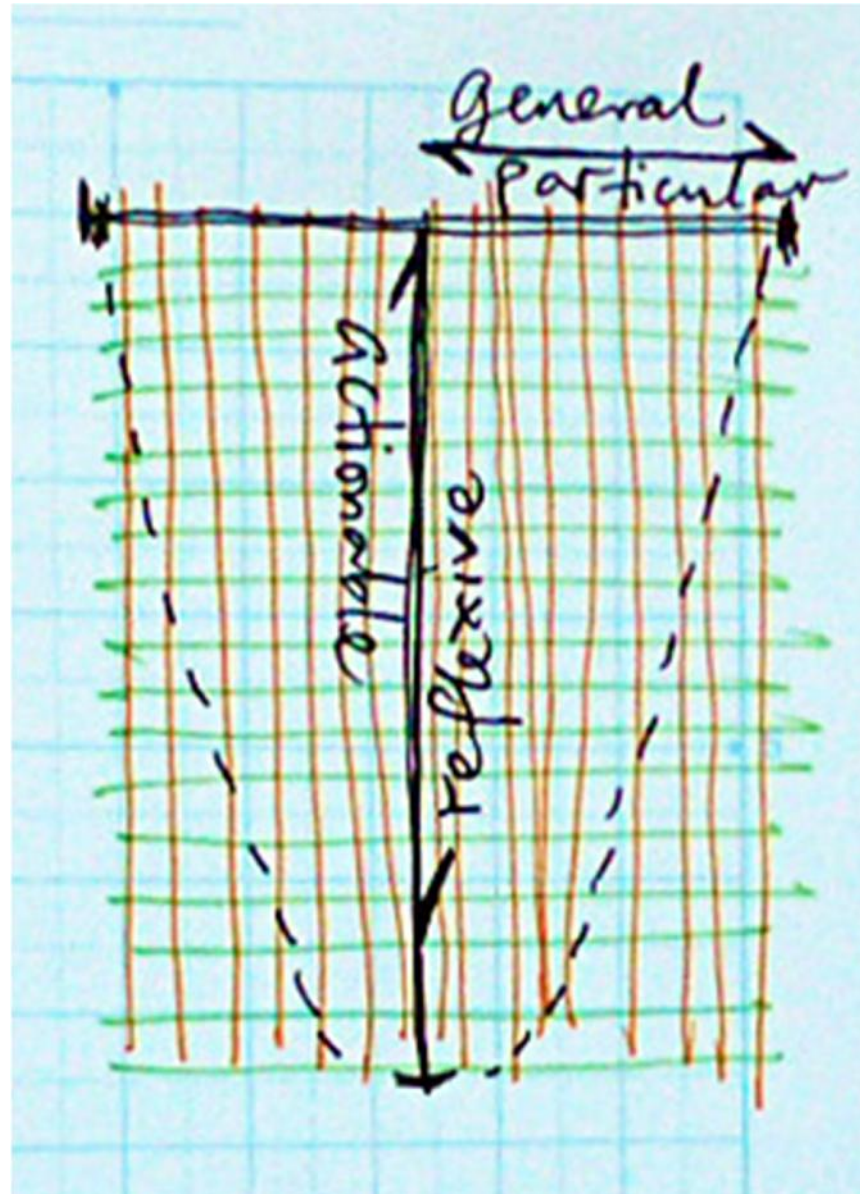
However this mentality also means they are not good with thinking of specifics, with thinking of planning (or is it even not 'correct way' to plan?). How can I work with people to produce or orientate them towards what I have termed as 'actionable thought'? I think nomadic culture and knowledge is a very deep well, a rich resource, but unless we can tap into it, draw water from it to address the problems of city living and systems that Mongolia is facing today, it is not 'giving'. During one of the workshop exercises, Chinzorig has said Mongolia is like stone, it needs to become like sand, or like water, able to give and support life.

Working with this input of broad and deep, I began to think how to develop a 3-dimensional ground. It should be shaped like a T, or like an inverted ger. The entire space would be charged with lines for locating a particular thought or idea, and to enable the exploration of the movements of that particular thought or idea by sliding it inwards towards more narrow, or more specific, and from deep to shallow.



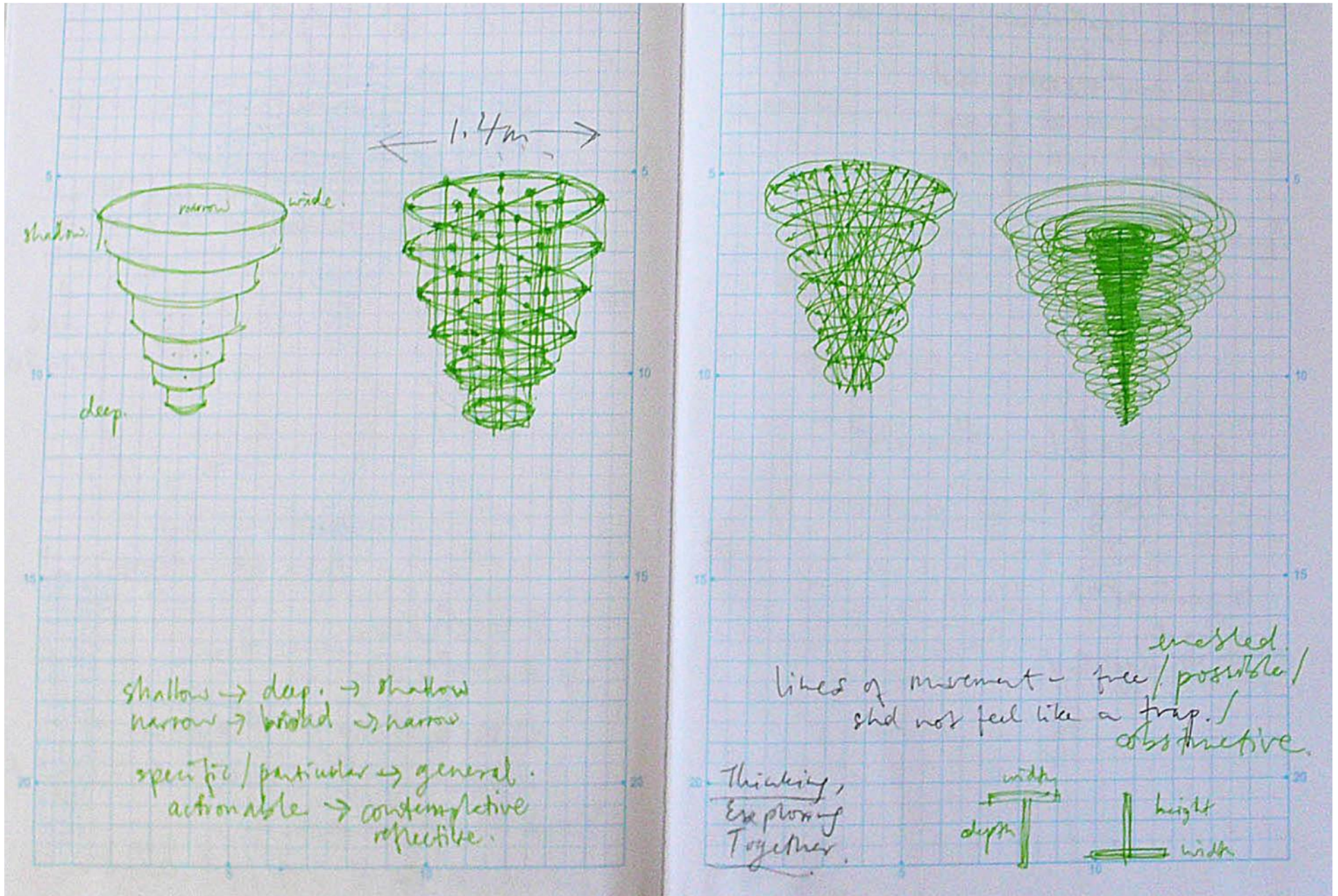
The horizontal axis would work as going outwards towards wholistic, and going into the centre as specific.

The vertical axis would work as going downwards as being more reflective, and going upwards as being more actionable.



Will discuss this with the group to see how feasible or workable this sculpture would be for them.

