

Values transcending national and cultural barrier:

Fan activism rolled out in Cantonese fansubbing in Thai Pop Culture

Yan Yee Ting

Master's thesis

Arctic art and design

Autumn 2024

# Abstract

Since the series of Hong Kong protests started in 2019 gradually died down after the passing of National Security Law and the outbreak of COVID-19, the remaining energy of social movement had been directed to different forms of civic engagement other than street protests and demonstrations. This thesis critically evaluates how the establishment and development of Kongji Production, the first Cantonese fansubbing group in the transnational Thai pop fandom based in Hong Kong, manifested fan activism driven by domestic politics. Unlike many established fansubbing groups aiming to promote their favored transnational pop culture products which are not broadcasted through traditional mass media in their home country, the initial motive of Kongji Production focused on advocating the use of written Cantonese for subtitles - the distinctive cultural indicator of Hong Kongers, challenging the norm of conventional written Chinese subtitles used in mass media. This autoethnographic research looks into the practice of translations, fan art productions and activities organized by Kongji Production through the lens of my own participation and observations of other group members. It investigates these establishments as a predicament to the silenced protests and blossoming localism over the recent decades of attempted regional assimilation of Hong Kong imposed by PRC. It also looked into how Hong Kongers perceived themselves as Milk Tea Alliance members and projected their unresolved concern of democracy through their participation in a transnational fandom.

The originality of this research lies in the unique convergence of fan studies and people's sense of cultural identity in a modern Asian political context. Through the years long observation of the fansubbing group, the study unveil the role of language in instituting one's cultural identity and how one's unresolved discontent towards the socio-political situation of home nation being projected to a transnational

socio-political concern of another place with similar pursuit of democracy through their interest in pop culture .

*Keywords:* Fansubbing, fan activism, cultural identity, community, Milk Tea alliance

# Content Page

<b>List of figures</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>1. Introduction</b>	<b>6</b>
1.1 Background	6
1.2 Main topics	8
<b>2. Context</b>	<b>11</b>
2.1 Formation of the Hong Kong identity	11
2.2 Before the return of sovereignty	12
2.3 Hong Kongers' political participation after the return of sovereignty	16
2.4 Cleavage of civic values and cultural values between Hong Kong locals and Mainlanders	26
2.5 Statement of problem	30
<b>3. Literature Review</b>	<b>32</b>
3.1 Culture, cultural identity, cultural memory	32
3.2 Community and Virtual Community / digital culture	35
3.3 Media convergence and participatory culture in fandom	40
3.4 Fan activism	43
3.5 Fansubbing	44
<b>4. Methodology</b>	<b>49</b>
4.1 Research question	49
4.2 Research design	49
4.3 Research strategy	49
<b>5. Research documentation and discussion</b>	<b>54</b>
5.1 Establishment of Kongji Production	54
5.2 Language as a way to sustaining collective identity of a fan community	57
5.3 Operating a fansub group without piracy issue	62
5.4 Setting up a step-by-step fansubbing tutorial on our website	63
5.5 Fan art production of group members	64
5.6 Digital activism across transnational fandom	67
5.7 Fan activism: mobilising fandom to engage in political consumerism in Hong	

Kong	74
5.8 Disharmonious within fansub group, facing haters and false accusations	81
<b>6. Conclusion</b>	<b>85</b>
<b>7. Bibliography</b>	<b>92</b>
<b>8. Figures reference</b>	<b>102</b>

## List of figures

**Figure 1.** Community subtitle function in YouTube

**Figure 2a.** A football match scene in 2gether the Series Episode 8

**Figure 2b.** Cantonese subtitles with “Everything is possible” - famous quote by Hong Kong former sports news reporter Ng Fong Wing

**Figure 3.** A step-by-step guide on fansubbing published on the website of Kongji Production

**Figure 4.** The first website created by Kongji Production

**Figure 5.** *Kangoo* Cantonese cover

**Figure 6.** Article by Kongji Production members submitted to inmediahk.net

**Figure 7.** Chatroom of our discord live session

**Figure 8a - 8f.** Souvenirs for audience participating in private screening

# 1. Introduction

## 1.1 Background

As a vibrant metropolitan city with advanced social and economic development, Hong Kong is also famously known as the “City of Protest”. It has always been a culturally unique place with a mergence of Chinese culture and universal values predicated on historical development. In 2019 - the same year I got admitted and enrolled to the Master degree programme of Arctic Art and Design - the massive Anti-Extradition Law Amendment Bill Movement broke out in Hong Kong. The series of protests had started off with citizens’ fear of losing the guaranteed “high degree of autonomy” in view of previous failure in the 2014 Umbrella Movement and the imprisonment of democrat activists in 2017. Citizens’ demand for democracy had accumulated over its constant erosion, and finally erupted into the largest series of demonstrations in Hong Kong’s history.

The street protests were greatly silenced in early 2020 as the pandemic broke out. Although the initial demand for withdrawing the Extradition Bill had already been accomplished, the discontent over excessive police brutality during protests, the fear of terrorism of Yuen Long Attack on July 21, 2019 and Prince Edward Station Incident happened on August 31, 2019 remained unresolved. In a social environment filled with frustration and a sense of powerlessness, citizens sought to continue the social movement in more subtle ways, including digital activism and political consumption in times of social gathering ban.

In times of the social gathering ban, connections with people through interactions in cyberspaces became unprecedentedly significant in maintaining one's need for social life. On top of known affiliations in reality, I coincidentally got acquainted with several Hong Kong fans sharing common interest in Thai drama series online. This passion further led to our collaboration in translating English subtitles of one particular drama series (2gether the Series) to our mother tongue Cantonese. We eventually prolonged this collaboration and co-found Kongji Production - the first Thai-to-Cantonese fansub group based in Hong Kong during the early phases of COVID-19.

This master thesis is an autoethnographic art-based action research, focusing on my journey in co-founding Kongji Production and how the subsequent fansubbing process, fan art production and other fandom activity experience manifest fan activism, culturally and emotionally empower a community in the aftermath of the Anti-extradition Bill protests and the imposing of National Security Law. I will first summarize the formation of Hong Konger identity from the mid 20th century to the present with historical contexts by citing the works of various scholars, including Clement Tsz Ming Tong, Nathan Kar Ming Chan, Lev Nachman, and Chit Wai John Mok. The research will look into the motives and fan production of our fansubbing group. With the proposition of language being the core of one culture, I will dissect how the unconventional decision of using Cantonese as target language in translation and production has become a notion in protecting local cultural value. The research also documented our different attempts to provoke awareness of Thailand protests among Thai pop culture fans in Hong Kong. With the bonding of Milk Tea Alliance and the empathy of similar pursuit of democratic values, our participation in this transnational fandom mirrors our aspiration to Hong Kong's future. Ultimately, this research aims to explore the possible approaches of culturally and emotionally empowering oneself and the online community centered around us in the state of powerlessness and a time of diaspora.

## 1.2 Main topics

The term *culture* usually encapsulates a broad range of concrete practices and development initiatives in cultural studies discourse. Among the sets of practices that *culture* confines, language is undoubtedly the substantial essence. In this research, I employ famous cultural theorist Stuart Hall's discourse on how language operates as a representational system in communicating meanings and enabling people to construct a culture of shared understanding. Culture, or more precisely, language decides the narrative direction of knowledge, how memory is preserved and transcended. Sets of beliefs, values and norms, experiences and memories that characterize a community, bound a community and also shape one's cultural identity. It is therefore noteworthy that the development and change of culture is often driven by political initiative for better implementation of policies. This also explained the significance of holding onto appropriate cultural values and collective memories that would transcend.

A model of how a community is constructed has shifted over time and social-economic development. Earliest concept of community originated from German sociologist Ferdinand Tönnies' proposed concept of *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft*. This concept categorized the nature of groups of people into either a natural occurrence of relationships or a calculated decision built upon choices. Other early sociologists also shared similar views that the move to urban life caused by industrialization led to transformation of the way relationships were established. The concept of "community" originated from the rural past and revolutionized over time. As Giddens (1991) suggested, late-modern social life is characterized by the reflexive nature and disembedding of relationships caused by the separation of time and spaces of social

actions. Miller (2011) also addressed that the establishment of social relations and identity are much open to globalizing influences. Face-to-face meetings or interactions are no longer the essence of community. Like Anderson proposed, a nation is a construction of an imagined community, whose identities are greatly influenced and shaped by print media, the symbolic resources connecting a community even people would never know, meet or hear most of their fellow members. In the new modern era, if such proposition is overlaid with the formation of virtual communities, we might also hypothesize that the existence of virtual communities would foster the spreading of these symbolic resources, hence enhancing the connection of a community.

Henry Jenkins' discourse of participatory culture on fan studies is also largely employed in the following study. In his argument, advancement of new media technology opens up more diverse ways of media consumption, and allows the audience to expand their power to "archive, annotate, appropriate, and recirculate media products" (2006, p.151). This has changed the power relations between media producers and consumers as media consumers participate in the creation and distribution of media narratives. Online fan communities are also described as imagined communities fostered by technologies, which overcome the barrier of time and distance to be in effect (Morimoto & Chin, 2017). The multidirectional flow of pop culture and intense online and offline participation in global media fandom on one hand foster a sense of belonging in the transnational fandom, but conflicts caused by cultural differences and misunderstandings. The power of fandom is yet an intriguing subject to be studied and explored. As Bird and Maher (2017) claimed, fan communities tend to identify themselves with the underlying values or beliefs from the stories they invested in. They can frame connections between fictional words they are passionate about, and let the underlying values and beliefs from within become the motivations for social changes in reality. According to Jenkins (2012), these forms of

civic engagement and political participation emerged from within fan culture itself could be defined as “fan activism”.

Over years a unique sense of cultural identity of Hong Konger emerged from their alienation from Mainland Chinese in early 1960s and 70s, resistance towards the regional assimilation by CCP, and later the advocacy of localism. In this research, the key concepts of *culture* and *community* connected to form the notion of *fan activism* that we practice. By promoting the use of written Cantonese, we try to preserve some localist thoughts advocated by Hong Kong activists as a subtle way in resisting the further regional assimilation from Mainland China. The significance of this research lies in my unique ethnographic perspective as a fansubbing group member reflecting upon Asian fan activism in soft power under the lens of cultural and fandom studies prevalent in western academia. The many coincidences, including the formation of the fansub group itself, the emergence of Milk Tea Alliance, our sense of connection to a transnational fandom and our participation in fandom, all contribute to an unpredictable yet innovative research process of its kind.

## 2. Context

### 2.1 Formation of the Hong Kong identity

The cultural identity of Hong Kong people varies along with the ever changing relationships between Hong Kong and China. According to Clement Tsz Ming Tong (2016, P.41) , many researchers accepted “Hong Kong people” is ultimately a cultural identity emerging out of “social and cultural differences Hong Kong people felt and feel towards the Mainland Chinese”. Even though Hong Kongers are ethnic Chinese, same as Mainlanders, the Hong Kong identity is shaped upon a “separate cultural repertoire of language, symbols, tradition, history, and collective memory” (Yew & Kwong, 2014, p.1093). Hence it is necessary to differentiate the local identity and Chinese national identity.

In his book *Return Migration and Identity : A Global Phenomenon, a Hong Kong Case*, Sussman (2010) indicated four distinct historical periods as key time points that “shaped each of the identity layers that envelop the Hong Kong residents”. These four periods are the era prior to the Opium Wars; the postwar British sovereignty period; the pre-handover period (1984–97), which included large-scale emigration; and the post-handover, remigration period. From a survey on people’s ethnic identity conducted by Public Opinion Programme, The University of Hong Kong, it shows a fluctuating trend of sense of Hong Kong identity and Chinese identity. In the first few years after Hong Kong’s return to China, the proportions of people identifying themselves as Hong Kongers were larger than that of those identifying themselves as Chinese. Such was reversed from the mid-2003 to 2009, with the proportion of people identifying themselves as Chinese reaching its peak in 2008 when the Beijing Olympics was held. However the trend showed another reversal since 2009 and hit a historic high in June 2012 since 1997, doubling that of those who consider themselves as

Chinese. The deepening mainlandization imposed by the Chinese government and the erosion of democracy guaranteed by the “one country, two systems” policy in recent decades has made the young generation more keenly aware of their unique identity as Hong Konger. To understand how the cultural identity of Hong Kong people emerge and develop, it will be crucial to briefly walk through how Hong Kong people developed their sense of local awareness and distinctiveness over history.

## **2.2 Before the return of sovereignty**

It was recorded that there have been people living in Hong Kong since the Song Dynasty (960–1279). According to Sussman (2010), there was one landowning group loosely ruling the other four separate Chinese indigenous communities. These communities were from Guangdong, the southern Chinese province. These communities not only brought Cantonese dialect to Hong Kong, but also traditional Chinese values rooted in Confucian teaching. The core of these values can be summarized as weighing collectivist approaches to life over individualist ones. Loyalty to and the well-being of family and friends have been emphasized in Chinese values. Obligations to family members have to be fulfilled within family relationships. When dealing with non-familial interpersonal relationships, it is also common to pursue harmonious social relations to avoid conflicts. To accomplish that, Sussman (2010) claimed that people value tradition, restrain emotional responses, conform to group practices and obey authority figures. These traits are inspired and reinforced in the moral teachings of social, educational, and political leaders.

Hong Kong was colonized and under the rule of the British government from 1842 to 1997. Several cataclysmic events in China including Chinese Communist Revolution, the Great Famine and the Cultural revolution happened within the 19th to 20th century led to the massive number of Chinese people fleeing to and settling in Hong Kong, aiming to escape Chinese Communist rule. Various ethnic groups of people including British, Portuguese from Macau, Macanese, south-east asians immigrated to Hong Kong and settled for generations. The population of Hong Kong is basically composed of four big groups, 1) indigenous people since the Song dynasty, 2) Chinese immigrants, 3) offsprings of Chinese immigrants, 4) ethnic groups whose mother tongue is not Chinese. The population continues to increase as China's reform and opening up allows people living in the mainland to move to Hong Kong.

As John Clammer (2014) asserted, there is a feedback loop between policy initiatives and change of culture. During early stages of British colonial rule, the overall ruling strategy of Hong Kong "sought to facilitate the growth of the market while incorporating business elites into the political structure by means of selection" (Ku, 2012). As a "refugee society" claimed by Siu-kai Lau (2, most residents concerned mostly the livelihood rather than political participation. In Lau's discourse, the "non-interventionist" colonial government created the "boundary consciousness" between the Chinese society and the colonial state in the early postwar period. The stability was maintained with Chinese society having few demands from the colonial government and receiving few interference from the regime. He further explained that after all the influx of immigrants fleeing to Hong Kong instead of participating in the revolutionary changes in their homeland suggest that they have strong anti-political feelings.

Hong Kong has not always enjoyed political stability. During the postwar era of economic development, Hong Kong experienced a series of social unrests. The 1956

'Double Tenth Riots' ended with hundreds injured and 60 killed, mainly the doing of "Hong Kong residents still giving allegiance to the CCP and KMT (*Guomindang*) and continuing their struggle in support of Communist China and Taiwan respectively" (Tong, 2016). While the colonial government kept an eye on the factional hostilities between the two sides, the Pro-Communist groups in Hong Kong expanded their forces to schools, trade unions, public utility companies and newspaper media.

The "refugee mentality" of early immigrants gradually shifted to a stronger sense of belonging along with the baby boomers in the 1960s. Rapid population growth in the 1960s brought upon social problems related to work, housing and living of the grassroots. Unlike the older generation fleeing to Hong Kong, locals had a general stronger sense of belonging to Hong Kong and stronger will to fight for its future. It was not until the 1966 Star Ferry riots that the contradictions between capitalism and absence of citizenship were exposed.

