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***The Question of Methodology in Collaborative Cultural Practice***

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During the course of my doctoral research, I have developed a framework for examining the role of collaborative, community- and dialogue-based modes of art practice in effecting social change. I have visited and interviewed numerous artists and cultural administrators in Australia, England, Ireland, Canada, and Austria, whose works in these countries and beyond engage with issues of education, development, intercultural dialogue, social cohesion and inclusion. In this paper, I will use the work of one of these artists to enquire into methodologies employed in creative collaborative cultural practice. Using as my point of departure the “methodology of engagement” developed by Singaporean-German artist, Jay Koh, I will investigate variables that help us measure the efficacy of such methods.

Koh developed his methodology through a ten-year-long project in Burma (aka Myanmar; 1997-2007) and, subsequently, deployed and extended it through his work in the Republic of Ireland (2007-2010). In Burma, using this method enabled him to establish a sustainable foundation for resource development and educational programs in collaboration with local and foreign artists and cultural producers. In Ireland, by comparison, Koh was commissioned by a cultural institution to devise artistic strategies for improving the tense intercultural dynamics between young Dubliners and Chinese migrants. Here he used his methodology of engagement to facilitate intercultural dialogue and cross-cultural learning between the two groups. I will examine Koh’s implementation of the same methodology in the two different sociocultural contexts of Burma and Ireland, the varying outcomes in each context, and the institutional, financial, community-related or other factors impacting the sustainability of each project.