Sketches of form options for sculpture-installation – for the placement, orientation and negotiation of thoughts and ideas



Basic ideas of the sculpture-installation

- The installation carves out a field where ideas and thoughts are visible, mobile and can be placed or plotted along 'meridian lines' of movement.
- Different persons then orientates his/her ideas/ thoughts within this field and negotiates with other's ideas/ thoughts.
- Groups of persons can also be asked to relocate these ideas based on how they evaluate them. What would the directions of movement correspond to? For example horizontal movement inwards from the outer to inner circumference can be read as moving from broad to narrow, which can be interpreted as moving from general to specific? Or from unactionable to actionable? Or from more spiritual to less? Etc.
- This 'evaluation' which involves judgement, is *not neutral, not value-free*; need also be 'shown' or made visible to be influenced by variety of factors – our orientation, our emotions, our values.



23 June meeting, OAU apartment

Present: Ganzug, Oyunzaya, Tseika, Jay, Chu Yuan

CY began by showing her sketches for the Thinking Together sculpture-installation

Ganzug: I like your sculpture very much. I think it reflects nomadic thinking, start from broad, then consider and put all the details in place.

CY: The question I wish to explore is whether we can draw from nomadic knowledge to work together with or help us to manage the modernisation process.

G: If we are thinking of solving problems, we are going towards the modernist way. What we need to do is we have to create another city or field of life or habitat that is based on nomadic principles. A few families combine to live together, cooperate and then move away. We cannot have fixed structures. The 'city' needs to be always changing and moving.

Jay: So who will organise the throwing of the rubbish after the people have moved away?

G: In nomadic life, we don't have the kinds of disposable rubbish that comes with modernisation. Everyone has a cup, and everywhere we go, we bring that cup. All these modern things (points to his own hand phone) are destroying our life.

Oyunzaya: We have to teach the younger generation about nomadic way. Young people like myself. If I have to live in the



countryside, I won't be able to survive or live there.

G: If you think you can't live there, then you should go away. In the modernised world, there are more powerful destructive things like winds, storms, earthquakes.

Oyu: But it has always been that the earth is managing us. Human beings cannot manage the earth eventhough we think we are. We have to try to teach our children from young, from kindergarten level, to try to change them from young.

Jay: You can try to bring back some basic simple nomadic practices, for example, of everyone bringing a cup with them everywhere. This will reduce the amount of rubbish. Can also try to limit the amount of cars going into the city daily.

CY: Ganzug, what you are saying is that we have to destroy and build anew, is there no other way to incorporate nomadic ways with modernisation? Does it mean we have to isolate Mongolia from the rest of the world, from globalisation?

G: Yes. The big danger is that Mongolian people destroy our own traditional culture. Every culture should be developing in their own way.

CY: Is it possible to think of one model or system without having to think how it is also contextualised by and have to interact with the bigger systems and structures?

Jay: For example, capitalism uses human rights to enter and exploit other countries, under the pretext of freedom of movement, but human rights also ensure people's rights to protect ourselves.

G: I think you should ask people how do you connect with the heavens or sky, and how do you reach to the ground or earth? You will find that even though the city folks have been living in the city, but their thinking is still nomadic. That's why there are many contradictions in our practices.

CY: What would be the aim of asking these questions? To get people to connect back to their nomadic thinking or mind?

G: Their answers would show where their connection or orientation is. Even if they are living in the city, where is their orientation? If you ask them these questions, they will think “this foreigner is asking very deep questions from me”. The people know the answers, always thinking about it.

CY: Is it better for foreigners to ask these questions to Mongolians or for fellow Mongolians to ask them?

G: It will be different. Every Mongolian carry his/her own heaven over his/her head, ; if living badly, heaven will be focusing on him/her. If doing bad, heaven will (exclude you, kick you out?).

CY: Is this the same as what we call conscience?

G: Every human’s heaven is related with the order of the ancestors, history and all thinking ways. There is a deep connection between things. Especially in nomadic training, the teaching begin when in mother’s stomach. After born, we learn in home, in daily life and learning our connection with nature.

CY: if a foreigner and a Mongolian ask you the same question, who will you answer in way that is more true?

G: Mongolian

CY: Then it is better that Mongolians ask the question in our public actions.

G: We can ask together. Actually Mongolian people, especially the nomadic people, don’t need to answer. We keep our secrets inside. It is very different to connect with nomadic people, we need to use ‘big thinking’. But now it is changing. We’ve been influenced by Buddhism, monasteries were built by Manchurians, and we had Russian Red Revolution. There is only one city – Karakorum – that’s built by nomadic way, now its destroyed. Now we are influenced by the world, we build big cities.

Reflections:

This for me is one of the most significant conversations I've had on this trip, for what it sheds on the topics of (1) knowledge; and (2) on negotiation.

(1) From what Ganzug says, it is not important for nomads to know something precisely, that one can only connect to them through 'big thinking'. I think this means seeing everything in interconnected ways. I wonder what kinds of knowledge or information is then deemed to be important for informing how one should act and in what ways? Do they create and differentiate between categories and states of things, like western knowledge?

(2) Ganzug lived as a nomad up until his late teens when he came to UB to study graphic design. He has been in UB city for more than 10 years, yet feels his deepest connections to nomadic culture. Oyunzaya grew up in the city. She is bright, speaks English and often attends arts and cultural activities organised by local and foreign NGOs in UB. She is an avid photographer, likes to create images depicting liberated womanhood, and has been commissioned to produce a series of such photographs for a woman's magazine.

When Oyu said she would not be able to live in the countryside, Ganzug responded then you should go away, I was thinking about one of the prerequisites of negotiation, from my own experience and confirmed by Ava Abramowitz, that "*You have to have something in common to negotiate*". In Architect's Essentials on Negotiation, she wrote: Usually that something is a scarce item – an item that one party has that the other party wants. Without that scarcity there wd be no incentive to deal. Indeed the more scarce the item, the more the Other needs that item, the greater the power and leverage its possessor will have in the negotiation.

Ganzug and Oyu are different in terms of age and background, one grew up nomadic and the other in city. G says the great need to relearn and re-embrace nomadic culture and practices and Oyu also acknowledges this, but says that education need to begin from young, otherwise it is hard to convince a youth like herself as she would feel completely out of place in the countryside. Ganzug's response is somewhat dismissive. In another situation with visiting curator Defne Ayas, she has noted that he is disruptive and dismissive when someone else is speaking, showing an attitude verging on what would be perceived in western culture as arrogance.

I wonder if this is arrogance, or just seen to be very plain, direct behaviour. The other MGNs do not seem disturbed by his behaviour. From my interactions with him, I noted that his behaviour not conditioned by mannerisms perceived as 'cultured' or 'civilised' or city ways, speaks his mind directly and boldly. Or perhaps his behaviour is in defiance of city people's prejudice against country people's mannerisms (the debate around city/country depicts nomadic ways as 'uncivilised')

In this situation there is interest but not a perceived need to negotiate. There are many options and choices where each can be, and what each can do, how each wants to lead his/her own life. And yet, G feels that the world is increasingly beset by problems that nomadic culture can provide a solution for. It is surprising that he does not try harder to persuade, or find way to negotiate with persons holding different values and practices. Because there is no scarcity of resources, there is no perceived need for the 2 to feel the need to negotiate with each other.

Possible idea for further work

Propose a situation

WHAT IF....

Resources in Mongolia becomes extremely scarce and the 2 main groups of people who have grown up in nomadic and city life, like Ganzug and Oyu, have to begin to negotiate and learn to live together in one space and time. How will they begin to negotiate and produce joint or collaborative ways to bridge the nomad/city divide and tensions?

Would they find the incentive to negotiate given that it would be a fictionalised situation, but one that could very possibly happen?

Young Mongolians who attend Open Academy have a sense of individual urgency, they want to learn and want to improve on their lives, but on the whole, there isn't a sense of collective or social urgency. Perhaps our discussion and definition of urgency needs to be grounded on the Mongolian sense of time. As Bazo has said to us, he and Boldo come from the desert where it is flat, and one cannot see anything in the horizon, there is no sense of time in that situation. Everything is just timeless and ever present (as well as non-present). This could perhaps explain why the Mongolians are not prompted to act until the thing or person or matter really appears before him/her, gets very close by. Even though we inform them months before, the collaborators in UB will only get things moving when we are physically there.

Poverty and the gap between rich and poor is growing, so are problems of pollution and improper habitation, sanitation. Perhaps the more captivating question for most Mongolians today is the changing of the old nomadic ways with the new city life.

There are people who think nomadic ways are crude and old fashioned. One of the proposals we received for the OA Grant, titled Attack for Civilised Culture, proposes the use of road signs to educate and create awareness for city ways for the nomads who come from the countryside. We decided not to support the project as we felt that it took a somewhat condescending view of nomadic culture and we think that static displays will not produce productive change without dialogue and the desire to approach the problem at its root in a more wholistic and multi-sided manner, to find out how the problem could be solve from multiple perspectives.