The 1967 riots is generally recognised by scholars as a watershed of the birth of "Hong Kong people" identity. As Tong (2016) described, the riots were sparked by a clash between picketing workers and riot police at the Artificial Flower Works in San Po Kong on May 6. The CCP supporting leftist groups seized the opportunity and went on protest "not just against police brutality, but more symbolically against British colonial rule" (Tong, 2016, 48-49). Feeling justified by the Chinese Foreign Ministry's strongly worded protest to Britain for the police brutality, the leftist groups had called for a general strike on June 24, hoping to cause widespread social chaos but ended up a failure. The last resort that the leftists decided to place real and fake bombs in both public places, often outside government buildings and pro-government facilities had generated public resentment and anger because of the indiscriminate violent act. As Tong (2016) asserted, a sense of solidarity began to form and unite Hong Kong people out of the violence and leftist rhetoric, repulsing the radical leftist faction in Hong Kong.

Though the colonial government survived the 1967 riots, W.S. Cater, head of the Hong Kong Department of the Commonwealth Office, would also admit that Hong Kong people did not necessarily love the British more, they just loved the radicals in the PRC and leftists less at that time (Tong, 2016).

According to Yew and Kwong (2014), Hong Kongers had grown to be “more defensive and protective as a community” (P.1096) by the late 1970s. As the economy grew, new Chinese immigrants brought about concerns over disruptions to public services, leading to Hong Kongers’ unwelcoming attitude towards Mainlanders following in their footsteps. The activists absorbed leftist thoughts during the 1960s while the trend of radicalism swept through the globe. Social movements advocated in the 1970s were characterized by strong nationalist and anti-colonialism. These advocations included the Protection of the Diaoyu Islands (a long time sovereignty conflict between China and Japan), making Chinese an official language, improvement of housing, education, social welfare, and labor conditions. The social movements were limited to petitions and street actions, aiming at mobilizing public sympathy and using that as tactics in pressurizing the government.

In the aftermath of the two riots, The government later launched a series of social and administrative changes as means to “restore legitimacy and promote a sense of belonging to the community” (Ku, 2012). The ruling strategy shifted towards a more interventionist one and one with “consultative democracy”, but there was not sufficient openness for democratic participation of the public. These conflicts caused by social inequalities and frequent protests did not develop into a wider sense of political citizenship as the government power structure did not open up and reform to one with public elected elements.

In view of the different stances Hong Kongers' took on various issues, this also revealed the complicated and fluid nature of Hong Kongers' identity. Since the wave of immigration to Hong Kong, a specific and unique "Hong Konger" identity started to develop over the social turbulence of Hong Kong and mainland. The period from 1970s to the present, is referred by scholars as the growth of Hong Kong as a "new civil society" in which the political stances of people split into pro-democracy and pro-Beijing (Ho, 2019; Ma, 2007). It is noteworthy that whether one identifies himself as Pro-Beijing or Pro-democracy often has direct implications for their self-acclaimed identity as a Hong Konger, Chinese or both. These two identities were once compatible with each other.

### **2.3 Hong Kongers' political participation after the return of sovereignty**

The hope of democracy emerged as the sovereignty of Hong Kong was returned to China in 1997, triggering the process of decolonisation and democratization. The British introduced a political reform to foster the development of representative democracy in Hong Kong, namely the The Sino-British Joint Declaration of 1984. The Declaration has stated that Hong Kong as a special administrative region will be governed under the principle of: 1) "One country, two systems", meaning Hong Kong remains to be a capitalist society for the following fifty years since 1997 (separated from that of China) ; 2) high degree of autonomy for Hong Kong under Chinese sovereignty. The Declaration conceived a pro-democracy movement within a thirteen-year transitional period and ultimately called for universal suffrage of the chief executive of Hong Kong and the election-borne legislature. However, in modern era, the "One country, two systems" framework granting semi-autonomous status of Hong Kong is contested by the Chinese Communist Parties (CCP)' attempt in assimilating

Hong Kong through a process scholars call mainlandization over years since the return of sovereignty. Such kind of national assimilation demonstrated CCP intended to formally integrate Hong Kong into its centralizing state (Chan, Nachman & Mok, 2021). The People's Republic of China (PRC) had been using a variety of policies to regulate Hong Kong's cultural and political space, ultimately aiming to secure the political and cultural loyalty of Hong Kongers.

#### Chinese government's manipulation through the Legislative Council

The governing blueprint is further elaborated in the Basic Law. It ensured that both the Chief Executive (CE) and the full Legislative Council (Legco) would ultimately be elected through universal suffrage after 1997, but it did not specify the timing. The proportion of popularly-elected seats was raised from one-third in 1997 to one-half in 2004. It requires the approval from two-thirds of Legco members, the CE and the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress (NPCSC) of China to change the electoral method of the CE and the Legco.

The political sentiments of Hong Kong had been mainly divided into the Pro-Beijing camp and Pro-democracy. The Pro-democracy alliance (Pan-democrats) were formed by social movement groups and activists, aiming to fight for full democracy in Hong Kong. Their goal was to enact the popularly elected Legislative Council and universal suffrage of the Chief Executive as they believed full democracy would defend the freedom, rights and lifestyle of Hong Kong residents. The constitutional framework established through the Basic Law, however, left an inherent legitimacy issue in the local governance, leading to the fact that the democrats would remain as a "permanent minority" position even though they claimed to represent the majority of the public (Ma, 2019). The Chinese government therefore managed to hold the key power to manipulate Hong Kong's future.

## National security law

In 2003, Hong Kong identity further crystallized as the government proposed to enact a national security law based on the requirement of Article 23 of the basic law. Many had feared that the legislation would threaten Hong Kong's civil liberties. In response to the proposal of legislation, over 500,000 citizens rallied against the bill on the July 1st protest, which is also the public day of celebrating the return of Hong Kong's sovereignty to the PRC. The anti-Article 23 protest activities were the "first massive rallies in Hong Kong directed against perceived threats from Beijing since 1997" (Chan, Nachman & Mok, P.5, 2021). The first ever massive scale protests directly resulted in the new pro-democracy movement between 2003 and 2006 (Lee & Chan, 2008). The protest eventually led Beijing to change its ruling strategy of Hong Kong from "non-intervention" to "pro-action" (Cheng, 2016).

## Improving livelihood, heritage protection and environmental protection

The direction of social and political movement gradually shifted from issues of improving livelihood to heritage protection and environmental protection. The younger generation of activists, mostly a group of 80s Hong Kong generation, protested against the demolition of Star Ferry, a historic pier at Central in 2006 for the construction of the new transportation network. For the first time, notions of "collective memories" and "local consciousness" became mottos on rallying collective action for the preservation of colonial heritages and culturally symbolic sites (Chow, Fu & Ng, 2019). These heritage movements had asserted the cultural identity of local Hong Konger to the public, aroused public sympathy and also triggered similar heritage protection movements in later history, including the Anti-Hong Kong Express Rail Link movement in 2009. A series of protests and campaigns were rallied in resistance to the construction of a high-speed railway connecting Hong Kong to Shenzhen and Guangzhou. The proposal of construction was accused of being extremely expensive

yet the number of Hong Kong citizens benefitting from the railway was unproportionally small. The construction would also come at the cost of the daily lives of villagers from *Choi Yuen Tsuen* - a village along the track, and would inevitably cause air and sound pollution. Despite the many opposing opinions, the construction project was passed in the Legco.

#### National education

In 2012, the government proposed to implement a national education curriculum in elementary and secondary schools. Many had feared that the purpose of the curriculum is to brainwash students with Beijing's version of nationalism and to instill the pride of a sense of identity of being Chinese. Besides, the guidelines of the curriculum had raised public concern that it emphasized the economic achievements since the establishment of PRC, but avoided sensitive historical incidents and issues related to infringement of human rights. In response to that, students, teachers and citizens had formed alliances and gathered protestors to surround the Hong Kong government's offices, requesting the backdown of such a proposal. The government later announced that the decision to implement a national education curriculum or not would be left for schools.

#### Umbrella Movement : seeking autonomous governance and law

In 2014, the unresolved demand for universal suffrage of the Hong Kong Chief Executive and full Legco members had resulted in the Umbrella Movement, second most massive protests ever in Hong Kong history. The protests began with NPCSC issuing a disregard to the proposed reform of the election system outlined in the Basic Law. The decision was seen as PRC's desire of continuous manipulation over Hong Kong by pre-screening Chief Executive candidates. To fight for the full autonomy of Hong Kong and resist the PRC's political influence, people supporting the universal

suffrage went on 80-days civil disobedience protests - Occupy Central with Love and Peace (OCLP) and later occupying different districts. The social movement ended with police clearances on December 15th. Though there was no concrete change of the decision, the Umbrella Movement was still a very important socio-political awakening especially to the younger generation. The contention between citizens supporting full autonomy of Hong Kong and those more inclined to the Beijing government further intensified. The identity of being a Hong Konger and Chinese became increasingly incompatible and politically opposed.

#### Burst of localism

After the Umbrella Movement, localism groups formed by some younger political activists emerged as a new stream in the political sentiment. Instead of traditional pan-democrats who emphasize “a linkage of democratic movement between Hong Kong and Mainland China” (Chow, Fu & Ng, P. 569, 2019), they advocated Hong Kongers to focus more on local culture, local issues and local politics. These localism groups were active in collective actions that defend “cultural custom” in Hong Kong, such as defending food hawkers from being evicted by street administrators, which later led to the 2016 Mong Kok civil unrest. The localists also participated in the Legco election, but two of the three “localism” elected candidates were disqualified by the government for “advocating separatism”. After the disqualification of the localist still drew public attention as one of the localist leader Tin-kei Leung was sentenced to jail for 6 years for his participation in the aforementioned Mong Kok civil unrest and another localism leader Andy Ho-tin Chan was invited by the Foreign Correspondents’ Club of Hong Kong to give a speech on separatism in 2018. The notions of “localism” or “Hong Kong identity” had asserted their impacts to the public and the political history ever since the emergence of these localism groups.

## “Be water” - Anti-extradition Bill

Between June and December 2019, a series of protests took place all over Hong Kong. The protests were triggered by the government’s announcement on introducing a bill that “would allow criminal suspects in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Zone (HKSAR) to be extradited to the People’s Republic of China (PRC)” (Holbig, P.325-326, 2020). Critics warned that such an extradition law would also potentially threaten dissidents, businessmen, expats and even tourists visiting Hong Kong. The bill had raised concern that rule of law in Hong Kong and the democratic freedoms of Hong Kongers would be seriously harmed.

The protests against the bill started on 9 June, when approximately 1 million people peacefully rallied on the streets demanding for the complete withdrawal of the bill. While the government did not immediately acknowledge citizens’ demand for withdrawal, about 40,000 protestors gathered outside the Legislative Council Complex on 12 June in an attempt to stall the bill’s second reading. Police fired tear gas and rubber bullets for the first time, hence escalating the situation and provoking strong emotional reactions among citizens, especially the youth generation. The protests continued with another massive scale of street rally with approximately 1.5 to 2 million citizens on 16 June against the “suspension” of the bill rather than “complete withdrawal”. With ever delayed response of “complete withdrawal” from Carrie Lam, the Chief Executive at that time, and characterization of the protests as “riots”, the protests carried on with demands for exonerating protestors arrested previously and notions against excessive use of force by Hong Kong police. From the iconic move of protestors storming the Legco Complex on 1 July, the anniversary of Hong Kong’s handover, the protests spread throughout the city to different districts. In weeks of summer the protestors’ concern crystallized into “Five Demands” as listed below (Tong, 2019):

1. The bill must be withdrawn.

2. The chief executive must resign.
3. the government must retract its characterization of the violent clashes as “riots”.
4. There must be a full independent inquiry into the actions of the police.
5. Everyone arrested in respect of the clashes must be unconditionally freed.

The demand for the resignation of Carrie Lam was soon replaced by the call for universal suffrage of chief executive and Legco. Such demand had been the concern of the pro-democrats stretching for more than a decade and the main notion of the Umbrella Movement in 2014 being ignored so far. The violent confrontations between protesters and police further intensified after the news of two students’ unnatural death went viral, a bystander was set on fire and another died of head injuries. Student protesters also occupied various universities throughout October and November. It was not until early January that the outbreak of pandemic that gradually silenced the protests.

Experiences from previous protests and their creative development had facilitated the speedy learning process for protesters. The protests appeared to emerge from the “bottom up among activist networks in a nonhierarchical, diversified fashion” (Holbig, P.332, 2020). Protestors’ actions are more based on spontaneous initiatives of every individual rather than the certain protest leaders’ top down organization. “Be water” - a quote from Sino-American kung-fu movie star Bruce Lee was spread and shared among protesters. Protestors developed their philosophy of resistance based on the formless and shapeless nature of water, and went for the principles of “Be strong like ice; be fluid like water; gather like dew; scatter like mist” (Anderlini, 2019). The fluidity serves as a powerful organizational tactic, allowing efficient horizontal communication diffuse among groups of protesters. Within this period, social media, interactive maps indicating police operations, digital networked groups, mobile apps such as Airdrop had helped protesters to navigate between locations and protest events and

co-ordinate instantly. Apart from confrontation with police forces, activists also combine symbolic global and local elements and refashion them into new forms of public art projects to mobilize people. Prominent examples include post-it walls on streets or shops resembling Lennon Walls, and human chain modeled after the 1989 Baltic Way.

#### Yellow economy: political consumerism in Hong Kong

The 79-days Umbrella Movement which took place in 2014 had irreversibly split Hong Kong society according to citizen's political stances. Among different demands and aspirations from various stakeholders, citizens are mainly divided into two streams - the "*Blue ribbons*" supporting pro-establishment camp political parties or politicians, and with higher tendency to support the Beijing communist government's act of increasing interventional governance approach on Hong Kong and abide by the homogenous Chinese identity Chinese government intended to enforce; while the "*Yellow ribbons*" supporting the pan-democrats and advocated the pursuit of democratization and autonomy of Hong Kong.

Though the generally peaceful Umbrella Movement ended, it was undeniably one of the largest civil disobediences in Hong Kong's history and would remain to be a very significant social movement as a political awakening of the younger generations. The idea of "Blue" and "Yellow" had lasted as a legacy of the Umbrella Movement. After Carrie Lam administration proposed the extradition law amendment bill (ELAB) that would allow extradition to China and some 170 countries in 2019, Hong Kong citizens who fear the legal firewall between Hong Kong and China would be destroyed, started demonstrations and protests to call for the withdrawal of the law. Police brutalities used in suppressing the array of peaceful or disruptive protests further intensified the polarity in political stances in the society and strengthened the solidarity of movement supporters regardless of their orientation of being moderate or violent.

Political consumerism is described as "part of a broader social movement that supplements other conventional forms of political engagement" (Chan, 2022; Copeland, 2014; Stolle et al., 2005). Political consumerism can be driven by "political, social, and/or ethical concerns in their boycott and/or buycott decisions" instead of purely based on price, quality and style of goods and services (Chan, 2022). The consumption decision would depend on whether the companies' political stances and values align with or oppose those of consumers. When the existing political system, the company's business strategy or grievance mechanism fail to accommodate the needs of consumers, consumers could engage in buycotting or boycotting to express their political, social and ethical values through their consumption, with the aim of using the market power to advocate political changes or companies reform (Micheletti, Follesdal & Stolle, 2014).