There is a sense though that by talking about nomadic ways MGNs want to stay with a certain sense of accomplishment of the past, of Genghis Khan and the warriors. There is no real desire to want to debate how nomadic ways can work with modernisation. This would be an impression I would like to verify with a MGN anthropologist whom Uldii will introduce to me.

25 June 2011 - Shopping for material in Ulaanbaataar's Black Market, a huge Soviet style indoor market with sections for various goods



Sourcing material for the sculpture-installation. Ganzug will help me form some loops of decreasing circumference using plastic pipes.



Moving onto threads and rope



Working on the sculpture







28 June, meeting with Nomad Wave members, OAU apartment

Nomad Wave's performance are often about keeping the Mongolian nation together. They focus on the role of women in MG. many MGN women are marrying foreigners. They want to remind society of women's role. If women are 'clean' then the country is 'clean' and tough.

In their performances, they use 2 'big' concepts:

1. Interconnected sleeves, to show connections between humans – their minds, heart and the country, the sky, ancestors and future generations
2. Lullaby to mother earth, to honour and remind MGNs of the relationship between human and mother earth. In these, they will use the 'blue stamp', which is 'nationalistic' (MGNs are believed to be born with a blue stamp on their body which gradually fades as they grow older, this blue stamp shows their connections to nature) as well as their own specially created queen's horn head dress.

The members found the Thinking Together installation very invigorating. Eya commented that it is like "a pool, where we can swim with thoughts and ideas." For their participation in Thinking Together, they would like to propose questions to understand people's perceptions and experiences of living in the countryside and in the city, and the reasons why ger dwellers have moved to the city from the Countryside, and whether they would like to return or stay.





29th June Planning for 3rd July public action in 2 places, ger district and apartment area

In this meeting, it was decided that the date for the action will be coming Sunday 3rd July, from 11 am to 2 pm in ger district and from 3 pm to evening in apartment area. Possible sites are in the north of the city, where there's a ger district and apartment area close to each other.

We discussed how many questions will be asked. Different coloured thread and paper will be prepared to differentiate between the answers of the various questions. CY will not pose any questions but will work with the MGN participants in developing and scaling the questions. Also discussed about the installation details, provide chairs, table, juice and snacks.

The group tossed up some questions:

Chinzo: (1) What can we do to protect the environment? (2) If 10,000 people combine together, what can they do to make people happy?

Mungun: What will happen if 10,000 people move from the city to the countryside?

Boldo: is it necessary to have ger district in the city? Why?

CY: How are you going to scale the questions? How to move people's imagination and thoughts in different directions?

Boldo: The we can ask "What will happen if we no longer have any ger district in the city? What will happen if we have 10x more ger district in the city?"





Apartment people will probably say its not necessary; whereas the ger people will say “If we can solve our problems, then its not necessary”. So should we then find out what are these problems?
We can connect with the nomad people and they can give their perspective of the city

CY: Ask how these problems can be solved by the nomadic way and by the city way.

Oyu: I would like to ask “How many times have you moved?” and why. Because often families are renting their yard and they have to move often.
Boldo: I’ll ask if I give you 10,000 animals will you leave the city.

CY’s reflection: the group seem to be rather caught up with the ‘imagine...’ questions, and are not thinking about framing the questions as trying to place and to visualise the relationship between nomadic culture and modernisation, between nomadic knowledge and modern knowledge, nomadic ways and modern ways; or to move the questions from the bigger picture/ general to specific/ the particular.

Ganzug’s question could be rephrased as What are your connections to the sky, and what are you connections to the earth. However, he decided not to ask any question on that day, as he was worried about the stability of the installation, and wanted to assist me with it.





CY: For example, with Boldo's question, we could try to orientate people into thinking about the problem from multiple perspectives: what can the government do? What can the city management do? What can a small group of people do, and what can 1 individual do?

CY: We should also tie all the answers onto the installation, and show the responses of people from the ger district to the people in the apartment area, and vice versa, so that each can respond to what the other has said.

In such a way the installation acts as field for each party to negotiate with the views of the other, and decide how to place their own responses to them.





Continuing to work on the sculpture in the evenings



30th June

Working together on the installation and planning for Oyulbileg's (seated on left) public action

After CY's workshop on visualisation strategies, Oyulbileg who is doing research on art and psychology, came up with the idea of showing people that they have power. She felt that too much discussion are centred on politics and what the government can do, the power of the government, while the power that is within each individual is ignored. She wanted to ask people to hold a mirror in their hands while facing the government house, so that with the reflection of the government building on the mirror, it looks that they are holding the seat of power in their own hands.

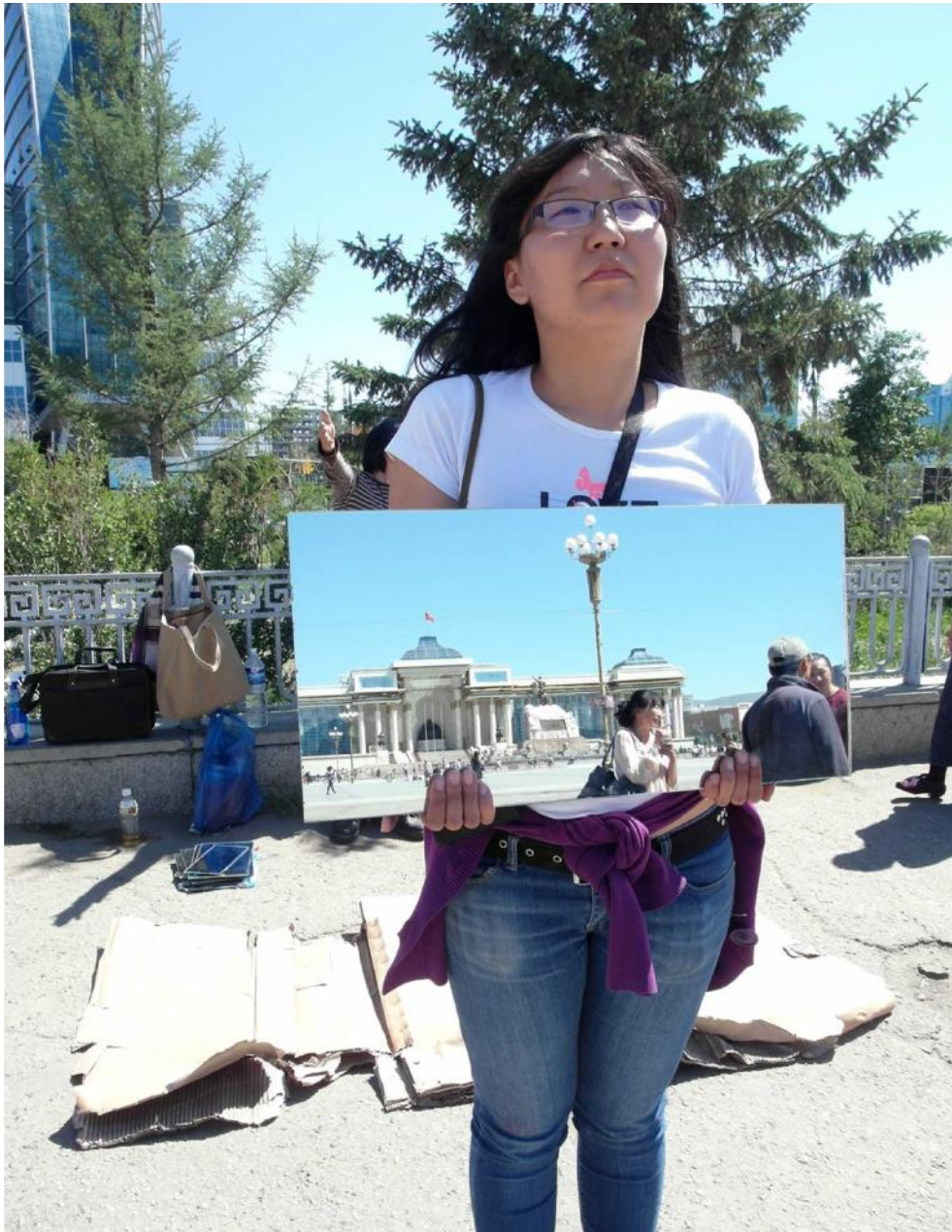
CY discussed with the group how this will be seen against other images and texts that are within the public sphere, for e.g. the MGN government has a slogan – “if united, we have power”. This can be used to lend legitimacy to the government and can be used by governments to evade or reduce their responsibility by shifting it to the people, whereas some things clearly need to be executed by governments.