It is note-worthy that business elites in Hong Kong had close ties with the colonial government as early as before Hong Kong's sovereignty returned to China and enjoyed disproportionate representation in the Legislative Council. Legislators from the business sector usually supported government bills for their benefits. These government-business ties have been increasingly sophisticated and Hong Kong tycoons have been co-opted by the Beijing government through political appointments (Fong, 2014; Wang-Kaeding & Kaeding, 2019). Valuing their business in Mainland China, local conglomerates must support the governance in Hong Kong and not act against the Beijing government. During the period of protests the Hop Hing Group and the Maxim's Group - local business tycoons were among the first businesses to be labeled as blue, owing to "their management or shareholder's pro-government stance" (Chan, 2022). Their management representatives expressing their support to the Hong Kong government in public had sparked the boycotting action to their branches of business in the early stage of protests. The concept of the Yellow Economy gradually

evolved into a mix of boycott and boycott strategies. The “Yellow Ribbons” boycott like-minded local companies which support democratization of Hong Kong and boycott the companies which support Chinese and Hong Kong government and police brutality. The Yellow Economy is therefore also considered an attempt to challenge the ties deeply rooted between the government and hegemonic conglomerates.

Regardless of their sectors, most yellow businesses are small and medium scale companies which have less dependence on the Chinese market. Early batches of yellow business were identified for their material support, such as food and drinks, during protests and participation in market strikes. Other pro-democracy businesses later joined in and used different means to support the anti-ELAB movement, such as raising humanitarian funds for arrestees, welcoming protesters to go to their shops to take a rest, sticking propagandas in their shops, and setting up lennon walls for customers to write messages to express their views and enhance solidarity. Netizens later voluntarily gathered information about different companies and created web guides which categorized businesses into yellow and blue for convenience. It should also be noted that the definition of Yellow businesses has become increasingly loose. The explicitness and persistence of companies’ contribution vary according to their financial capability and risk tolerance levels (Chan, 2022). In the post National Security Law era, it is even more difficult to categorize with increasing political risks.

To sustain the Yellow Economy, it required efforts from both the “supply” side, i.e. the businesses, and the “demand” side, i.e. consumers. Debbie Chan, Hong Kong public policy scholar, did her research on the sustainability of political consumerism by interviewing consumers who identified themselves as either “pan-democrats” or “localists”. She suggested the collective identity shared by the supporters of the pro-democracy movement was the main motivation to sustain consumer activism. Most participants also agreed that even the businesses might not contribute resources

to the movement, knowing the business owners shared the same political beliefs has been a sufficient initiative to spend money on them. Some supporters also sympathized with the small-scale Yellow businesses struggling in the exacerbating economic downturn in times of coronavirus epidemic. Most significantly, Chan's studies highlighted that even though political consumerism in Hong Kong could not yield resource mobilisation and political opportunity expansion like other political consumerism happened abroad, embedding their own political beliefs in their consumption was the less risky form of self political expression. While other forms of political participation are repressed, the Yellow Economy survives the growingly tough political climate and helps sustain the pro-democracy social movement.

#### **2.4 Cleavage of civic values and cultural values between Hong Kong locals and Mainlanders**

In 2011, Hong Kong-based scholar Wan Chin published a book titled *Theory of the Hong Kong City-State*, advocating Hong Kongers to “maintain Hong Kong as a separate ‘city-state’ under China’s rule to preserve the existing ‘Hong Kong value’ from being assimilated by egregious ‘Chinese value’, which had already been distorted by communist ideologies and ruined under the Cultural Revolution” (Chow, Fu & Ng, 2019, P.571). Hence, residents of Mainland China and Hong Kong do not share the same cultural background. Other local scholars like cultural sociologist Sing Yan Tsui also explained the cultural differences between the two groups from historical and ancestral perspectives, claiming that ethnic bonds between races of northern China and Hong Kong people should be considered vulnerable. Some extreme localists even advocated the culture and history of Hong Kong should be “segregated” from discursive Chinese culture to establish its own cultural autonomy.

## Cultural differences and disruption of local daily lives

Discourses of localism in Hong Kong or Hong Kong identity mainly drew on the cultural differentiation between Hong Kong local residents and immigrants or visitors from mainland China. In the first decade after returning sovereignty to China, Hong Kongers once perceived Mainland Chinese as “less disciplined, less outspoken, less valuing freedom and less Westernized” (Chow, Fu & Ng, P.572, 2019). Later in the second decade, the influx of mainland immigrants and tourists were further accused of interrupting the daily lives of local Hong Kongers. Tourists’ unbridled purchase of daily necessities, the birth tourism to Hong Kong which further burdened the public medical service were regarded as depriving Hong Kong local community. In 2014, news reported that tourists defecating and urinating in public area, arousing public concern over the uncivilized and “non-local” behavior. Mainland immigrants and companies’ investment on the Hong Kong property market was also criticized for soaring property prices and creating “asset bubbles” to the Hong Kong economy.

In recent years, supporters of localists also advocated for Hong Kongers to draw a distinction between locals and mainlanders through some everyday practices on cultural aspects. Speaking Cantonese instead of Putonghua, using traditional Chinese characters instead of simplified Chinese characters, not using Chinese idioms prevalent in Chinese media are some of the most significant practices in resisting the cultural invasion and mainlandisation Hong Kongers perceived over years of social changes. Supporters of localisms also proclaimed locals are more inclined to use internationally recognised digital payment methods (eg. Visa, Master) and instant messaging applications (eg. WhatsApp, Telegram, Signal) instead of payment applications (WeChat and Alipay) and messaging applications (WeChat) popular in China for better efficiency and more enhanced security.

## Cantonese and written Chinese: spoken and written language in Hong Kong

For historical and geographical reasons, the mother tongue of the majority of Hong Kong people has been Cantonese, while a portion of Chinese immigrants spoke Putonghua or other Chinese dialects as their mother tongue. According to the 2021 Population Census conducted by Census and Statistics Development of Hong Kong government, there are 6.32 million out of the population of 7.17 million aging 5 or above using Cantonese as their usual spoken language, which makes up 88.2% of the total. The second comes to Putonghua, which is the usual spoken language of 165 thousand people among the censused population, taking up 2.3% of total. 90.1% of the censused population are able to read Chinese and 87.8% are able to write Chinese.

Like many Hong Kong residents, I always struggle to explain the “idiosyncratic use of Chinese Language” (Lo, 1998, P.152). In the 1910s, Chinese scholars and authors started to initiate modernisation in Chinese literature to switch from classical Chinese to modern Chinese. Later writings that combined classical and modern standard Chinese emerged and which gradually sank into the unified Chinese literary style within regions using various Chinese dialects. In the modern era, Cantonese - my mother tongue - is not exactly a proper form of written language that a student would learn in classes. Most of the time it has to be “transcribed” into this more proper or standard form of written Chinese, known as Mandarin or Putonghua (Lo, 1998). Cantonese writing has never been officialised in Hong Kong by any government throughout the British colony, after the hangover and even up till today.

Cantonese and Chinese share the same set of Chinese characters, but slightly vary in sentence structure, wordings and the right ordering to place the words. Has Cantonese always not been written in any form of publications or media? Not really. In the past ancient era, Cantonese was more commonly used among the grassroots, as they seldom have the privilege to learn classical Chinese - a more elegant form for the

literate and upper class. According to Kataoka and Lee (2022), there had been traditions of “write what one talks” in Guangdong. Since the Ming and Qing dynasty there have been folk writings written in Cantonese. Scholars also found folk songs, fictions, textbooks, Chinese opera and newspaper dated around the period of late Qing dynasty and early republic of China written in Cantonese. To facilitate the catholic preaching from Europe to Guangdong, missionaries even translated bibles into Cantonese for people living in the Guangdong area to understand and read. Though there are dictionaries authored by scholars to indicate common use of Cantonese words, there were no particular official specifications issued by the government.

According to Kwai-Cheung Lo (1998), Cantonese has become the dominant language used in many popular writings under the increasingly engulfing influence of Hong Kong mass culture over the last two decades. Cantonese writing in mass media nowadays usually appear in the following forms:

1. Modern Chinese writing mixed with a few Cantonese wordings: news paper, magazine article, movie dialogue translations in cinema
2. Chinese writing with Cantonese dialogues: electronic literature
3. Full Cantonese writing: local movie dialogues, online discussion, social media post, electronic literature

Language constitutes a significant portion of one’s cultural identity. Like Lo (1998) claimed, Hong Kong is a marvelous example of how the use of language one place constituted “a contested terrain in which a local identity strives to come into being”. The return of sovereignty of Hong Kong to China might not necessarily eliminate differences between Hong Kong and China, and whether the attempt of constituting a unified Chineseness and new Chinese identity was successful or not, is rather doubtful. And this cultural politics of the use of language in Hong Kong, after these 20 years of vigorous socio-political changes, remains an intriguing problem to be investigated.

## Civic values of Hong Kong locals

The conflicts between Hong Kongers and mainland China residents also lies in civic values. For the following, civic values are defined as “people’s familiarity with their political selectable institutions, participation in political process, and knowing the history of their civic society” (Chow, Fu & Ng, 2019, P.572). It is observed that Hong Kongers, especially better educated youths, are more likely to adopt local identity than Chinese identity in a sense of pursuing democratic civic values through their political participation in social movements led by local community groups. On matters of preserving historical heritages and urban renovation, these groups requested more democratized participation in urban planning. People supporting localism usually shared a stance of rejecting authoritarian, monopoly and hegemony. People living in Hong Kong are not only used to unrestrained and uncensored access to information, but also receive education that does not censor sensitive historical issues that happened in China, such as the Cultural Revolution and 1989 Tiananmen Square protests and massacre. Such a social environment easily leads to a strong repulsion towards the surveillance and censorship imposed by the Chinese government and distorted nationalist concepts rooted in Chinese mainland society. This also extends to the worries of localists supporters, that Chinese immigrants might not protect the local values of justice and democracy.

### **2.5 Statement of problem**

The linkage between identity to politics can be drawn on previous works of social identity theorists. Taifel (1981) had pointed out all individuals tended to think in terms of their affiliated groups. These social groups bear psychological value and significance to every individual. Whenever there are any forms of threats targeted at the group or losses that would cause, political behavior of people would be influenced. Threats can

come in the form of losses in money or territory (Sides, Tesler & Vavreck, 2019), or in the form of symbolic losses such as “a decline in a group’s status in society” (Chan, Nachman & Mok, P.5, 2021). These losses need not be realized to influence later political consequences. In view of the case in Hong Kong, the main threat would be mainlandization threatening its regional autonomy. The ELAB became a turning point that triggered a sudden loss of democracy. The brutal violence used by police towards protestors, unnatural death cases, mob attack in railway station with delayed arrival of police and many more incidents had subjected the public to a collective cultural trauma. This research sought to seek ways of protecting and advancing the status of our group to “secure a positive social identity” (Chan, Nachman & Mok, P.7, 2021), ultimately to defend ourselves.

## 3. Literature Review

### 3.1 Culture, cultural identity, cultural memory

#### Culture

Culture, according to the Cambridge dictionary definition, refers to "the way of life, especially the general customs and beliefs, of a particular group of people at a particular time". In his groundbreaking book *Guns, Germs and Steel*, Jared Diamond, a professor of physiology, develops the notion that culture (and identity) was first and foremost, a consequence of geographic location, climate, and natural resources. He suggests that topography, the ratio of sun and rain, accessibility to rivers and the sea, and the ways in which a population sustains itself all shape ideas of culture and self. Culture connects people from the same community with "common language, historical memory, habit, tradition" (Berlin, P.12, 1979). Clammer (2014) described culture as "the source of our collective memories and our social imagination". It is widely argued that culture is not a set of "things" but a set of practices. Murphie and Potts (2003) pointed out that culture is multiple as it encapsulates the "activities of different classes, of different races, of different age groups".

Culture is also about "shared meaning", as Stuart Hall (1997) claimed. Hall suggested that language operates as a representational system that enables people to "build up a culture of shared understanding and so interpret the world in roughly the same ways", as language worked as the "privileged medium" for people to produce and exchange meaning. Signs and symbols - sounds, words, images, musical notes and as diverse as it can be - represent our thoughts, ideas and feelings, and "language is one of the 'media' through which thoughts, ideas and feelings are represented in a culture". As correlation is drawn between our conceptual system and our language system, and meaning is constructed and fixed in the shared conceptual maps and shared language

system, people who understand the same language would be able to communicate ideas. Culture satisfies the spiritual need of the members of the community by enabling them to understand and sympathize with other institutions.

In his book *Art, Culture and International Development: Humanizing Social Transformation*, Clammer (2014) mentioned there is a feedback loop between new policy initiatives and change of culture. To impose political decisions efficiently to a target population, politicians tend to alter perceptions or implant particular knowledge into their mindsets. When the population developed a shared understanding of how the policies would benefit their personal interests, the tendency to accept and abide by the policies would increase. Murphie and Potts (YEAR) shared similar views and asserted that culture is “conditioned by political and economical forces”.

#### Cultural identity and memory

Gilbert (2010) and Ferdman (1990) provided two notions that distinguish cultural identity. The first one, individual cultural identity, refers to “an individual’s identity in its cultural aspect, the various features of the way someone has been brought up with” (Gilbert, 2010, p.3). Ferdman (2000) specified an individual cultural identity as “one’s individual image of the behaviors, beliefs, values and norms that are thought to characterize one’s group(s), together with one’s feeling about those features and one’s understanding of how they are (or are not) reflected in oneself” (Ferdman, 2000).

The second one, collective cultural identity, refers to the membership of a cultural group. The common dialects, the shared set of beliefs, experiences, and memories are noticeably something that bound families, neighborhoods, cities, religions, and even entire cultures (Pennebaker, 1997). Participants of one cultural group distinguished themselves by the mentioned collective cultural features which characterize their ways of life. Gilbert (2010) stressed that a cultural group should not necessarily be

considered equivalent to a community (here defined as “a group of people leading a common life”). The essence that constitutes collective identity is the preserved, transcended memory of people.

Jan Assmann introduced a concept of “cultural memory” to the archaeological discipline studies. Assmann and Czaplicka (1995) differentiated “cultural memory” from everyday “communicative memory” by characterizing its distance from everyday life. Contrasting the temporal horizon of communicative memory, the horizon of cultural memory remained unchanged even as time passed. According to Assmann and Czaplicka (1995), the fixed points of cultural memory are “fateful events of the past, whose memory is maintained through cultural formation and institutional communication” (p.129). Findings from traditional laboratory-based memory research suggested that if memories for events are “unique, provoke emotional reactions, are actively rehearsed, and are associated with subsequent changes in behaviour or beliefs”, they are more likely to be remembered (Pennebaker & Banasik, 1997, p.4).

In Assmann’s discourse, cultural memory exists in forms of: first, archives that accumulated text, images and rules of conduct, and second, actuality where relevance can be drawn between contemporary context and objectivised meaning. Cultural memory exhibited the characteristic of its capacity to reconstruct itself “within its contemporary frame of reference” (Halbwachs, 1992). As Rodriguez and Fortier (2007) assert, cultural memory consists of elements of remembering and remembrance or memory. It is people, the society to remember. It is remembered “in memory, raised in celebration, passed on orally, recorded writings, designated to a sacred place” (Rodriguez & Fortier, 2007, p.9).

A social group would have its own important memory that helps them “define themselves, understand the world, and structure their motivations” (Baumeister &

Hastings, 1997, p.277). Memory had to be transmitted through narrative. Emphasizing self-shaping and active quality of human thoughts, the power of narrative resides in “its ability to create, form, refashion, and reclaim identity” (Rodriguez & Fortier, 2007, p.7). One’s religious, class and family affiliations form one’s cognition, that help “construct the manner in which a memory will be interpreted” (Rodriguez & Fortier, 2007, p.7). Pennebaker and Banasik (1997) also argued that “the way people talk and think about recent and distant events is determined by current needs and desires” (p. 3). Objective record of the facts is not guaranteed to be the most helpful way of satisfying those interpretative needs, leading to a systematic distortion of memory (Baumeister & Hastings, 1997). In Halbwachs’ theory, traumatic political events are usually repressed “silent memories”, which “voluntarily are forgotten and usually divide a society” (Paez, Basabe & Gonzalez, 1997, p.147).

### **3.2 Community and Virtual Community / digital culture**

Community, as one of the most fundamental concepts in sociological research, is also an extremely difficult term to define. Cambridge dictionary provided the definition of community as “the people living in one particular area or people who are considered as a unit because of their common interests, social group, or nationality”. The fact that George Hillery (1955) came up with 94 specific definitions of the term, probably proved that a wide definition of the term was too broad to be meaningful. In classical sociology, the concept of “community” is used to describe “group-ness” in contrast to “conditions or feelings of isolation or individualism” (Day, 2006; Miller, 2011).

German sociologist Ferdinand Tönnies (1955) proposed the concept of *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft*, forming an early foundation of sociological critique regarding the

transformation from traditional agrarian society to a modern urban one under industrial revolution, as well as concepts of community (Day, 2006; Kumar, 1978). Tönnies suggested that *Gemeinschaft* (commonly translated from German as “community”) as a “way of being” in a pre-modern rural village (Day, 2006). *Gemeinschaft* was used to describe people tied together “in small-scaled face-to-face contexts of spatial proximity” in different levels (Miller, 2011). These contexts could be kinship and blood relations, mutual interdependence and multi-dimensional ties where multiple relationships exist between the same people, and the shared historical ties to the place. *Gemeinschaft* is always seen as a more “natural” interdependence existing in face-to-face contacts. *Gesellschaft* (translated as “association”), however, is seen as an opposite concept of *Gemeinschaft*. *Gesellschaft* described relationships built upon choices, formal contracts and convenience. Contrasting the natural occurrence of *Gemeinschaft*, *Gesellschaft* is calculated and rational. Tönnies suggested that these kinds of relationships were encouraged by the “large and growing industrial cities” (Miller, 2011) in the nineteenth century. Industrialisation and urbanization boosted the mobility of populations, expanded spatial scales and spheres of social interaction in one’s modern lifestyle. It became rare for people to share face-to-face encounters with the same person but in different contexts.

Other early sociologists also shared similar views that the move to urban life had affected people’s sense of belonging and interaction with each other. Weber (1978) suggested that short-term, immediate, ends-based relationships within city life were less capable in fostering the communal sentiments of belonging (Day, 2006; Domingues, 2000; Miller, 2011). Simmel (1950) considered the common blasé attitude towards the surroundings as a result of over-stimulation of the senses in urban environments, also contributing to individuality and creating a sense of isolation in the urban subject (Kumar,1978:71; Miller, 2011). American sociologist Louis Wirth (1938) built upon Simmel’s argument, argued that urban life allows people to “specialize or

compartmentalize their relationships by establishing them on the basis of one aspect or interest in life” (Miller, 2011, P.186), which is the opposite of *gemeinschaft* relationships.

These writers’ opinions converged to a view that a natural or organic form of “community” originated from the social order of the rural past. Their concept of "community" was bound by a particular spatial order within the restraints of “bodily travel, the rootedness in place and history, the social limitations set by the interweaving, interdependency and obligation of personal relationships tied to an extremely local scale” (Miller, 2011, P.186). In his discourses, Wellman (2002) had proposed that the concept of community was revolutionizing and moved from defining it in terms of space to defining it in terms of social network. Miller (2011) also addressed the importance of seeing “transformation in the relationship to space and place from village to city is seen to have had in the transformation of community to *gesellschaft* relations” (P.186). Urbanization and development facilitated the mobility of people, resources and goods across long distances, transforming the sense of localness from the scope of interpersonal relationships to a mechanized travel in a possibly national scale (Luke, 1996; Miller, 2011). The space that bound a “community” or a “localness” expanded from village to nation. It might result in nations becoming one’s most important community. But as Anderson (1983) also argued, nations are imagined communities because members of a nation would never know, meet or hear of most of their fellow members. The essence of community here is not based on face-to-face meeting or interactions, but rather built upon an environment with symbolic resources (flags, anthems, flags etc.) and nationally-based media which “encourages a belief among its citizens in a common ground, history and experience” (Miller, 2011).

As Giddens (1991) suggested and addressed by Miller (2011), late-modern social life can be characterized by three aspects:

1. Time has been separated from space in terms of social actions with others
2. The disembedding of social relationships and organizations caused by the separation of time and spaces of social actions
3. The reflexive ordering of social relations that leave most forms of social relationships being constantly revised considering the increasing information, self-awareness and available choices for the person

The disembedding of social relationships also signified the increasing exposure of models for “living outside the limitation of tradition” (Miller, 2011). Miller (2011) also addressed that social relations, affiliation and identity are more open to globalizing influences, and people have a higher tendency to choose how they want to construct their own biographies. Virtual communities are also a kind of social relations that emerged out of technological advancement. Formation of virtual community had brought along its five virtues as he summarized:

1. Cyber space compensates for the need of community in reality as the engagement in socializing in internet space could fulfill typical functions of informal social space.
2. Cyber space increases one’s choice in their social relationships as the internet and other digital communication technologies lift away social, geographical and biological constraints of place and proximity. People get to choose to associate with people who share common interests, values, beliefs or passions of their own.
3. People enjoy freedom in engagement in virtual communities.
4. The problem of mobility is naturally overcome and the physical location of the body becomes a less important factor to maintain communal ties.
5. The membership of the community provides tangible benefits to their members such as expanding one’s social and knowledge capital, and providing feelings of communion.

Along with bureaucratization, industrialization, urbanization and capitalism, technology advancement and rapid modernisation had also brought concerns over their effects on communities. Wellman and Gulia (1997) raised possible concerns that whether these changes would lead the community to (a) fall apart, (b) persevere as village-like shelters from mass society or (c) be liberated from the clasp of traditional solidary groups. Critics worry that life on the NET would “never be meaningful or complete” (Wellman & Gulia, 1997, P.2) as people were away from in-person contact in real life. They also worry that people getting so “engulfed in a simulacrum virtual reality” (Wellman & Gulia, 1997, P.2) would lose their connection with their life in the living reality.

This notion and virtues of choosing an affiliated virtual community and expanding it also lie in fandom. The word “fandom” is a combination from the word “fans” and “kingdom”. Jenkins (2006) asserted that fandom is “one of those spaces where people are learning how to live and collaborate with a knowledge community”. According to Jenkins’ review of Pierre Levy’s *Collective Intelligence*, Levy provided a compelling vision of the newly emerged “knowledge space”. With the advancement of the net and the Web, rapid many-to-many communications were facilitated. This might “enable broader participation in decision-making, new modes of citizenship and community, and the reciprocal exchange of information” (Jenkins, 2006. P.136), fostering the “deterritorialization” of knowledge. These new knowledge communities, as Jenkins (2006, P.137) described, would be “voluntary, temporary, and tactical affiliations, defined through common intellectual enterprises and emotional investments”. They might belong to more than one community, and shift from one to another whenever their needs and interests change.

As Miller suggests, “network” instead of “community” would be a more accurate term to define the current state of social relations in modern post-industrial societies. This is

due to speedy social changes fostered by information and communication technology, most notably in increasing physical mobility and the rise of individualism. In Castells' (1996, 1997, 2001) argument, network has become the primary relationship in a culture revolving around information and communication. The "hierarchy" is starting to be replaced by "network" in that social structure. The direction of information flows in a network, and even a network architecture itself are more horizontal in nature. For Wellman (1979), increased mobility and advances in communication technologies intensified the process of moving from communities to networks, where social relations are moving from being completely place-centered to being completely person-centered and aspatial. This results in social relationships increasingly centred around the person rather than linkage from place. Wellman argued that this shift to network individualism means that people in which one is connected perform a certain instrumental role in another's life. Networks have a specific goal, project or purpose for their existence.

In this study, the "community" we refer to will be limited to our online fansub group and our audiences. It was one of the objectives to explore the possibilities and impacts of "meaningful relationships" built online through "mutual production and reciprocal exchange of knowledge" (Jenkins, 2006, P.137) and how to sustain it.

### **3.3 Media convergence and participatory culture in fandom**

In Henry Jenkins' (2006) *Fans, Bloggers, and Gamers : Exploring Participatory Culture*, he took the concept "pop cosmopolitanism" as the ground of his discourse on media convergence and participatory culture. "Pop Cosmopolitanism" first appeared in Marcelo M. Suarez-Orozco and Desiree Baolian Qin-Hillard (2004) *Globalization: Culture and Education in the New Millennium*. Jenkins (2006, p. 154) described media convergence as "ongoing process occurring at various intersections between media

technologies, industries, content, and audiences”. In his argument, media convergence is not simply a digital revolution, but rather how advancement of new media technology “enable consumers to archive, annotate, transform, and recirculate media content” (2006, p.155), and hence altering the relationship between technologies, industries, markets, genres and audiences. In Jenkins’ (2006) discourse, he asserted that when the forces of corporate convergence - small number of multinational conglomerates interested in ensuring media flow across different platforms and countries, and grassroots convergence - digitally empowered consumers shaping the production, distribution, and reception of media content, intersected to create a global convergence of multidirectional flow of cultural goods around the world. He concluded that global convergence led to the rise of new pop cosmopolitanism, which he referred to as “the ways that the transcultural flows of popular culture inspire new forms of global consciousness and cultural competency” (2006, p.156) .

According to Jenkins (2006), the relationship between media producers and consumers is changed by new media technologies. In some sectors of the media industries, the feedback of fans were received and being incorporated into their design process of viewer-generated content. Consumers who were previously spectators holding little power in shaping media content, had expanded their power to “archive, annotate, appropriate, and recirculate media products” (2006, p.151) in the prevalence of new media technologies. This new style of media consumerism emerged is referred to as participatory culture (Jenkins, 2003). Fans tend to “embrace their favored texts and attempt to integrate media representations within their own social experience” (Jenkins, 2006, P.39). They refuse to read by the meanings imposed by authorship, but to reclaim the textual material, “making it one’s own, appropriating or reappropriating it” (de Certeau, 1984, P.166). As media consumers, they participate in the creation and distribution of media narratives by “creating new content and meaning that incorporates or expands upon the source text” (The Janissary Collective, 2014, P.79).

The most famous and probably long-standing form of fan creations is fan fiction, which are “stories authored by fans that create additional content through the incorporation of characters, plots and/or setting from a source text” (The Janissary Collective, P.79, 2014). Videocassette recorder, digital photography, audio sampling technologies and other technology advancement also enabled media consumers to manipulate and rework their own new forms of cultural expressions. These productions could range from stories, music, movies, photo collages and even more. Since the emergence of the web, it has served as a significant platform to showcase these grassroots cultural productions for broader circulation and greater visibility.

In his book Jenkins (2006) described online fan communities as the most fully realized versions of Pierre Levy’s vision of “knowledge space”. These expansive communities centered around “the collective production, debate, and circulation of meanings, interpretations, and fantasies in response to various artifacts of contemporary popular culture” (Jenkins, 2006, P.137). Modern fandoms are imagined communities “fostered by technologies that enable geographically dispersed people to overcome time and distance in forging virtual communities of affect” (Morimoto & Chin, 2017, P.174) in the scope of English-language media fan studies. Iterated from Benedict Anderson’s theory, “imagined communities” of fandom are transborder and transnational, sharing a popular cultural experience rather than national subjects including language, race, and ideology. As an online fan community comprises people from diverse locations and cultures, scholars figured modern media fandom is necessarily transcultural. Under the multidirectional flow of pop culture, western fans of Asian pop culture participate in those fan cultures and “incorporate the media and fan practices of the originating culture into their own popular cultural repertoires” (Morimoto & Chin, 2017, P.178). Thus they concluded that such intensified online and offline participation in global media fandoms could foster the sense of transcultural fan community belonging among fans scattered around the globe. Meanwhile, misunderstandings and conflicts could also

happen out of “incompatibilities in the community standards and practices of distinct fan cultures within a broader fan community” (Morimoto & Chin, 2017, P.179). Morimoto and Chin also pointed out even there has been a growth in scholarship on non-Western fandom and non-English-speaking contexts, these studies were isolated from “mainstream” English-language fan studies, and others could overlook them entirely as they felt disconnected and inapplicable to discuss other transcultural media fandoms. It should be noted that the quantity of transcultural fandom studies focused on Hong Kong fans is far from adequate, and this study focusing explicitly in Thai pop culture fandom would enrich this field of studies.

### **3.4 Fan activism**

Henry Jenkins (2012, no page) defines fan activism as “forms of civic engagement and political participation that emerge from within fan culture itself, often in response to the shared interests of fans, often conducted through the infrastructure of existing fan practices and relationships, and often framed through metaphors drawn from popular and participatory culture”. Fans communities are more often connected through their shared passion of certain popular culture and media texts. Fans are often “the earliest adopters of new media” (Bird & Maher, 2017) as they used it for creating fan fiction, fan art, videos, music around the stories they love, forming virtual communities to share and discuss contents based on the stories. Fan communities identify themselves with “underlying values and beliefs, heroes and villains, and motivational or cautionary stories” (Bird & Maher, P. 28, 2017) from the stories they invested in. According to Bird and Maher (2017), fan communities tend to have sets of beliefs and practices, and they can frame connections between the fictional worlds they are passionate about and issues with broader interests and concerns happening in the real world. Social movement scholars Snow, Rochford, J Worden and Benford (1986) identified a couple

of ways which these connections can be drawn to social movement, listed as follows (Bird & Maher, P.28, 2017):

1. Frame bridging: linking ideologically congruent but structurally disconnecting frames
2. Frame amplification: sharpening or aggrandize existing values or beliefs
3. Frame extension: expanding existing frames to incorporate a broader set of concerns
4. Frame transformation: changing old understandings into new ones

The underlying values and beliefs from the stories fans love resonate as motivation for social changes in real life. Fan communities themselves are not social movement communities (Bird & Maher, 2017). Yet, Bird and Maher (2017, p. 27) also highlighted, “the sense of collective identity for participants, powerful cultural symbols and values, skills to adapt to new media” are elements that make fan communities effective as social movement communities. Typical examples include the current Fandom Forward (formerly known as the Harry Potter Alliance) founded in 2005 by Andrew Slack, which is a United States-based nonprofit organization originally inspired by Dumbledore's Army in the Harry Potter narrative. It has been advocating beliefs such as marriage equality and fair trade underlying in the story and run activist campaigns in real life. The organization had even motivated nonfans to join, and is now expanded to include members of various fandoms.

### **3.5 Fansubbing**

In a broader approach to fansubbing adopted by Barra (2009) and Fernández Costales (2011), subtitles produced by “fans or amateur enthusiasts rather than professional translators” (Dwyer, 2012, P.224) could be considered as fansubbing. From the beginning of subtitles produced “by fans for fans” among Japanese anime lovers in the

mid-1990s, fansubbing has been expanded to subtitling programmes or movies in other genres and languages “by fans for all” (Díaz-Cintas, 2018). Fansubbing communities worldwide adapted different sorts of cooperation models and platforms of distribution. Mika’s analysis on his study about Polish amateur fansubbing community stated that there are funsubbers group operate on web shared similar characteristics to those of “typical online cooperation group” (Mika, 2015) and some fansubbers work as individual and cooperate with others according to their own will. Apart from the common passion and wish to share their beloved media content worldwide, Barra (2009) also pointed out fansubbers do not necessarily have to be fans. The motivation of fansubbers could also be from their desire to become part of a group or to practise particular foreign language skills, Barra therefore identifies the voluntary and non-profit nature as the essential feature of fansubbing. Fernández Costales (2011) also gave very little distinction between “fan” and “amateur”. And surely, professional translators could be “fans” themselves and engage in such solo or group cybersubtitling activities.