Additionally, CY also discussed additional strategies to build onto those of 'making visible. In addition to creating the image of people holding power in their hands, what else can be done to create realisation on how to exercise that power, and in some cases, what can be done collectively to support and develop the capacity of that exercise of power.

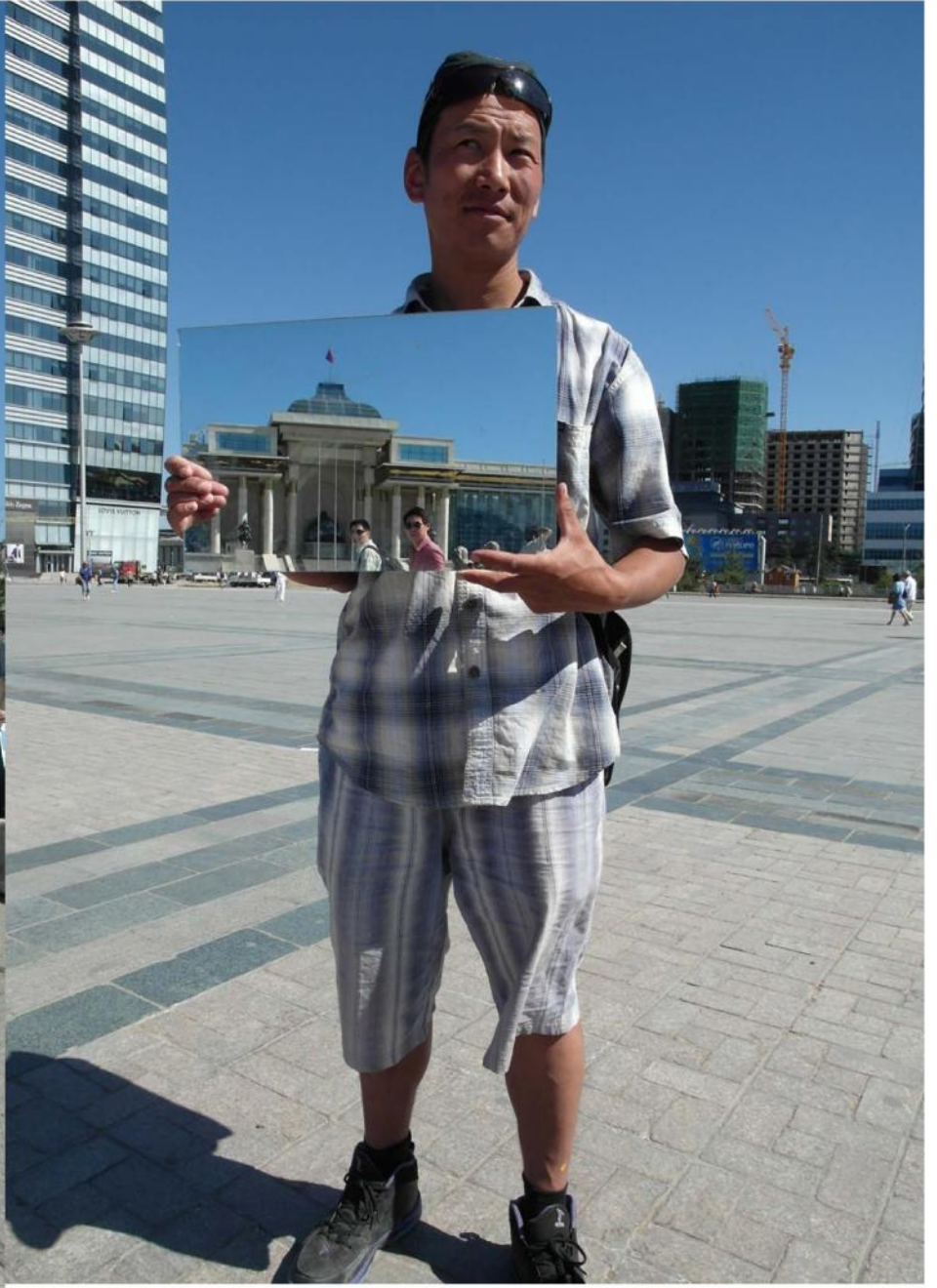
1st July – action in Ulaanbaatar’s parliament square. A selection of the photographs taken.





Many OAU participants came to support Oyunbileg in her first public art activity. Chu Yuan assisted her in the positioning, framing and shooting of the photographs, which still turned out to be a challenge - to capture the desired framing of the parliament house in the mirror without capturing the image of the photographer (here seen in the mirror image on the right).









On the morning of the *Thinking Together* action

On the morning of the action, the rolling out of events clearly showed differences between the Mongolian collaborators' worldview, behaviour and attitude towards organising and planning with those of Jay's and mine.

The coordinator of OAU had agreed to meet a group of us in the OAU apartment and together we will head out to the site of the action. Tseika, Ganzug, Chinzo, Oyu, Gandulam, Defne and Burak (visiting Turkish artist and curator involved with OAU workshops) Jay and myself gathered at 10 am at the OA apartment.

At close to 11 am, we found out that the coordinator was not coming. We then also found out that the exact site for the action was not yet determined. We decided to split our group into 2 cars, figure out how and where to meet the others who are also in 2 cars, who goes with the installation and who goes to pick up table and chairs from the old Blue Sun studio.

At 11.00 a group of us went to Blue Sun's old studio, while another group went towards the ger district with the installation. Meanwhile Boldo and Muji in 2 separate cars have gone ahead to determine exactly where the actions will take place. The 4 groups finally got together at Dari Ekh at close to 12 noon.

Jay had asked later why all these could not have been planned before hand, and Tseika responded that they prefer for everyone to come together and rackey the sites together before deciding, to which Jay responded why this rackey could not have been carried out earlier?

In addition to the Mongolian sense of time which I had recounted earlier, Tseika explained that for Mongolians it is not good to plan ahead of time. It means there is no faith in the journey and a sure sign that something will go wrong. This is confirmed by previous experiences that we have had with Mongolians. In 1995, Jay had met a group of Mongolians in Europe who had only enough money to venture out but not to return. We also know of Mongolians making trips out to the desert with enough petrol only for the outward journey. Tseika also said it is a Mongolian wisdom that we must not rush to do things.

Using the negotiation tool, it would be interesting and useful to place on the same field, Jay's sense of time and organisation, mine and those of our Mongolian collaborators.



The site of the action – the Dari Ekh ger district,
Ulaanbaatar



About Ger Districts in Ulaanbaatar

Around 60% of urban families live in *ger* areas in a mixture of traditional Mongolian felt tent *ger* (around 70% are “5 wall *ger*” of 25m²), and in informally constructed private houses that are generally built with minimal levels of insulation and high ventilation heat losses as there is a general lack of formal construction worker training and technical knowledge, and to reduce costs the workers are usually hired directly by the urban family and not employed by a construction company.

These private houses are usually small (around 30-40m²), sometimes with a second storey which is not occupied during Mongolia’s bitterly cold winters. Sometimes the house itself is not occupied during winter with a *ger* being used instead due to its smaller size and often superior insulation, or families rent an apartment to reduce travel times to work and school and utilize the superior district heating provision of apartment buildings.

Extracted from the presentation “Present situation of air pollution in Ger area” by Buyan MUNKHBAYAR, Building Energy Efficiency Centre, Mongolia, delivered in the International conference “The Current Situation of Ger Area in Ulaanbaatar City”, in Ulaanbaatar.



Air pollution in winter caused by the burning of coal in the ger districts

Photographs taken from the presentation "Results of a Survey into the Internal Environment of Ulaanbaatar's Ger Area Households," by Jun Kato et al, Japan International Cooperation Agency & Mongolian University of Science & technology MUST, delivered in the International conference "The Current Situation of Ger Area in Ulaanbaatar City".





Shamanic totem and spring at Dari Ekh

This site and the water is believed to be sacred as the site is guarded by a shamanic as well as Buddhist totem (shown above).

Water from the spring head (left) is believed to have special benefits for health.



Collecting water from the spring head. The spring is an extremely popular water source with ger dwellers. People submerge household pots and bottles into the water source, a possible cause of contamination which an upcoming project awarded an OAU grant will address.



Collecting thrash from the site before the start of the action





Unusual sight of all our bags on the ground, as Mongolians believe bags should be honoured and not placed on the ground. Here it sits contrasted with the thrash that we collected from the site.

Setting up the
sculpture-installation
by the spring
(Photograph by
Ganzug)





View of installation connecting with the spring and the shamanic totem in the field (Photograph by Ganzug)



Putting up the 5 questions – with Chinzorig wearing his (Photograph by Ganzug)



A crowd begins to gather





Photograph by Ganzug





Photograph by Ganzug)



Photograph by Ganzug



Tying the responses onto the sculpture-installation. (Photographs by Ganzug)



Photograph by Ganzug



Muji interacting with visitors at Dari-Ekh with Nomad Wave's question: Would you like to live in (or return to) the countryside and why? (Photograph by Ganzug)



Chinzorig with his question: What can 1000 Mongolians do to bring about some happiness? (Photograph by Ganzug)



Boldo working with a participant on his question: Are ger districts necessary in Ulaanbaatar











Үгүй,
Утасда, хоюо
Анхлагүй эчир
Бауранд Бэсэл Аюу.

1. 2 ир
2. 7 ир залуу

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Цовэр, хоггүй
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арх ирэн хяналт
амьдралд туслахаа
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ХО П
ОС
АМЬС

Some fun before we leave...





Setting out for the apartment area...



Installation safely packed into Muji's car



One group sets off by car...

The other by bus...



Female bus conductor

Curious little fellow
passenger















(Photograph by Ganzug)



(Photographs by Ganzug)



(Photograph by Ganzug)



(Photograph by Ganzug)







Tseika (left top) and Gandulam (right) working with participants.



(Photograph by Ganzug)



(Photograph by Ganzug)



Apartment folks reading what the ger folks wrote





Left to right: Chu Yuan, Muji, Tseika



Left to right: Zaya, Gandulam, Tseika, Oyulbileg, Chinzorig

Reflections:

The *Thinking Together* project was running concurrently with the OAU workshops by myself, Defne Ayas, Burak Arıkan, and a grant competition and selection process, in addition to 2 contemporary art projects that many of the artists are involved with – a multimedia event in the Black Box theatre in early July and the Blue Sun annual art camp in mid July. It was really amazing that the participants found the time, energy and commitment to immerse themselves into the TT discussions, planning and actions.

I had begun my workshops by introducing a way of exploring the multiple perspectives of an issue or idea, by looking at different aspects of the work or from different points-of-view. For example, the idea can be explored from the perspective of the bigger social picture, or from finer details. I had developed this from my visual experimentations of 'field' and 'elements', using different layers of tracing paper built upon the initial layer of white card which is marked as layer zero. Each added transparent layer is to be titled – they represent a particular 'lens' or 'filter' with which to look at the issue or idea laid out on layer zero, e.g. they could be from the point of 'concerns', 'problems', 'short or long term aims', 'possible partners' etc.

I think it was important that with the *Thinking Together* project, the participants went through the process of seeing and experiencing how this 2-dimensional method became translated into a 3-dimensional sculpture-installation, while still keeping a continuity with the exercise of exploring issues from multiple perspectives and views, albeit with additional dimensions of being able to negotiate the location and sliding of the ideas in a more tangible, tactile way, plotted along different axis. I wanted to show them the development of my own research ideas and thinking process as well, as my mentoring was aimed at helping them to develop their own thinking and visualisation processes.

For the action on 3rd July, we housed responses for 5 different questions (some of which were in sets) in the sculpture-installation. I think it would have been much better if we had the time to post only one question at one time, something we had explored but just couldn't fit in the time for. With one question at a time, we would have been able to explore it from different perspectives, e.g. from the perspective of ger dwellers, and apartment dwellers; from the public and the authorities, and from

specific interest groups, etc. with different colours indicating the groups of views. Or we could have placed people's sentiments alongside the facts by 'experts'. The installation could have 'located' or 'held' all these views together, placing all of them in one continuous visualised field. The different views could be 're-positioned' or 'replaced' through different sessions of negotiations and conversations with different groups of audiences and participants.

In order to accommodate the 5 questions, I improvised with 5 different colours for the threads that form the 'meridian lines' of location, with corresponding coloured cards. We wrote a code on the back of each card to indicate if the view was expressed by ger or apartment dweller.

The installation was created over a period of 3 – 4 days, and was hand made using available materials locally. It could be developed and refined further to offer a wider range of lines and positions for locations and shifts.

An initial idea I had was that this 2011 activity would form an opportunity for the public to negotiate with the earlier responses from *Imagining Possibilities 2009*, i.e. I could have plotted the responses from 2009 onto the *Thinking Together* installation for the negotiation of those views with new audiences. However, due to the fact that these responses seem a bit dated, and there are many new participants in OAU 2011 who did not experience the 2009 work, in order to engage them more deeply, I decided that I should create a new work with their involvement from the start.

Due to shortness in time and the simple set up in public space, I had realised that we would not be able to create an atmosphere where we could lead the each member of the public who interacted with us to give us their response as well as negotiate or in negotiation with other person's responses to ascertain the location of the views within the 'field' of the installation. We also needed to have some initial responses to form some 'markers' within the field, so that other views can be placed in *relation* to them. So on the day of the action, while we did encourage people to read responses from others, we tied all the responses onto the installation at random positions.

The strategy that I adopted then is to give this understanding and experience of using the installation to locate and negotiate different views to the participant-collaborators. Therefore, I had requested for a post action session with them, so that they review all the responses together and negotiate with them, as well as with each other so as to determine how they should be located within the installation. They will have to decide together how (with what criteria) they would evaluate the responses and how they would use them to create a field of related and relational views, placed in revisable relational positions with each other.

This inter-related field of views could then be brought to different publics for further rounds of public discussions and negotiations around a particular issue, acting firstly as an orientational device to grasp the different points of views, and 'stake-holders' involved in the discussion, and secondly as a negotiative device where positions and view points can be considered, evaluated and shifted if desired. It could also function as a field for exploring the further development of ideas, actions, considering and building upon points of interconnections and relationality.

Post public action negotiation



On 4th July, a group gathered together after the public actions to look through all the responses gathered, evaluate them and negotiate on their placement and position within the charged field that is demarcated by the installation.

After taking down all the responses, the group discussed the responses together and decide where their position is vis-à-vis how general or specific, as well as how reflective or actionable the thought or idea is. There were some arguments amongst the group, through which they resolved by persuasion. I mainly observed and did not intervene. I asked that they told me which of the responses they found significant and where would they place them. Here are their selection:



To the question: Are ger districts necessary in UB?

- Yes ger districts are necessary, because Mongolian people need to be touching the ground. However, ger districts need to be developed. Every Mongolian need to work together to develop this area.
- What are the problems? Cold and hot water, toilets and burning of coal.
- How can we develop the area? For example, we can make the area look more tidy and uniform, every fence can be in same colour, make it look nicer and influence the city planning.
- Yes ger districts are necessary because people should not live in the streets.
- Yes ger districts are necessary because people are poor and don't have money to buy apartments.
- In ger districts, there are problems of thrash, air pollution, the streets are dark and bad things happen. Government has to solve the problem, make better lighting and have a police station nearby.



-What can be done? When people agree, they can combine to build one apartment block together.

-Its necessary because there are very poor people living in the tunnel (the underground sewage tunnels in Mongolia)

-Necessary because our tradition come from our ancestors, so we have to respect our tradition.

-Together we can do everything.

-In our ger district, we have to work to protect our mineral spring.

-Ger districts are taking up too much space and affecting air pollution.

-The public, the government, Mongolian society and the President should solve the problems because I is their responsibility.

-We need to be in apartments because ger districts are dirty and there are too many drunken people.

-Air pollution and city management is bad.

-We have to move ger districts to the south.

-People say there are too many cars in ger districts but they are everywhere too. It is not just ger districts that has air pollution.

To the question: How can we protect the spring water in Dari Ekh?

-Don't use pot to pull out water from the spring, don't leave thrash. People can pick up thrash and clean the well together.

-We have to keep our environment clean. If there is thrash we should take it away.

- The most important thing is clean environment.

-Mongolian president should protect the spring.

--We need to set up night watch. If any organisation leave their thrash here, people should move the thrash far from the spring.

Note: One of the winning proposal for the OAU grant is a project to build an elevation and some taps for the spring, so that people do not need to step down to the spring and use their pots and bottles to scoop water from the spring, leaving oily and other residue in the water.

To the question: Would you like to live in (or to return to) the countryside and why?

-No, in rural areas there are no job positions, so I have to be in the city.