Fansubbing is characterized by its “norm-defying and creative textual features”, hugely contrasting mainstream professional subtitles which are confined to conventions established in the Western world. Professional translations resort to mainstream practitioner practices resulting from formal training and the working dynamics within the industry. For example, the conventions for subtitling deal with time and space constraints so that viewers could have sufficient time to read the subtitles comfortably at the same time enjoying the visuals. When it comes to fansubbing, the tendency of subverting traditional norms and conventions are manifested in both linguistic features and visual features. Some defining linguistic features of speech patterns include the incorporation of “abusive language, blasphemy, profanity, oaths and parodies on things that are considered sacred” (Díaz-Cintas, 2018).

Based on some widely recognised characteristics in anime fansubbing, Dwyer (2012) proposed a model of four “overarching traits” of fansubs - formal innovation, collaborative methods, foreignization, and genre expertise. The formal innovation involves creative features such as use of various fonts, colors, type size, positioning and movements of (sub)titles, and the additional translator notes for explicating “untranslatable or culturally impenetrable terms and concepts” (Dwyer, 2012, p.226). Diaz-Cintas (2018) also noted that occasionally translators would utilize translator notes to joke with audiences rather than translating the source text accurately. The collaborative methods refers to fansubbers making use of online networking, adapting collective and a technologically networked model of practice to distribute work and co-create subtitles. Foreignization, though not always adopted in all programme genres and languages, is an approach that seeks to provide accurate and “authentic” translation without culturally “deodorizing” the source material. Genre expertise refers to fansubbers possessing more in-depth genre knowledge than professional translators.

As Leksawat (2022) claimed, while it is generally acknowledged that formal training and proper working mechanisms would contribute to guaranteed quality of translations, it does not necessarily imply that the amateur fansubbing community lack such practice. For example, from Bartosz Mika’s study on the Polish amateur fansubbing community, it is known that they have their own internal guidelines concerning the quality of translations. Leksawat’s article also stated that there is a trend of fansub groups screening new potential translators with admission tests instead of allowing any random people to participate in the translation. On the contrary, professional practices also seem to be influenced by amateur translations. Pérez-González (2014) defined the “incorporation of performative onscreen texts, a typical feature in fansubbing, into a mainstream media production” as “cross-fertilization” (Leksawat, 2022, p.119). Hence, recent research of fansubbing is gradually shifting concerns over quality or translation

errors to a noticeable phenomenon of the blurriness between professional and amateur translations.

In the era of multidirectional cultural goods and media flow around the world, fansubbing plays a key role in fostering digital media transmission when the presence of these cultural goods on local mainstream mass media is still limited in quantity and diversity. In the typical media dissemination system, the content to be shown on mass media was controlled by authorized bodies. Díaz Cintas (2018) asserted that the existence of cybersubtitling communities itself held social significance in challenging the hegemony of media while mass media conglomerates act as gatekeepers of official culture, which is “represented by the authorities and the existing hierarchy, and is controlled by repression and prohibitions” (Díaz Cintas, 2018). He took China as an example, in which the importation of foreign movies were restricted with screening regulations and censorship controls. The imbalanced supply and demand had led to emergence of foreign programmes distribution via non-official channels, while fansub groups play their part in providing subtitle translations for audiences incapable in understanding the foreign programmes. The development of fansub groups definitely cultivate the generation-wide audiences and contribute to the expansion of market for new productions, bringing consequent commercial values along. The distribution of fansubbed video content online though, raised the controversy of piracy for long. In recent years, fansubbers in China, Poland, Spain and the Netherlands have been prosecuted for “providing unauthorized subtitles for foreign movies and television shows” (Díaz Cintas, 2018).

In overall view, as Díaz Cintas remarked, digital technology has opened up plenty of potentials for individuals to engage with communities with the same interests. Social networks and platforms enable the increasing semi-direct or direct interaction between subtitlers and viewers. The development of fansub groups, and even translation

platforms like ViKi, also demonstrated the empowering potential of translation as “both a community-building device and mode of personal expression” (Dwyer, 2012).

## **4. Methodology**

### **4.1 Research question**

1. What are the main features of Hong Konger identity along with ?
2. How can a fansubbing group culturally and emotionally empower a community?

### **4.2 Research design**

This study is an autoethnographic art-based action research. The study provides an ethnographic documentation of my personal experience of co-founding fansubbing group Kongji Production and getting involved in subtitle translation, fan production and other participation in the online fandom. I will use my personal experience in forming and sustaining Kongji Production to investigate the social and cultural implications of our fan subtitles and fan productions. I attempt to uncover the role of language in the sustaining communal cultural identity of Hongkongers. I would also like to reflect upon our fan activist practice to explore the potential of how this virtual community-based fansub group can act as an agent in mobilizing the fandom in socio-political aspects.

### **4.3 Research strategy**

1. Ethnography and autoethnography

Traditional ethnography is rooted in the field of cultural anthropology. As described by Madden (2010) and Muratovski (2016), it is a type of study that involves an in-depth, systematic study about certain target groups of people by observing or directly participating in their lives. It is frequently used to study “social interactions, behaviours,

beliefs, and perceptions that occur within groups, teams, organizations, and communities” (Muratovski, 2016, p.56). To put it simple, ethnography refers to writing about culture (Leavy, 2017). Leavy (2017) suggested primary research methods of ethnography are participatory or non-participatory observations. By placing researchers in the natural setting of the community, researchers could understand the culture from the perspectives of its participants. Participatory observations require researchers to get involved in the activities of the community to be studied directly. Sometimes ethnographers might even live with the research participants over a long period of time. On the contrary, researchers do not engage in the same activities as the participants do in non-participatory observations. Interviews conducted in different media, including face-to-face, video conferencing and skype interview, are also commonly used methods to effectively learn the knowledge through conversations with participants.

According to Leavy (2017), the genres of qualitative research that rely on self-data have been rapidly expanding to research into identity and identity politics. Autoethnography emerged in the 1980s as the primary research method of such genres, which is also one key element of this study. Autoethnography, like ethnography, is writing about culture. Its core ideal is to connect researcher’s personal experience, insights and knowledge to a larger cultural and political context (Adams, Jones & Ellis, 2014, p.25). Adams, Jones and Ellis (2014, p.36) also provided a list of four fundamental reasons of doing autoethnography :

1. To critique, make contributions to existing research and theory
2. To embrace vulnerability as a way to understand emotions and improve social life
3. To disrupt taboos, break silences, and reclaim lost and disregarded voices
4. To make research accessible to multiple audiences

Being a member of the community to be studied also means I have the privilege to illustrate insider knowledge and to criticize cultural experience from an “insider perspective” which might clear some common assumptions about these cultural phenomena.

## 2. Art-based action research

Art-based action research (ABAR) can be associated as part of qualitative research strategy, which was developed at the University of Lapland’s Faculty of Arts primarily used in development projects of art education, applied visual art and contemporary art (Jokela & Huhmarniemi, 2018). ABAR is rooted in various research methods including action research, artistic and art-based research. It follows traditional action research in which practitioners would investigate and evaluate their own work and reflect on their working process (Muratovski, 2016). The principle of action research is always to improve the practice based on a problem. To conduct action research, one would proceed with a cyclic process of planning, acting, observing and reflecting in their developmental work. New problems might be discovered throughout the process and trigger a new cycle.

## 3. Research methods

This research consisted of 4 primary elements: participatory observation, analysing the rationale, process and results of some iconic fan activities related to the cultural sociosince Kongji Production was formed, and talking to the members of this community and acquaintances made along this journey via online interviews or web chat conversations across different platforms including Telegram, Instagram and Discord.

Kongji Production, the community to be studied, was originally formed online with members located in different parts of the globe. I have been staying in Finland most of the time ever since the group was formed, and hence most communications, observations and interviews were conducted online.

Above all the ethical concerns, I would like to state in advance that the formation of Kongji Production itself, our co-created productions, artifacts - the main subject to be studied, were not carried out or produced for research purposes by nature. I see this virtual community as living social interactions on and offline, but not a controlled experiment in a laboratory. The community to be studied in this research formed, expanded and evolved in response to members' desire and needs throughout time. People come and leave, absorbing and transforming ideas and practices from different online communities, internet social contexts and physical world cultures. As one of the co-founders and currently active leaders of the group, I have witnessed the formation of Kongji Production since early stages. I have been involved in many decisions that facilitated the development of its operational routine and the progress in growing diversity of our fan productions. Behind every decision we made and actions we put forward, there lie the struggles between upholding the proper image for our identity, beliefs, yet at the same time keeping away from legal risks. The emotions came along with ups and downs were inseparable as I am part of the community and part of the research. It is essential to keep an open attitude to cope with different happenings and emergent phenomena in both the physical world and the online social network. Not knowing what response I would receive, I also tried to embrace the vulnerability to disclose stories of myself and those close to me.

Kongji Production, as an online community, brings people with similar interests and visions together. Members' levels of devotion to our translation works and productions

vary, and the willingness of them to get acquainted with other members also vary. Active leaders and some devoting members eventually continued meetings and conversations offline, extending their scope of community from the virtual to real life. As more trust was built up among group members, the higher chance of us to discuss deeper thoughts and sensitive personal experience. To avoid putting them at legal risk because of shrinking freedom of speech in Hong Kong, sensitive information of informants would be handled carefully. I also attempt to use pseudonyms and censor labels in the following findings and analysis so as to keep both external and internal anonymity according to my group members' will.

As much as I am aware that the power dynamics within this community grant me the privilege of obtaining relevant research data from our digital storage space and group members, I also value our group members' true thoughts and feelings along this journey of fan production. Malinowski (1922) once concluded the goal of an ethnographic study is, "to grasp the native's point of view, his relation to life, to realize his vision of his world". Whenever there is a need to include my group members' opinions and experience in the ethnography in order to provide a more comprehensive picture, my obligations in providing accurate and objective interpretations and translations of their exact wordings would be kept in mind. It is unavoidable that members might take different stances and opinions under different circumstances for the benefit of their own and the whole group. No matter if I agree with all the beliefs and actions of my group members (informants in this research) or not, I should always portray their stance and preferences without bias.

Last but not least, data and documentation accessible in our collective Google drive were used in this research under the consent of all leaders of our group. Any names appearing on documents, screen captured dialogues across different platforms which might indicate one's virtual or real identity would also either be blurred or renamed.

## 5. Research documentation and discussion

### 5.1 Establishment of Kongji Production

Kongji Production, one of the most well-known Cantonese fan subtitling groups in Hong Kong, was established in April 2020. The Chinese name of Kongji Production 登製 (Cantonese pronunciation: *dang zai*) has a similar pronunciation with the Thai word ตั้งใจ, which means determination. The name implied members' diligence and passion in providing Cantonese subtitle translations to Thai series, variety shows and Thai pop songs which are available on YouTube.

To trace the origin of Kongji Production, it was a simple thought that suddenly crossed the mind of Yatsum - the founder of Kongji Production, while watching a Thai series on YouTube on an ordinary night.

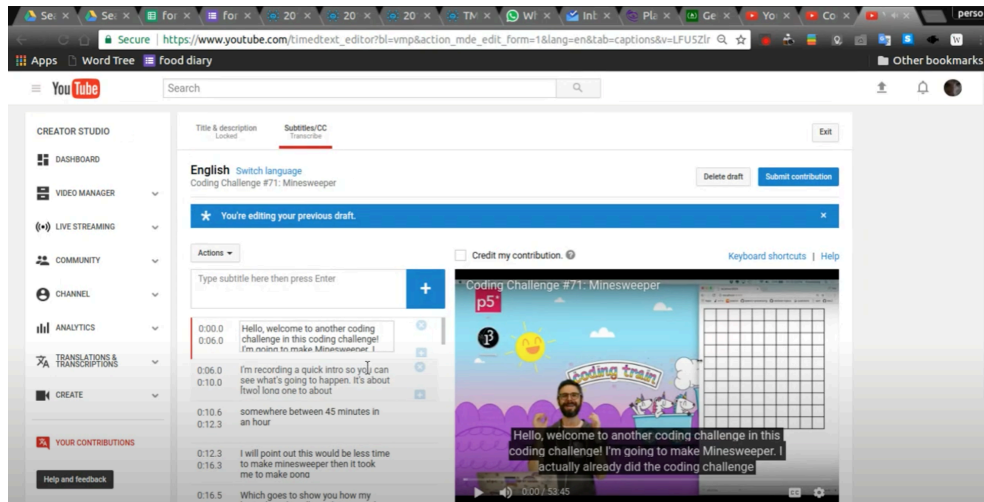
“Why don't we have our own Cantonese subtitles?”

Under common understanding, subtitles available in traditional mainstream media such as programmes aired in TV or broadcasted in streaming platforms are typically written Chinese. Written Chinese has always been adapted as a standard form of writing in Hong Kong. While occasionally there are a mix of Cantonese expressions in Chinese subtitles for movies screened in cinema, it was still a rare approach to have subtitles completely in Cantonese in the recent decade. It was not until *The Way We Keep Dancing*, a Hong Kong feature film, came out in 2021 that we got to watch a film with full Cantonese subtitles in cinema.

The emergence of Kongji Production, a fansub group using Cantonese as the main target language, is one of the earliest of its kind. At first *Yatsum* started her first

translation of *2gether the Series* on her own with encouragement from her friend. The series was produced by GMMTV and started airing during the outburst of the COVID-19 pandemic in late February 2020. With the lighthearted plot and starring the two charismatic male actors, it drew an unprecedented amount of worldwide attention. The series, like the others produced by the same company, was uploaded to their YouTube channel with external English subtitles in order to reach worldwide audiences. With the built-in community subtitle function of YouTube, fans can take the provided English subtitles as source language texts and translate them to other languages. Yatsum thus translated episode 4 and 5 of *2gether the Series* from English subtitles to a complete Cantonese subtitle. This subtitle was noticed by the users of LIHKG, one of the most famous online forums. The Cantonese subtitle was screen-captured and posted on the chatroom related to Thai drama series. By coincidence Yatsum's friend noticed such comments praising the lively Cantonese dialogue, and Yatsum left a comment indicating she is the one who made this first ever Cantonese subtitle for a Thai drama series. She also explained how we could use the community subtitle function of YouTube to contribute our own fansub. YouTube users could login to the subtitling platform of a certain video and type in the subtitle anonymously.

**Figure 1.** Community subtitle function in YouTube



This sparked other fans' interest in translating the English subtitles of *2gether the Series* into Cantonese, including myself. At the time of the pandemic, major social activities like schooling, working or any form of leisure meetups were massively suspended so as to prevent COVID-19 infection via human contact. People were bound to work from home or take online lessons instead of face-to-face mode. For me, the pandemic was like cutting off most human interactions I would have engaged in real life. Living on my own in Rovaniemi, I eventually spent more time online exploring new hobbies and communicating with people around the world via the internet. With less than ever human interaction in my daily life, I found the work of translating dialogue into Cantonese an amusing way to mentally engage myself in a lively conversation in my mother tongue. It was an experience that provided a sense of comfort in solitude and connection with an environment I felt familiar with. Apart from this particular personal reason, every fan, including myself, that participated in this fansub contribution shared the same interest and passion for the drama series.

For the first few episodes, there was no clear distribution of work among fans participating in the fansub production, since the only way of communicating among us was through the forum post mentioned above and the fact that not everyone doing the

translation would leave a comment stating their participation. We have no idea who was responsible for translating a particular part, which often caused redundant labor, but it was co-created in a peaceful and non-competitive manner in general. It was not until we figured out the subtitle of a certain part was disrupted anonymously. The timecode of certain parts were shortened to an unreasonably fast speed and words were changed to offensive foul language. We then realized the need to form an organization to cooperate with each other, so as to better manage the later fansub production and discuss precautions for similar circumstances. This marked the beginning of the journey of Kongji Production, and certainly planted a milestone in the scene of fansub using Cantonese as the main written language.

## **5.2 Language as a way to sustaining collective identity of a fan community**

The idea of starting to translate a subtitle in which Cantonese is the target language was pioneering. To promote their productions to worldwide audiences, it is common for production companies to provide official English subtitles for marketing purposes. Some would even allow fansubbing submission so that fans could voluntarily devote their passion in translating subtitles to their mother tongue, lifting away possible language barriers. It should be acknowledged that our notion of translating English subtitles to Cantonese is not completely due to the occurrence of English illiteracy, as English is included in our complementary school curriculum.

To us, the idea of making Cantonese subtitles is encouraging Hong Kong netizens not to over rely on Chinese subtitles provided by mainland fansub groups, which might infringe the piracy and occasionally mistranslate some dialogues. This idea also bears our pride in our cultural identity and helps consolidate this sense of cultural identity. We had received a number of feedback claiming they were not used to reading Cantonese

when they first came across a full Cantonese subtitle. Yatsum, even as the pioneer of Cantonese subtitles, also shared the same weird feeling like audiences did. It is reasonable to reckon such unfamiliarity with the lack of compulsory or voluntary Cantonese dialogue reading in both academic and recreational sources. Cantonese reading and writing had never been implemented as a syllabus of learning in complementary education in Hong Kong. Articles for academic purposes had always been written in modern Chinese. It is also more common for Hong Kong mainstream media, including news broadcasts, programmes shown on TV or streamed online, to put on traditional Chinese ones rather than Cantonese subtitles. In an environment severely scarce of Cantonese reading in mainstream media, Cantonese subtitles seemed astray from the norm. Against the odds of Cantonese subtitles not conforming to Hong Kongers' main reading habits, its emergence was surprisingly embraced and supported by netizens. The number of Instagram followers of Kongji Production has risen to 8,600 since its formation in April 2020.

According to our observation, the generally positive feedback of Cantonese fansubbing practice is mainly due to the strong sense of Hong Kongers' identity implied in Cantonese fansubbing practice and how we operate our Instagram account. From the research conducted by Siu-lun Chow, King-wa Fu and Yu-Leung Ng on generating a measurement scale for the identity of Hong Kong people, it was concluded language held a paramount importance of identity confirmation in the cultural domains, and the opposing attitude towards authoritarianism and proactive political participation are key characteristics in the civic domains. Our Cantonese fansubbing is exactly upholding Cantonese as our native language and sustaining localists' thoughts promoted in recent decades in an innovative and alternate way. Use of Cantonese in daily practice is an emphasis on Hong Kong values and norms (Yew & Kwong, 2014). This has been the most significant factor of why we manage to gain support from other Hong Kongers.

Like Anderson (1983) once argued, written language, and with print-capitalism, “constitutes the basis for national consciousness by unifying the tools of exchange and communication and by hierarchizing one dialect over the others” (Lo, P. 155, 1998). In our fansubbing we have been adapting the characteristics of Hong Kongers’ conversation. We employed a wide use of Cantonese idioms and a hybrid form of Cantonese colloquial and English - a communication style that we would be proud of. In the earlier phase of fansubbing, we had very limited knowledge of Thai language, and thus we relied heavily on the English subtitles provided by the production company. The main principle of our translation is to make the dialogue sound more like Hong Kong local speaking, pursuing equivalence of translation while glocalising cultural representation and word expressions of Hong Kong without distracting the original context. For example, in a scene of a football match with narrations (Figure 2a), we have put in certain jargons of football commentators (Figure 2b).

**Figure 2a.** A football match scene in 2gether the Series Episode 8

**Figure 2b.** Cantonese subtitles with “Everything is possible” - famous quote by Hong Kong former sports news reporter Ng Fong Wing



As time goes by, more members have started to learn Thai and more newcomers capable in Thai language join the fansubbing group. The deviation of translating from

English to Cantonese gradually became less and the overall accuracy of translation improved as a more sophisticated checking procedure was developed. As translators, we always have the awareness of our power in comprehending the subtitle texts and dialogue, and even the meaning and intention hidden in the choice of the language. It is always our responsibility to control the explicitness and vagueness within words, interpreting the intended narratives of the speaker accurately as we are fundamentally manipulating the message the audience would perceive. The spirit of translating subtitles in a localized, readable and accurate way is undoubtedly a key to maintain a respectful reputation of our group and receive continuous support from our audiences.

Whenever we completed a subtitle, we usually submitted it to the production companies who accept fansub, so that they could put on our subtitles to the Chinese (Hong Kong) or Cantonese (Hong Kong) subtitle channel. Our audiences can look up our social media account stated in the opening credits of our subtitle, and follow us to know our updates and sometimes social and political news that we shared. We started to build up a network of virtual communities based on the common interest in Thai pop (which remained a minority choice of entertainment) and the common mother tongue. As Miller (2011) asserted, culture and community are maintained via communication and conversation. Despite how conversations and communication in general transmit beliefs, ideas, perspectives, ideologies and information, the use of language is already a practice that binds people together through interaction. Malinowski (1922) refers these two simultaneous functions of language as follows:

1. Mode of reflection: to exchange information from one to another with the use of language
2. Mode of action: the act of communicating itself creates sociability through the acknowledgement of others' presence

These built connections lifted away constrictions of space and time, provided need for community in reality especially in times of the COVID-19 pandemic for both fansub group members and audiences.

These built connections lifted away constrictions of space and time, provided need for community in reality especially in times of the COVID-19 pandemic for both fansub group members and audiences. When I now recall the time Kongji Production was first formed, I remembered some of us were studying abroad with all face-to-face lessons converted to online classes, some of us were working from home. We all isolated ourselves from human contacts for the public health precautions for a long period of time. We also received feedback from our audiences that watching our subtitles with occasional translators' comments to joke with them made them feel like someone with the same interest in Thai drama series is accompanying them, whereas in reality they might not have friends sharing this uncommon passion.

As we continued running the fansub group, we realized that the force that drove us to keep working on translation projects is something more than self-entertainment or improving our language skills. Occasionally we would come across drama series or video clips with more social, political, or educational meaning. Some Thai drama series raised concern over elitism in the education system, some reflected the socio-political situation of Thailand. Some group members are even devoted to Thailand politics and motivated to translate speeches of political party leaders or video explaining Thai politics or laws. We also felt like we took on a civic responsibility to broaden audiences' horizons and offer more in-depth Thailand related knowledge in Chinese or Cantonese in the cybersphere of Hong Kong.

### **5.3 Operating a fansub group without piracy issue**

One major difference between traditional fansub groups and us, lies in the production and distribution of fansub. In typical fansubbing process, fansubbers have to obtain the unsubtitled video source, translating dialogue of the video into a script, time the script to match dialogue and typesetting the dialogue to adjust appearance of texts on video (which is particularly important for variety shows with special text effects). Finally fansubbers would overlay the subtitle on the video, export the subtitled video and distribute it online or as hard copy. We are, on the other hand, adopting very different sets of procedures. With the built-in subtitling tool available for the community captions function of YouTube, fansubbers can simply type in the translated dialogues of the provided text boxes created from its original subtitle provided by the video owner. Timing of dialogue can be adjusted in the subtitling tool with the video player playing the video simultaneously. After finishing the translation, fansubbers could submit the subtitle for the video owners' review. Once the video owner approved, the subtitle would be available in the video's captions list for the audience to select. There is no particular distribution of subtitled works other than to promote it to potential viewers. Such procedures of fansubbing had refrained us from getting involved in the debatable piracy issues long rooted in the topic of fansubbing. Another merit of this kind of publication is, the subtitles would not be removed by external parties due to government imposed censorship or server closedown when accused of piracy.

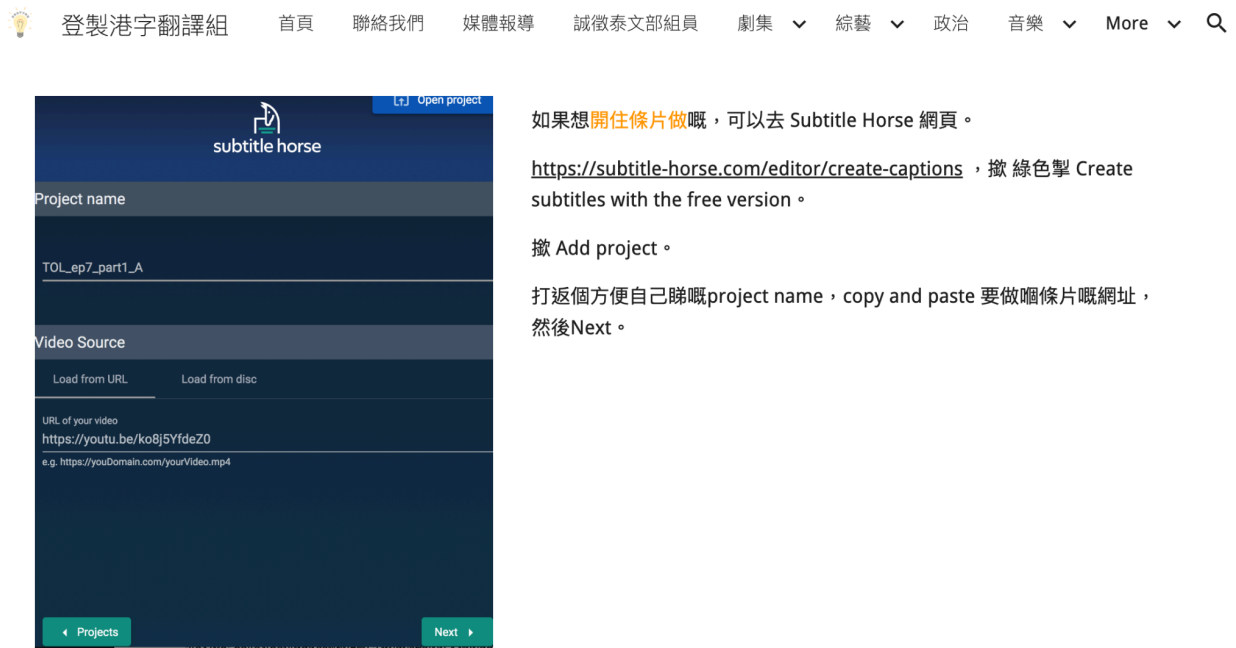
YouTube discontinued its function of community captions in September 2020, claiming it was "rarely used, reported spam and abuse" in Team YouTube's online statement announcing the closure of this function. After seeking viewers' opinion and internal discussion, we managed to develop a new set of procedures. We found another online subtitling platform as a replacement of the built-in subtitling platform. We send our subtitles to the video owners' email directly to request for publishing our work. We also

uploaded our subtitles to YouTube external CC, which is a platform to overlay closed captions on YouTube video and contributing view counts to the YouTube video source. It served as a backup plan for viewers to watch the video with our subtitles while they were still pending for video owners' approval. Later in March 2022, YouTube external CC was closed as the developer decided to replace it with the newly developed and more advanced NekoCap, which is a web browser extension that hosts subtitles for multiple video streaming platforms including YouTube and also provides a subtitling interface for editing contributors' subtitles. With previous experience of coping with changes, that did not bother us much to adapt to new working procedures.

#### **5.4 Setting up a step-by-step fansubbing tutorial on our website**

Thai drama series is currently rising to be internationally recognised as a soft power of Thailand. To promote their productions to worldwide audiences, it is common for production companies to provide official English subtitles for marketing purposes. Some would even allow fansubbing submission so that fans could voluntarily devote their passion in translating subtitles to their mother tongue, lifting away possible language barriers. Fansubbing for a video is a time-consuming activity, requiring the passion, willingness and competence of fans. We realized we have limited manpower or passion for fansubbing some other TV shows or celebrities. To encourage communal participation of fansubbing for videos, we even published a tutorial of how we make use of web tools to do our fansubbing and publish our work. We later observed that other individual fans or fansub groups from Hong Kong and Taiwan imitated and re-adapted such kinds of practices for their liking. We also believe that the symbolic act of advocating Cantonese could potentially expand and engage more Hong Kongers fans. Thus, the idea and spirit of promoting the use of Cantonese could be popularized with the participatory culture in fandom.

**Figure 3.** A step-by-step guide on fansubbing published on the website of Kongji Production



## 5.5 Fan art production of group members

Kongji Production, as a fansub group, have been producing more than fansubbing out of many expectations. With an interestingly diverse background of members, it was surprising that we gathered enough talents to build our first website (Figure 4) initially aimed for promoting our fansubbing for 2gether the Series in a systematic and strategic approach.

**Figure 4.** The first website created by Kongji Production



We also produced some fan-made videos and our Cantonese covers of the soundtrack of the series. We started with re-editing scenes of *2gether the Series* with two Thai songs which were once a great hit among netizens in Hong Kong. The two songs we used were the Thai version of *Kamen Rider* theme song, and the Thai version of the theme song of *Devil's Disciples*, a Hong Kong TV drama series, which was sung by singers from Hong Kong. Unlike Japanese and Korean pop culture, Thai pop media had never been a mainstream entertainment for Hong Kong audiences. However, when Thai language is transcribed into Cantonese writing, the combination of words would sometimes accidentally produce hilarious meanings to Cantonese speakers. These two songs we have picked caused great hits in Hong Kong under these circumstances when they were released. Remapping these songs with the video clips from the series revealed our members' reimagination of contexts the story. Later our members also edited some music videos of *2gether the Series* with popular and famous Cantonese songs. We even made a tutorial video to demonstrate how to wear a mask properly using the photos of the actors wearing masks as a demonstration.

One of our members *T* wrote a Cantonese version of the lyrics for *Kangoo* - ending theme song of *2gether the Series* and planned to dedicate the song to their partner.

Once that member shared their lyrics with other members, another member Cow tried to record the song and *Hi* remixed it with instrumental background music for fun. Even the tempo of the vocal did not match that of the background music, that ludicrous remix became the starting point of our first Cantonese cover production. After that Cow re-recorded the song and *T* did the remixing with his own vocal to produce a duet version of the Cantonese version of *Kangoo*. *Hi* edited our first cover song music video and the cover was published on the day when the finale of *2gether the Series* premiered. The music video and the cover received generally positive feedback from fans watching our Cantonese subtitles.

**Figure 5.** *Kangoo* Cantonese cover



Later we continued to write Cantonese lyrics for several Thai songs, mostly soundtracks of *2gether the Series* and its special sequel *Still2gether the Series*, and some other soundtracks from other Thai TV series. Members including myself worked on different themes when we wrote the lyrics. Sometimes we got inspirations from story plots of respective TV series and wrote the lyrics that were reminiscing the dynamics between protagonists. Sometimes we voiced our grief for the aftermath of social movement, our turmoil and aspirations for future changes in our lyrics.

Other than writing lyrics, writing fan fiction is also one medium for our members to communicate their grief and beliefs. Yatsum took the settings of the protagonists from

*2gether the Series*, which is two young male students studying their bachelor in the faculty of law and political science respectively and re-imagined a love story that happened in a world of injustice. She depicted the downfall of democracy in the fictional *City of Thai*, resembling the turmoil in Hong Kong and the aftermath.

To us, it has been a wonderful coincidence that these co-founders of Kongji Production with different talents of creation were able to gather in the net and create these interesting fanarts. These different talents and strengths of members complement each other. With constant brainstorming and exchange of ideas, we were able to continue these fanart productions until some of the co-founders eventually returned to their normal busy lives before the outbreak of COVID-19. We have so far published 8 cover songs and 11 fan made videos. Through different forms of fan creations, we expressed our observations, beliefs and communicated our messages. To a certain extent, these artistic expressions are our responses towards cultural trauma. They are “collective means for undoing repression and allowing the pent-up emotions of loss and mourning to be expressed” (Alexander, P.7, 2004). We chose to confront the reality of the brutal events in the past social movement, and to memorialize the victims of the repression in Hong Kong. We believed these creations would serve as a fond memory of how dedicated we were, and in other ways, serve as a form of documentary of happenings from citizens’ perspective.