-I want to live in the countryside, because of the fresh air and environment

-Of course I would like to return to nature.

-Yes, but because of life problems I have to live in the city, but if the provinces can develop like the city, I'd like to return.

-No, because life conditions there are bad.

To the question: What can 1000 Mongolians do to bring about happiness?

-Build a lot of apartments together.

-Encourage each other.

-Contribution of mind.

-Combine each person's 21,000 Togrogs from the government and buy something big. (Every Mongolian citizen gets 20,000 Togrogs as welfare payment from the government each month, roughly equivalent to £10)

-10,000 people can combine together to give smiles and love.

-Have to make the orphans and the poor happy.

-We can make people happy in a lot of ways, for e.g. by mind, action and skill. We can create buildings, statues, plant healthy vegetables, plant grass in the desert, create forests. We have the power of holding the mountain and stirring the water' (Mongolian expression of great power).

To the question: What will happen if 10,000 Mongolians move to the city tomorrow?

-If 10,000 Mongolians move to the city, that would be the biggest tragedy because our Motherland is very big and it shouldn't happen.

-Its necessary for the Motherland that families stay together, then the liver is full (Mongolian phrase meaning completion).

-We have to manage the movement of people from the countryside.











Interviews on video, 5 July



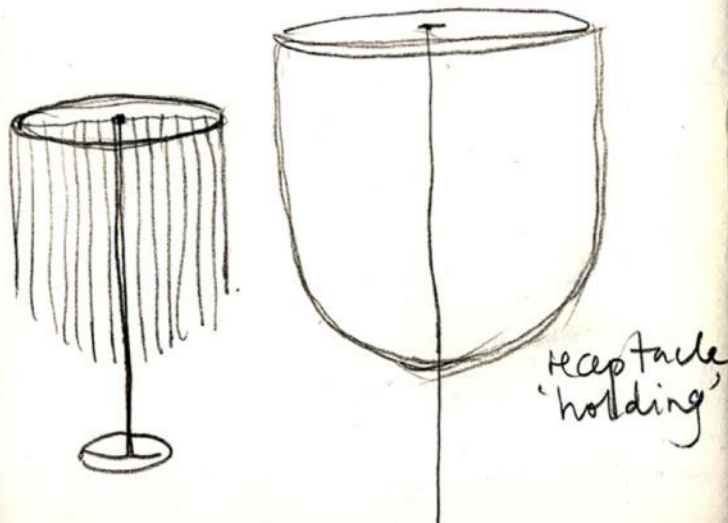
Chu Yuan asked each of the Thinking Together collaborators who fielded questions to express the thoughts behind their questions.

Clockwise from top right:
Mungun, Boldo, Chinzorig, Eya
and Muji (o.b.o. Nomad Wave),
Ganzug, Zaya



Selected drawings showing the re-working of the
Thinking Together ground-space after return to
Aberdeen 2011

In the early sessions -
 the participants articulated
 the sense of air W.V. or
 lifeworld, & what the sense
 of air 'field' is like, & what's
 their obstacle. - can't think
 of specifics, difficult to decide a way
 + using what they have expressed
 I developed a way of
 visualising it & creating

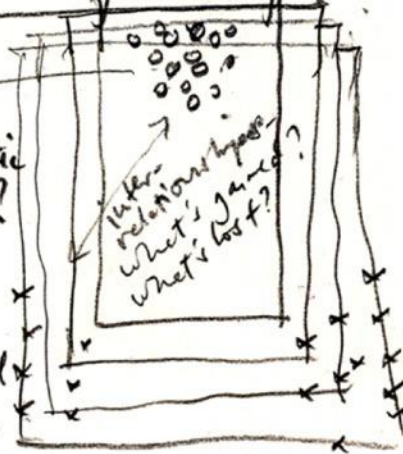


heap table
 'holding'

field/
 form/
 sculpture.

slicing through.

shallow
 +
 specific.
 → pragmatic
 culture?



*
 ay - don't
 understand
 concept.

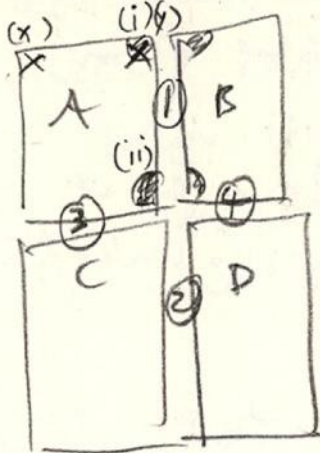
broad
 +
 deep
 ↓

connected
 roots of
 nomadic
 culture?

↓
 anchor's
 points - delineated
 sculpting out markers?
 the field
 of the views, values,
 & worldviews?

The earlier drawings focused on how to make the ground-space work like a 'tool': Ideas on slicing the ground-space into 2D for analysis; as seen in the following four slides

\bar{e} side axis must be a common character shared by 2 sides -



① common axis btw A + B

② common btw C + D

③ common btw A + C

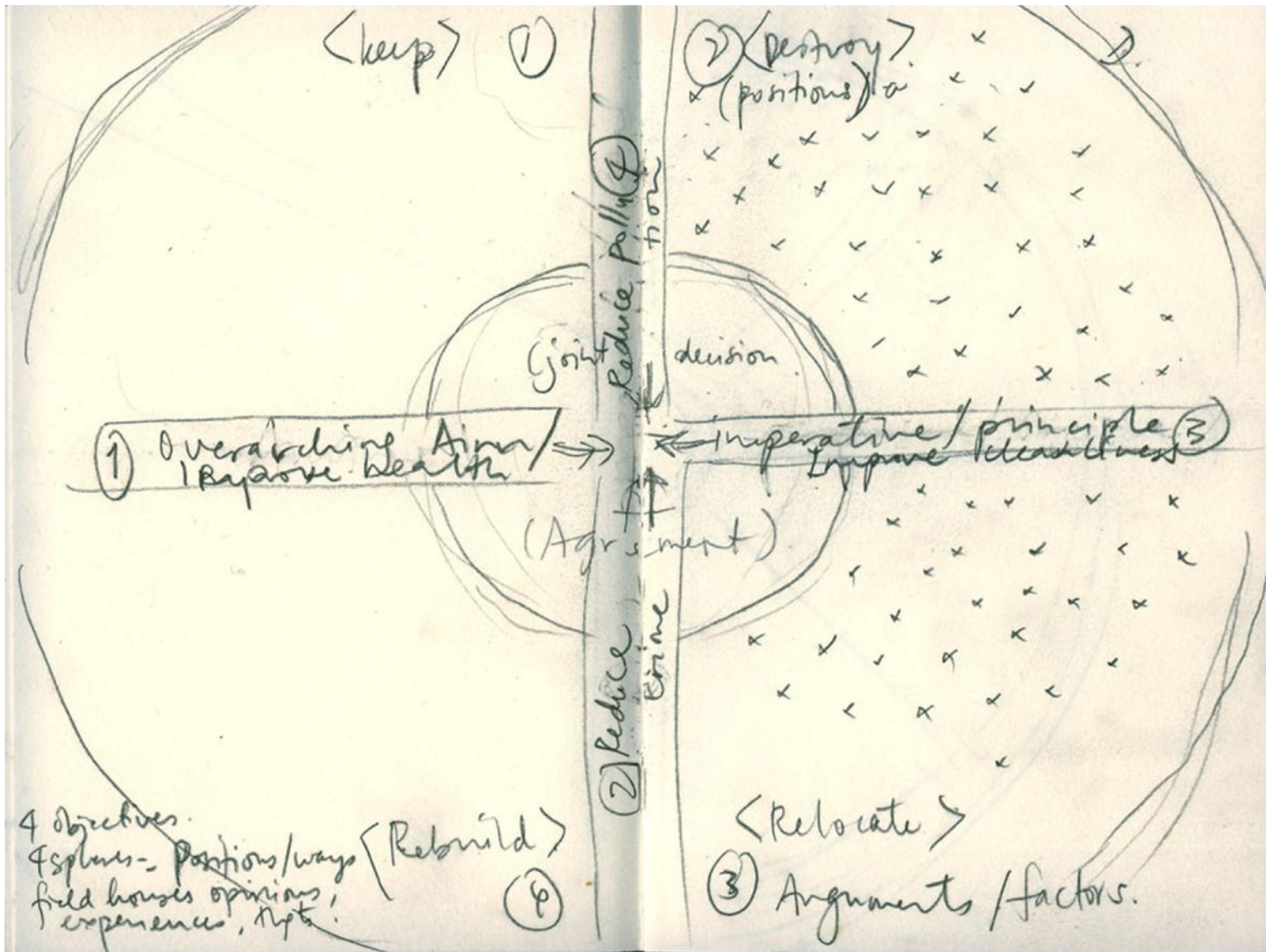
④ common btw B + D

i + ii - must be opposite
x + y - " " "

if main tokens mark positions taken by persons/idea, "arguments" \bar{e} "muggets" of conversations can be recorded on diff + tokens + played on \bar{e} edges - can connect to \bar{e} main ideas \bar{e} other threads

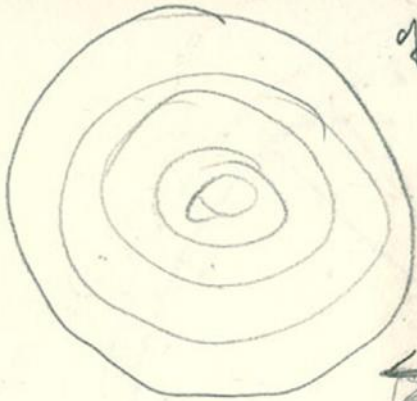
* tool should be used over a period of time - to record \bar{e} nego. process + by looking

at \bar{e} dev't over time, may help. \bar{e} nego. go in certain directions parties converge - e.g. each time field add stg. to \bar{e} "muggets" / "summary"

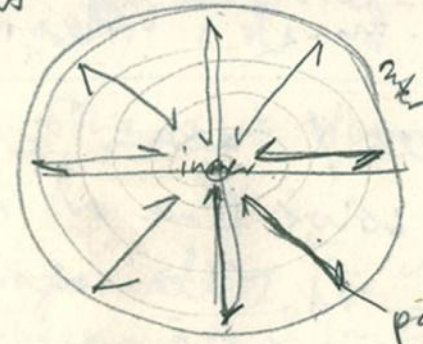


4 objectives.
 4 splines - positions/ways
 field houses opinions,
 experiences, etc.
 (Rebuild) ④

<Relocate>
 ③ Arguments/factors.



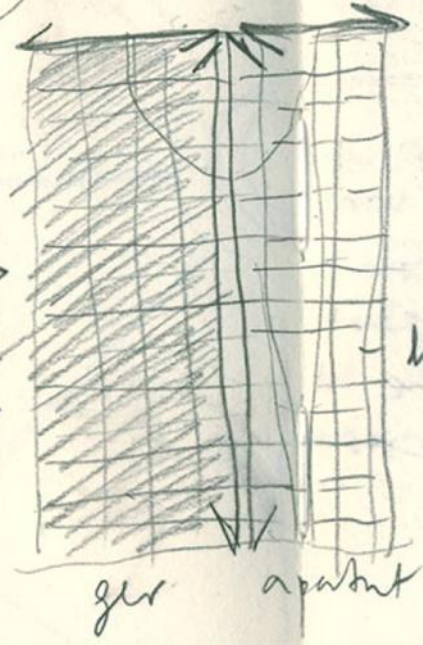
if nego = personal views
of parties -
also can use
diff. ^{elements} colors.
(chess pieces)



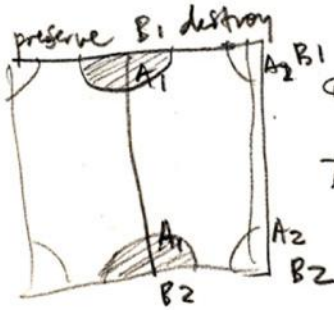
parties/
methods/
ways

outer → inner
different methods/ways of
achieving the movement of
outer → inner.
(diverse) (unified).

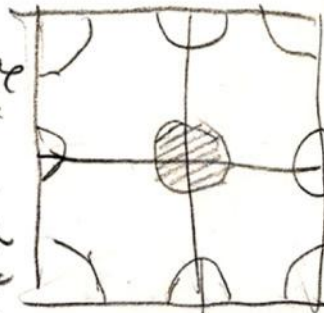
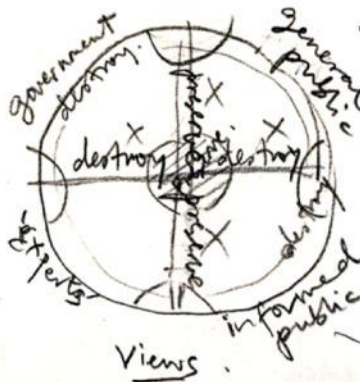
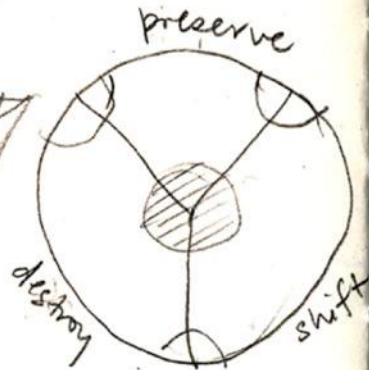
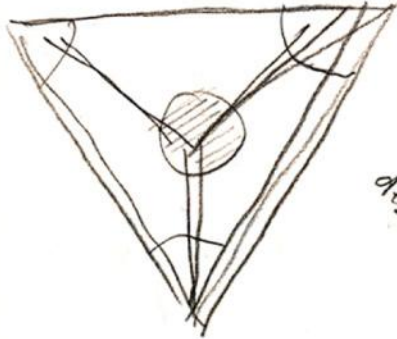
if depth is imp't.
→ sink from fi
used this



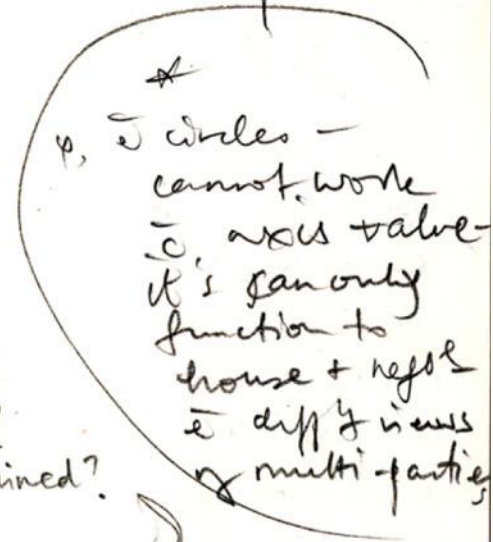
honoring expert views
popular views.
government's (official) views