## **5.6 Digital activism across transnational fandom**

Ever since we began fansubbing in Cantonese and established Kongji Production, the vision of forwarding localness, supporting the pursuit of universal values are almost as important as continuing our fansubbing work. From the very beginning, Kongji Production serves to provide lighthearted entertainment for netizens with the same

interest in Thai pop culture in the time of a depressing social atmosphere. Our Instagram account was used to promote new subtitles updates and our new fan art projects launch. As our followers gradually increase and this fandom network continues to expand, we started to wonder if the attention and support we received could possibly enable us to impact others' civic engagement. Throughout this journey of setting up and running Kongji Production, fan activism took place in different forms.

The formation of Kongji Production happened around the time when Milk Tea Alliance was formed. As described in *Strategic Comments* (2021), Milk Tea Alliance is an “online solidarity movement connecting pro-democracy protesters in Hong Kong, Thailand and Myanmar, plus those in Taiwan and elsewhere that are sympathetic to their causes. (P.1)” Milk Tea Alliance was formed from an online argument in April 2020, in which Hong Kong protests had already begun. According to *Strategic Comments*, it began with a young Thai actor named Vachirawit Chivaaree, stage name Bright, starring in *2gether the Series*, retweeting a photo that recognised Hong Kong as an independent country. The other part of the reason unstated in this journal was, the speech of Bright’s girlfriend Weeraya, Twitter account name *nnevy*, was considered supportive towards Taiwan independence. Chinese netizens also claimed that Bright liked a post retweeted by Weeraya about COVID-19 being called *Wuhan Pneumonia*, and the virus laboratory in Wuhan stored 1500 virus strains including bats. A massive amount of Chinese netizens, feeling these social media activities and speech discriminating and offending Chinese, flooded to the Instagram and Twitter account of Weeraya and demanded their apology. Bright’s Thai fanbase came into his defense from the many harsh criticisms from Chinese netizens. Fans and protestors in Hong Kong (and many Taiwanese as well) joined the side of the Thais in the argument. The argument even escalated to a tense level that government officials from China and Thailand responded to the incident. As the cause of the whole incident was simply a misinterpretation of Google translate, the “net war” eventually ceased.

The name “Milk Tea Alliance” was drawn from the common custody in Hong Kong, Thailand and Taiwan of drinking milk tea, contrasting that of China of drinking tea without milk. Even though the mass social movement in Hong Kong from 2019 to 2020 ultimately failed, it still became a model for other pro-democratic movements for different regions as activists sustained their protests using online tools like Twitter. The hashtag #MilkTeaAlliance facilitates the sharing of information about protests tactics developed in Hong Kong with activists across the globe, including Thailand’s anti-government protestors.

According to *Strategic Comments* (2021), The Thai anti-government protests in 2020 were driven by citizens’ frustration over the political hierarchy which was dominated by conservative establishment which comprised corporate, military and monarchist elites. The protests were fueled by the opposition leader Thanathorn Juangroongruangkit, being disqualified by Thailand’s Constitutional Court from continuing to serve as a member of parliament and Thanatorn’s Future Forward Party (FFP) which held a critical stance towards the military-powered government being dissolved in February 2020. In Aim Sinpeng's study of hashtag activism of #FreeYouth protests in Thailand, she described Twitter was merely an online platform to “discuss their entertainment interests, with K-pop, Thai pop, and fans of Thai evening soap opera television shows dominating conversations and hashtags” (P.196, 2021), until FFP started to use Twitter as a significant tool to mobilize support before the 2019 elections. Twitter activism against Thailand Prime Minister Prayuth Chan o-cha and the government body was accelerated by an online campaign to save FFP from being dissolved by the Constitutional Court. As subsequent anti-government hashtag campaigns and Free Youth Movement proceeded, this protest developed into the first large-scale pro-democracy protests in Thailand mediated on Twitter. Activist groups such as FreeYouth and United Front of Thammasat and Demonstration (UFTD) utilized social

media to mobilize people across Thailand with the same dissatisfaction towards the monarchy and government to gather onsite and protest for political reform.

In their article Anamwathana and Thanapornsangsuth (2023) also described the scope of student-led protests expanded from university level anti-government protests to high-school and middle-school levels school-related issues rallies throughout 2020. In early 2021, the mass protests ended as classes were conducted online and students could not gather on campus due to the worsening situation of COVID-19. On the other hand, the death rate of COVID-19, low vaccination rates and plummeting economy in Thailand had prompted protestors to initiate smaller scale daily demonstrations by September.

Members of Kongji Production including myself had kept our attention to the social movement. Living in the similar helpless and threatening condition of democracy deprivation, we have a strong sense of connection with Thai people. Despite the fact that we mainly translated TV series and variety shows for entertainment, we felt that we might be capable of researching valid information of Thai protests and provide an easy understanding summary for our followers on Instagram and Twitter. Members who used to be reporters thus decided to write articles explaining the "three demands" proposed by Thai protestors and the discourse behind. Later we also wrote another article explaining the new demands from protestors to properly combat the worsening situation of COVID-19. These articles were published to our Twitter as threads. We even submitted the second article to Stand News and In-Media, which are Hong Kong online news media, and our articles were published on their website (Figure 6).

Figure 6. Article by Kongji Production members submitted to inmediahk.net



We also observed that Thai people tended to express their political views with pop culture. In early protests in 2020, students often referenced pop culture, such as Harry Potter, Hunger games and Japanese anime Hamtaro. Like McCargo (2021) described, the early protests had a “carnavalesque atmosphere, as seen in the witty appropriation of icons from popular culture” (P.179). In 2021 we started to translate a new action drama series *Not Me* produced by GMMTV. The story depicts the injustice, corruption and civil rights infringements of Thailand and the strong will of the youth generation to bring changes through political activism. Mise en scène of the series deliberately included Thai political artists’ painting, socio-political books of Thailand as props, and rap song composed by Thailand rappers to criticize the incompetence of the government and unjust social situation. Members at first intended to write supplementary information in the subtitles for audiences’ better understanding of context. However the knowledge, if included in the subtitle, would lower its readability as the lines were too long. We therefore created a new Instagram account *column* to post these “easter eggs” we gathered for audiences interested in learning more about the social context of Thailand. When we completed translating the 14 episodes of *Not*

*Me*, we also organized a discord chatroom live session to let our members, especially those participated in the translation of the series, to discuss the considerations on how to approach the translation by picking more contextualized phrases that Hong Kong people could relate without misinterpreting the literal meaning, and to have conversations with audience on how they perceived the sense of localism mediated through the translation. In general our audience had positive feedback on our translation, stating that they could empathize with the story because of previous social movements in Hong Kong and our translation strengthened their sense of connection to the situation (Figure 7). Later one of our members *Phaa* was invited as a guest speaker of an online talk organized by Centre For Asian Languages and Cultures of the Hang Seng University of Hong Kong. With a rich and extensive knowledge of Thailand's socio-political situation, she managed to explain these facets of Thailand which seem unfamiliar to Hong Kong people.

Figure 7. Chatroom of discord live session



## **5.7 Fan activism: mobilising fandom to engage in political consumerism in Hong Kong**

In June 2021, 2gether the Movie premiered in Japan and later released in Thailand, Hong Kong and Taiwan. The movie was adapted from the 2gether the Series and Jittirain's original novel. As the co-founders of Kongji Production, we had a particular fondness over this iconic TV drama series as it inspired us to do our first translation and fan production. One can say 2gether the Series is iconic to us since it is the starting point of Kongji Production, and we always tried to hold on to the passion and courage to continue our work.

Yatsum and I decided to organize a screening event of the movie as a way to encourage our online community to actively engage in offline social activity after the lockdown of the pandemic. After prior ticket reservation for our Kongji Production members and our affiliations, we designed a Google form for external ticket sales and published an instagram post to promote the event. We asked interested followers to complete the form to register their places and we contacted them via Instagram direct messages to proceed with the payment. The tickets were sold out in one minute and we considered it rather successful. I personally was not able to attend the screening in Hong Kong which was held on, but I still managed to assist the other two administrators in charge of the event in coordinating the tickets sales, promotion and dealing with enquiry.

Alongside the screening event, we decided to design a set of our own fan art souvenirs based on 2gether the Series. The set of souvenirs was intended to be distributed to audiences in the screening session and to be given as awards for a future campaign that encouraged our supporters to participate in the Yellow Economy political consumerism. Yatsum and I started by collecting visual references of others' fan art

productions and gathered a selection of samples on Miro (Figure 8), which is a common web whiteboard tool for online collaborative works. We both have a mutual agreement on the principle of creating something practical in use instead of disposable or purely decorative printed stuff. We finally decided the souvenirs would include 2 types of bookmarks, 1 type of letter paper, a set of transparent typography stickers, 1 fabric reusable cup sleeve for bubble tea drink and 1 memo pad.



Figure 8a - 8f. Souvenirs for audience participating in private screening

**港字**  
連登  
LINK KONGCI



**逐篇譜寫我倆的書籤**

Kangoo版

若瞬間心中有火花 直覺不出錯

**港字**  
連登  
LINK KONGCI



**逐篇譜寫我倆的書籤**

One hug版

留白這歌給你 只需 跟我走下去

**港字**  
連登  
LINK KONGCI



**信紙不設限期 繼續細味**

我地只係兩個相愛嘅人，唔係出於勇氣，而係出自愛。

**港字**  
連登  
LINK KONGCI



**勇氣100% MEMO**

你可能只有1%嘅機會，  
但如果你個心仲想堅持落去，  
你嘅機會永遠唔會跌到0%。

**港字**  
連登  
LINK KONGCI



**示愛不簡單 應該用貼紙**

想將你刻光緒 我好想要 你嘅貼紙

**港字**  
連登  
LINK KONGCI



**TEN YEARS LATER 繼續用布杯套**

Ten years, twenty years, thirty years later,  
Baby you and me will be together.

After the screening session, we held a *Thai Cuisine Michelin Campaign* from December 2021 to January 2022. The campaign was initially divided into two categories - Thai cuisine restaurant category and bubble tea shop category. To participate in the campaign and win the awards, participants were required to dine in a Thai cuisine restaurant and/or purchase a beverage from a bubble tea shop which are categorised as Yellow businesses. After dining and/or purchasing beverages, they have to post a short review or recommendation with photos on their public Instagram account respectively. Finally they were required to fill in the Google form and submit the receipts and a screen capture of their Instagram posts. The 6 winners of the Thai cuisine restaurant category will be awarded with the stationery set of screening souvenirs, including bookmarks, letter paper and stickers, while the 6 winners of bubble tea shop category would be awarded with the fabric cup sleeve.

The campaign was intended to use our awards as incentives to encourage our supporters to participate in political consumerism. Hong Kong government had been employing an uncommonly harsh policy to restaurants throughout the pandemic. Whenever the number of COVID-19 infection rates hit a certain peak, the government would update the measures to restrict the number of customers of each table in restaurants, and occasionally even forbid eat-ins during a specific period of time. These measures unavoidably put economic pressure on food and beverage sector businesses. We therefore carry out this campaign in hope of people enjoying their meal from restaurants with family and friends during the holiday season.

The campaign and the awards were promoted in our Instagram account @kongjiproductio. The post of campaign received 634 likes and the post of

introduction of souvenirs received 605 likes. Surprisingly we did not have enough participants for each category when the campaign was almost closing. To understand the obstacles hindering people from participating in the campaign, we opened a question box for our potential participants to answer. Most response we received were:

1. People do not use public instagram account
2. People usually post Instagram story rather than post

We then had a discussion on these responses and talked about our personal preferences and observations in using Instagram. We noticed some active fans of the Thai pop culture fandom might have public fan accounts to share news, pictures or videos of the pop stars or actors they liked, while some others do not have extra public accounts and were reserved to publicize their private personal account for the campaign. We also agreed that people's tendency of posting instagram posts was declining as they might only post on important or memorable occasions with exquisite photos to make our profile appealing. In view of these we adjusted the rules to allow people to post also in private Instagram and stories. We also extend the deadline so as to get more participants. At last we got 12 participants for the Thai cuisine restaurant category and 8 participants for the bubble tea shop category. Each of the 5 administrators of Kongji Production, including Yatsum and myself, held 5 votes for each category. We picked our bias based on the descriptive texts accompanied with the images of the food or beverages.

Fannish activities which are most visible and well-studied are productive practices in which "fans create new content and meaning that incorporates or expands upon the source text" (The Janissary Collective, P.79, 2014). As the Janissary Collective (2014) pointed out, fans could engage in many forms of cognitive and affective engagement with media. Some productive practices could generate tangible material outcomes that reflect fans' personal engagement. Furthermore, fans could also engage in a "much

more distributed and social form of productivity” (The Janissary Collective, P.79, 2014). When we created our sets of movie screening souvenirs, we took in some dialogues from the series and lyrics we wrote for the song cover, reinterpreting them into our context, repurposing and circulating them. In some works, we tried to instill values of persistence into our productions, reinforcing some common political beliefs which might be shaken after the die down of street protests. We hope that the happy memories of audiences watching the series and our motives of continuing to run the fansub group would crystallize into useful objects for daily lives and well kept by audiences.

In our campaign advocating political consumerism, we suggested in our promotion that participants could dine in restaurants or purchase bubble tea from merchants listed in the Lemon Map (an online interactive map indicating shops in the Yellow Camp) or the Mee App (an app listed restaurants and beverage shops in the Yellow Camp), and promote these merchants on their social media. Driven by the motto of “be water” in a non-hierarchical social movement, there were many online and offline small communities formed to perform different roles and achieve different aims in both resistance in daily activities and street demonstrations. The campaign we organized aimed to connect many fragmented communities of the Yellow Camp and to engage more people with the same direction of beliefs into the Yellow economy. Ultimately this activism was aimed to drive the flow of social capital, to use the market power to advocate political changes. From feedback from our audiences, we learned that advocating the Yellow economy in social media could be burdensome for some people due to different ties and affiliations in reality. This hindered them from participating in our campaign, but our motives were still well delivered.

## **5.8 Disharmonious within fansub group, facing haters and false accusations**

It has come to our knowledge that our fansub group has received quite a number of hate speech comments posted on anonymous social media accounts. More surprisingly, some were from our former or current fansub group members. Considering how limited the scope of anti-fan culture study had developed and the research value of first hand experience, I decided to include this as a supplementary part originally not planned. I will briefly list what kind of dissatisfactory comments we received, analyze the possible reason behind these situations, possible risks and how we try to tackle these problems. I also acknowledge that the following discourse would be inevitably subjective in literal expression and have its limitations due to the lack of perspectives.

Dissatisfactory comments and attacks towards our fansub group could be basically summarized as follows:

1. There are too many translators' notes on subtitles
2. We stop updating some old projects but continue on new projects
3. Sometimes even if others have translated the subtitles of certain videos/series, we would translate the same video
4. We spend time doing "unnecessary" stuffs such as publishing translation notes for providing insights and contexts of translations
5. They are only interested in entertainment-related updates but not socio-political news

All these comments actually reflect typical misunderstanding and lack of insights regarding the operation of a fansub group. To maintain the high accuracy and quality of subtitles, we developed a standard checking procedure of subtitles to let members

with better Thai and Cantonese skills proofread and edit before publishing. In other words, it requires a certain amount of manpower to translate and proofread a drama series. However, as our group members increase over time, our interests in genre and preference of actors is increasingly diversified. It also became rare to gather enough manpower that we commonly agreed to opt for a new project updated on a reasonable schedule. We also believe that our members have advanced Cantonese, Chinese and Thai language skills, enabling us to provide subtitles with high quality. Therefore most of us pay very little attention to whether we would translate “duplicate” projects with other translators.