offers 4 position / solutions
f 2 parties: negot

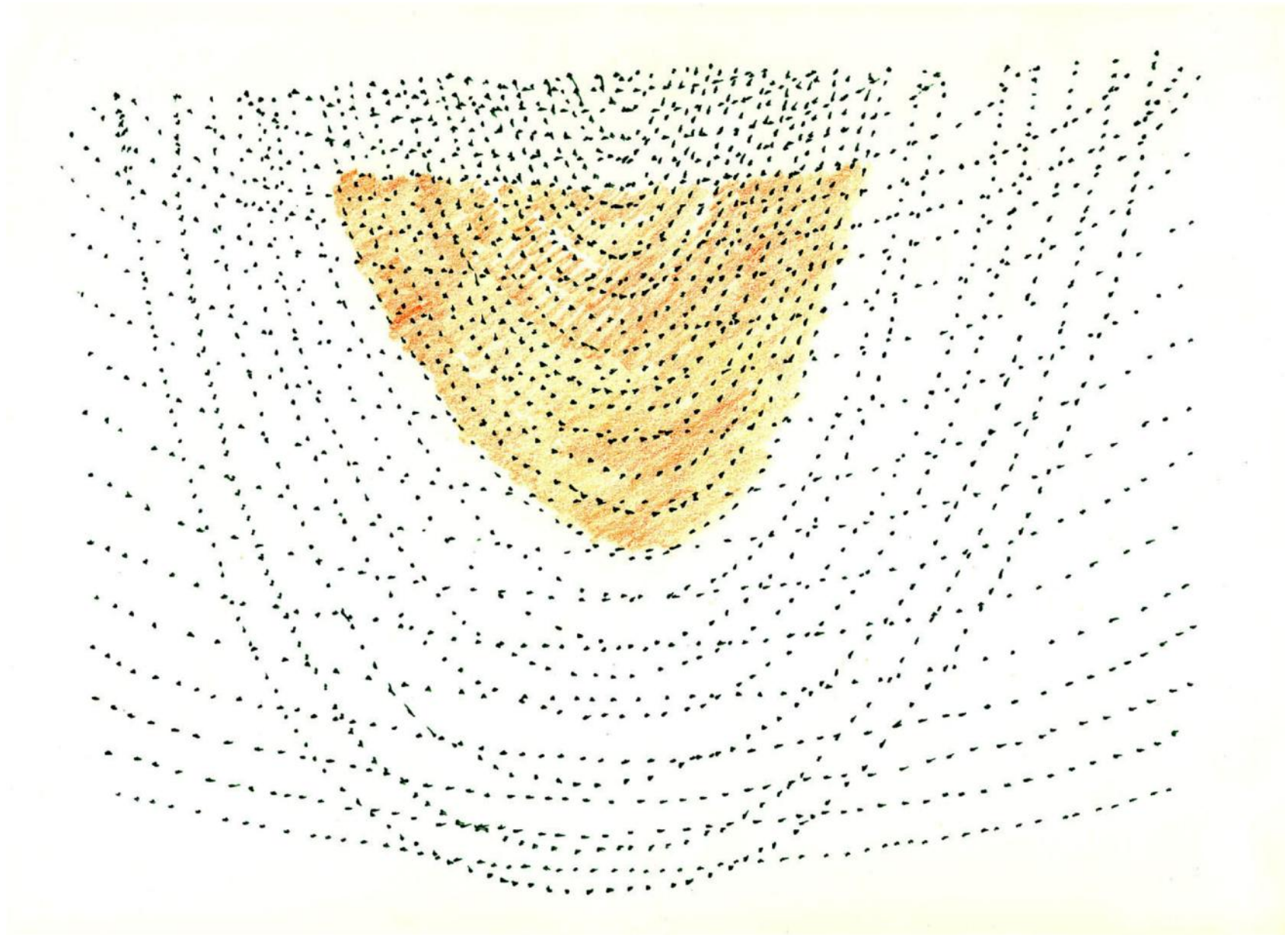


axis can only
work in 2 party
negot?



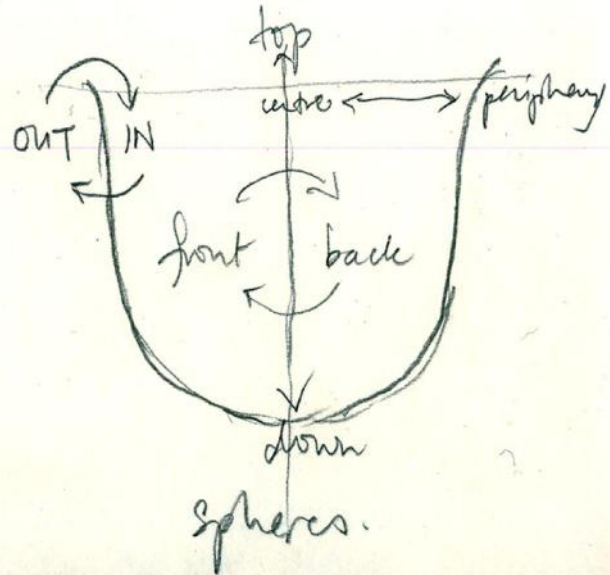
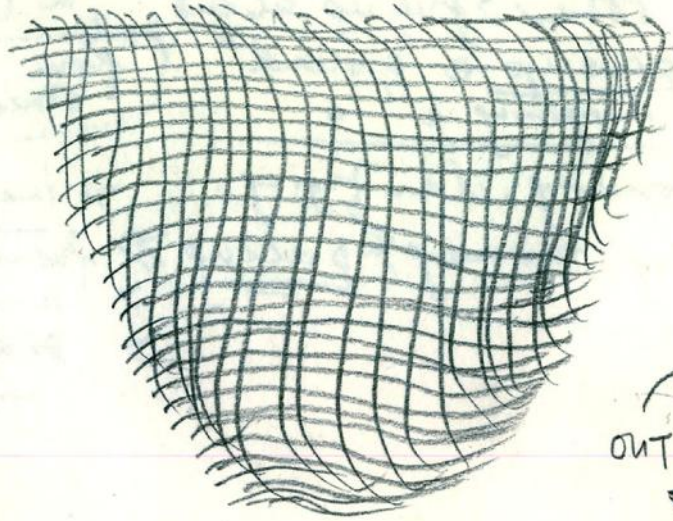
1. middle circle = aim? targeted solution? pre-determined?

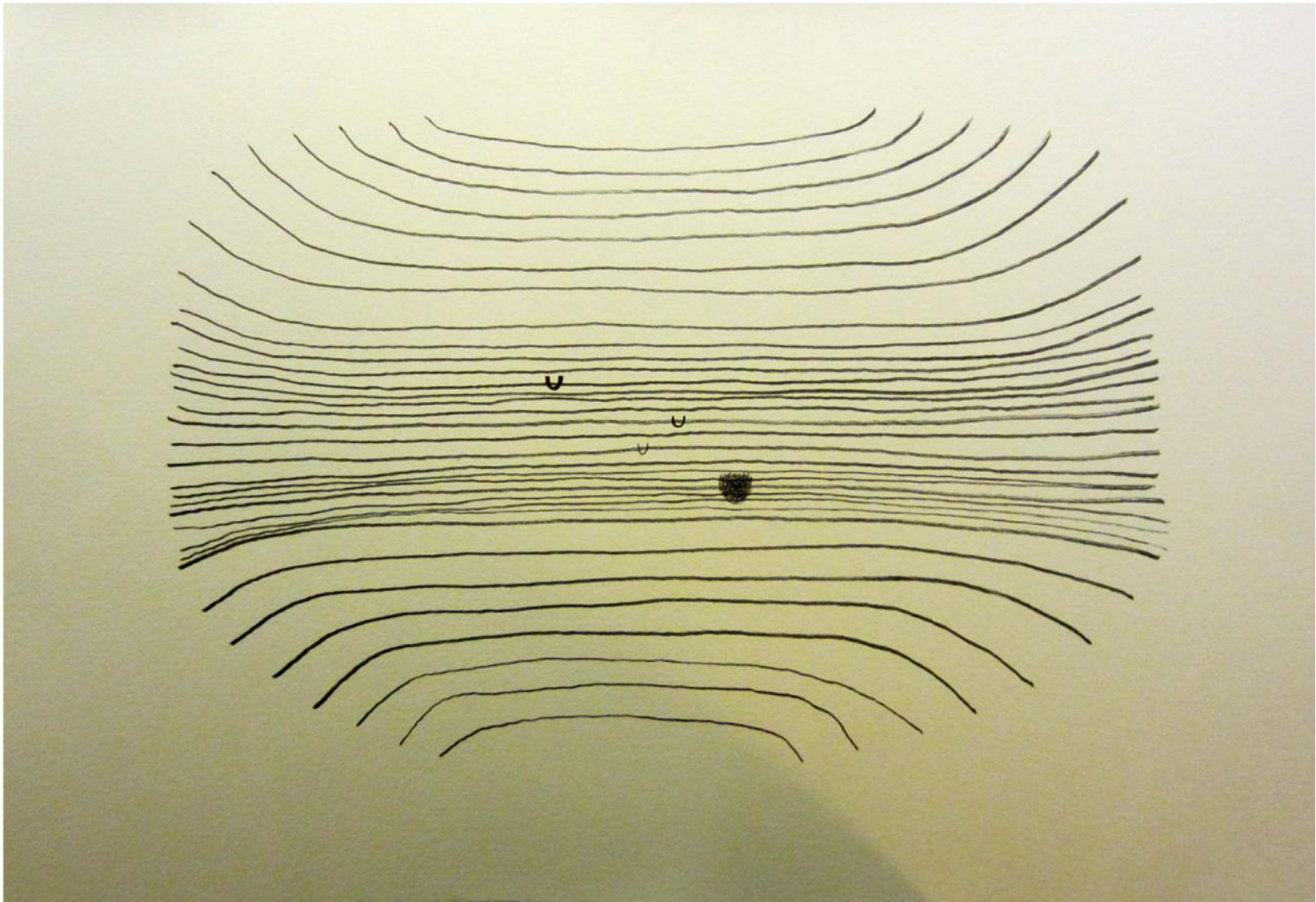
2. solution is at a middle circle show overlaps or views that are in agreement - all 4 parties - cannot give value / function as denominator
→ how to show overlaps btw gov & informed public?



Visualisation of the dynamic 'outside' fields of our worldview; or the unconscious space of practical embedded knowledge

one possible conception of ground-space.
broad + deep,





Later drawings focused on expressing or experiencing the reverberations within the interstitial time-space of negotiation (see following two slides