Another variable affecting the regular update schedules is the fluctuating availability and passion of group members. New projects would constantly come up and members would usually focus more on them. Besides, members interested in some projects might gradually lose their passion for translation as time passes or lose their interest in certain drama series as the story plot becomes less appealing. With the lack of manpower, occasionally we might not be able to keep up with updates. As a volunteering fansub group, the major force that motivates us to translate is always our interest or hobby. Some of us found it interesting to write translators’ notes to explain thoughts behind translation. Some of us could only devote ourselves to translation of materials that we are interested in. Some of us like to utilize our skills in media production and participate in fan art production. As we grow together as a group, we are also learning how to collaborate and operate more smoothly so as to fulfill most members’ aspirations, without over-neglecting audiences’ opinions.

By far there were two severe defamation cases we encountered that happened in 2023 since the emergence of an anonymous instagram page named *Thai Secrets*. The first one is that, we found that there are submissions claiming to be our former or current group members. They are dissatisfied that some projects were not published until lately

because editor role members procrastinated a lot. Little did they know that some particular members' drafts were in poor quality that discourage proofreaders to devote time in double checking before publishing the final version. There were also submissions disclosing some internal opinions discussed in private group chats of our fansub group. These had led to suspicion of group members disclosing too much confidential information to outsiders, bringing threats of net security of members for our sensitive advocacy of localism.

Another accusation was about plagiarizing subtitles. Along with the step-to-step subtitling tutorial we published, we also provided a subtitle submission for individual fansubber to publish their work to our websites. We would also state their credits so that audiences could find them on social media. However there was a claim that after one subtitle was published to our website, our group translated another subtitle for the same video. As the accusation was serious and would potentially cause harm to our reputation, we drafted and posted an official notice to clarify that we never refrain ourselves from translating the same material even if others have already done it before. We also decently decline any possibilities in plagiarizing others' work. We pointed out that we know how much effort one has to put in translation, and we despise the act of plagiarism. We also stated that we have confidence in our literacy and language skills, and we hold pride in our work. To clear other members' possible query towards these incidents, we hold a meeting to let members involved in more administrative and proofread work (including myself). We explained about these issues and difficulties that we seldom bring up in front of all members. We also discussed different views about how to tackle unfinished projects led by members no longer active, and finally agreed to continue doing whatever current members are interested in within our capacity so as not to stress out ourselves.

Along this journey, we have branded ourselves to a fansub group supporting localists' thoughts by what we choose to post on instagram and twitter, what our fanarts are about, and how we introduced ourselves in media interviews. Whenever we recruit new members, we assume that people who would like to join us definitely share the same political stance with us and know very well how we advocate our thoughts via our social media. Nonetheless, we are also learning to run this growing fansub group with better division of labor, higher transparency of team management and more inclusiveness in decision making for its sustainable development.

## 6. Conclusion

Set in a time period when street protests of the Anti-Extradition Bill Movement of Hong Kong gradually silenced by National Security Law and the breakout of pandemic, this thesis looks into the formation and development of a fansubbing group since 2020. It aims to examine the operation of the fansub group Kongji Production and their participation in different fannish activities, so as to explore how a fansub group culturally and emotionally empowers a community.

The research starts by revisiting how Hong Konger identity had been developing from the mid 20th century. The influx of immigration to Hong Kong in order to escape the political instability in mainland China instead of participating in revolutionary changes suggested that they had strong anti-political feelings. At first most immigrants exerted the “refugee mentality” to strive for their livelihood rather than political participation. It gradually shifted to a stronger sense of belonging along and protectiveness as a community. Though Hong Kongers share the same ethnic identity of Chinese as mainlanders, Hong Kongers shaped their identity upon the social and cultural differences between Hong Kong and China. As the CCP’s attempt in culturally and politically assimilating Hong Kong through mainlandization further eroded Hong Kong’s democracy guaranteed under the “One Country, two systems” over years, Hong Kongers’ political resistance was increasingly aggravated. The recurring social movement in recent decades and the many inconveniences in daily lives caused by mainland visitors and immigrants had strengthened Hong Kongers’ local identity. The once compatible identity of being Hong Konger and Chinese gradually become exclusive to each other.

Even after the withdrawal of the anti-extradition bill in 2019 and the national security law had been enacted, political participation of Hong Kongers continues as symptoms

of mainlandization are still pervasive. With advanced information and communication technologies, I argue that fan activism could culturally and emotionally empower one community in times of diaspora. This research suggests fansubbing, a means of forming and participating in virtual communities, could advocate political resistance towards the ideology the government persists to cultivate the public through numerous directions. The results are obtained from my autoethnographic art-based action research on my experience in co-founding the first Thai-to-Cantonese fan subtitling and participating in different fannish activities.

Fundamentally speaking, our fansub group Kongji Production culturally and emotionally empower a community by upholding and promoting the most prominent elements in cultural and civic domains that construct Hong Konger identity. From the research of developing Hong Konger Identity Scale, Chow, Fu and Ng (2019) suggested language is the most significant factor in constructing a Hong Konger identity in the cultural domain, while the opposing attitude towards authoritarianism and proactive political participation are the most prominent characteristics in the civic domain. Under the influence of localists' thoughts advocated by Hong Kong activists and the pertaining political resistance after the anti-extradition bill protests, our group attempt to uphold our Hong Konger identity and connect the fan community by the following practices:

### **1. Translating subtitles to Cantonese and setting up a step-by-step guide:**

Against the odds of Hong Kongers' unused to watching Cantonese subtitles, the notion of upholding our mother tongue and adapting the characteristics of Hong Kongers' conversation gained support from the small fandom community for its motive of upholding Hong Konger local identity and binding people together through interaction via the use of language. By setting up a step-by-step guide, more fans who are capable

and available could carry on this motive and popularize the practice of Cantonese fansubbing.

## **2. Fansubbing without piracy:**

Our fansubbing practiced a form of fansubbing without arousing piracy issues commonly occurring in fansubbing in different fandoms. This preference alienates us from adapting the same controversial approach as mainland fansub groups.

## **3. Translating Thailand social movement related source texts, drama series into Cantonese or Chinese, open up online fan space for online discussion:**

The Milk Tea Alliance, including Hong Kong and Thailand, was connected over our own political resistance towards the autocratic rule in our homeland. Though the mass social movement of Hong Kong ultimately failed, it became the model of protests in other regions. During Thailand protests in 2020, social media served as an important tool for “recruiting and mobilizing supporters, and for creating an open and participatory protest space where new ideas can emerge” (Sinpeng, P.203, 2021). It is also “a key tool for mobilizing pro-democratic sentiments among Thai Twitter users” (Sinpeng, P.203, 2021), including us transnational Thai pop fans. These underlying values and beliefs from stories or real life experiences can be bridged between transnationally. We thus translated these social-political related source materials to communicate these information with the fan community we belong to as a response to create social changes. Occasionally we also hold online fan talk on discord to engage group members and audiences to discuss drama series and the

underlying symbols, so as to provide a comfortable virtual space for people with similar likings and beliefs to gather and exchange knowledge.

#### **4. Producing fan art with local context and using Cantonese as language medium**

Our members have collaborated and produced fan art projects such as fan fiction, fan video, writing Cantonese lyrics of Thai songs and members did the song covers and sound mixing. These contents were inspired by our social experience and pop culture context that we are familiar with. They reflected our grievances, aspirations and sometimes sense of humor and directly responded to cultural trauma we had been facing.

#### **5. Mobilizing fans to participate in political consumerism**

By providing self-created souvenirs as incentives, we tried to mobilize the fan community in participating in political consumerism through an online campaign. We hoped that we could bring attention to supporting merchants in the yellow camp, shed light on other platforms developed in response to the protests in 2019 and promote connections with other networks of the same political stance via social media.

Nonetheless, the circumstances of forming a virtual community and sustaining it like Kongji Production is relatively not universal. We conclude that the emergence and sustainability are attributed to the right time, the right place with the right people, as Chinese saying goes.

## **Time**

When we started Kongji Production, the unresolved sentiment and traumatized feelings towards the protest remained and the pandemic broke out to suspend all sorts of face-to-face activities, let alone street protests. People stayed at home for work and leisure activities, substituting most of the communications in reality with online. They also tended to seek out hobbies online and look for virtual communities more than ever to compensate for what was cut out in reality. It should also be acknowledged that one reason that the first drama series we first translated cost a worldwide blast was because it aired in the time of pandemic, more people came across the series on YouTube and Netflix. This also sparked a bloom in Thai pop fandom in Hong Kong.

## **Place**

In the era of networking, there are a lot of online platforms and social media that could gather people with common interests or for certain purposes. It was a coincidence that Yatsum, after initiating the Cantonese translation, would virtually meet other netizens (including myself) equally passionate in following her steps on a forum, and later co-found Kongji Production together. After co-founding the group, we consider social media an efficient tool to reach out to more audiences and promote our motives. In general, we might conclude that a discussion space more open to the public such as a forum allows more multi-ends dialogue and long lasting discussion for interested netizens to voluntarily participate. On the other hand, social media being a popular and convenient channel for following news or exploring media contents, is suitable for promotion and announcement of the group's updates and new directions.

## People

Our group members have diverse backgrounds, creative, passionate and competent in nature. Most importantly, we shared a common interest in Thai pop culture, similar political stance and a vision to sustain it after completing our first translation. Not only did we manage to retain a stable quality of production, but we also utilized group members' skills in fan art production and building virtual infrastructure of the group for future operation. The more new members join us, the more important it is to have these established hierarchical crowdsourcing procedures to ensure smooth collaboration. Though more enthusiastic people joining the group means opening up new possibilities and directions with increasing sets of skills, it also means divergence in preferences and aspirations. Some members would also fade out the community when their passion was exhausted. To sustain the contribution of fan members, it is essential to show appreciation to each other's work, maintain a community with mutual respect and trust so that members would feel a sense of belonging within the community.

This research focuses on how online translation communities could serve as a socially and culturally empowering agent in the context of Thai pop culture fan communities of Hong Kong. The case of Kongji Production also demonstrated both the merits of utilizing virtual communities to aggregate people with both technological advances and territorial forces, and the internal and external challenges of sustaining it. I argue that practicing and upholding the most significant characteristics in identity formation via different kinds of fannish activities could most likely entail fan activism of socially and culturally empowering an online fan community sharing the same cultural identity. If the translation community could sustain their contribution and receive positive feedback and appreciation from the audience, the interaction would grow into a positive feedback loop of social and cultural empowerment.

There is a famous quote from Milan Kundera's novel *The Book of Laughter and Forgetting*: "The struggle of man against power is the struggle of memory against forgetting". This research only captured the scenery of the development of Kongji Production throughout 2020 to 2023, while our motherland experienced a massive socio-political turbulence. In these few years, national security law and national education that were once backdowned have now been implemented. Apple Daily, one of the best selling Hong Kong pro-democrats newspapers, was forced to its closure in 2021. Because of this unfavorable and repressive socio-political environment in Hong Kong, the emigration rate in recent years has rocketed. All these social transformations would impact people's sense of place and space, reshaping contexts of forwarding fan activism. Tactics once were effective and practical might no longer be. We believed that the sustainability of Kongji Production would constantly be challenged by censorship. It is therefore recommended to further research on how other fandoms carry out fan activism in different forms and notions, and to capture both fan activists and spectators' point of view to evaluate on the practicality and effectiveness. As for how long these struggles would last, and how far fan activism could go, only time will tell.

## 7. Bibliography

Adams, T., Jones, S. L. H. & Ellis, C. (2015) *Autoethnography: Understanding Qualitative Research*. Oxford University Press.

Anamwathana, P., & Thanapornsanguth, S. (2023). Youth Political Participation in Thailand: A Social and Historical Overview. *International Journal of Sociology*, 53(2), 146-157. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00207659.2023.2167381>

Anderlini, J. (2019). *Hong Kong's Water Revolution Spins out of Control*. Financial Times, September 2. <https://www.ft.com/content/d1f60a3a-cd58-11e9-b018-ca4456540ea6>

Anderson, B. (1983) *Imagined Communities: Reflections of the Spread of Nationalism*. London: Verso.

Asia's new generation of pro-democracy protesters (2021). *Strategic Comments*, 27:4, vii-ix, DOI: 10.1080/13567888.2021.1949140

Assmann, J., & Czaplicka, J. (1995). Collective Memory and Cultural Identity. *New German Critique*, 65, 125–133. <https://doi.org/10.2307/488538>

Barra, L. (2009) *The Mediation is the Message: Italian Regionalization of US TV Series as Co-creational Work*. *International Journal of Cultural Studies*, 12(5), 509-525.

Baumeister, R. F. & Hastings, S. (1997) Distortions of Collective Memory. In J. W. Pennebaker, D. Paez & B. Rimé (eds.) *Collective Memory of Political Events: Social Psychological Perspectives* (pp. 277-293). Psychology Press.

Bird, J. & Maher, T. V. (2017) *Turning Fans Into Heroes: How the Harry Potter Alliance Uses the Power of Story to Facilitate Fan Activism and Bloc Recruitment*. In J. Earl & D.A. Rohlinger (ed.) *Social Movements and Media (Studies in Media and Communications, Vol. 14)*. Bingley: Emerald Publishing Limited, pp. 23-54.  
<https://doi.org/10.1108/S2050-206020170000014002>

Castells, M. (1996) *The Rise of the Network Society*. Oxford: Blackwell.

Castells, M. (1997) *The Power of Identity*. Oxford: Blackwell.

Castells, M. (2001) *The Internet Galaxy: Reflections on the Internet*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Chan, D. S. W. (2022) *The consumption power of the politically powerless: The Yellow Economy in Hong Kong*. *Journal of Civil Society*, 18(1), 69-86, doi:  
10.1080/17448689.2022.2061548

Chan, N. K. M., Nachman, L., & Mok, C. W. J. (2021). *TRENDS: A Red Flag for Participation: The Influence of Chinese Mainlandization on Political Behavior in Hong Kong*. *Political Research Quarterly*, 74(3), 3–17.

Cheng, E. (2016). *Street Politics in a Hybrid Regime: The Diffusion of Political Activism in Post-colonial Hong Kong*. *The China Quarterly*, 226, 383-406.  
doi:10.1017/S0305741016000394

Chow, S.-L., Fu, K.-W. & Ng, Y.-L. (2020) *Development of the Hong Kong Identity Scale: Differentiation between Hong Kong 'Locals' and Mainland Chinese in Cultural*

*and Civic Domains*. *Journal of Contemporary China*, 29(124), 568-584.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/10670564.2019.1677365>

Clammer, J. (2014). *Art, Culture and International Development: Humanizing social transformation* (1st ed.). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315775555>

Copeland, L. (2014). *Conceptualizing political consumerism: How citizenship norms differentiate boycotting from buycotting*. *Political Studies*, 62(S1), 172–186.  
<https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9248.12067>

Day, G. (2006). *Community and Everyday Life*. New York: Routledge

de Certeau, M. (1984) *The Practice of Everyday Life*. Berkeley: University of California Press

Díaz Cintas, J. (2018) '*Subtitling's a carnival*': *New practices in cyberspace*. *The Journal of Specialised Translation*, 30(July), 127-149

Domingues, J. (2000) *The city*, *Philosophy & Social Criticism*, 26(4), 107-126

Dwyer, T. (2012) *Fansub Dreaming on ViKi*. *The Translator*, 18(2), 217-243.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/13556509.2012.10799509>

Fernández Costales, A. (2011) *Translation 2.0: facing the challenges of the global era* [Paper presentation]. *Tralogy - Translation Careers and Technologies and the Convergence Points for the Future*, Paris

Fong, B. C. H. (2014). *The partnership between the Chinese government and Hong Kong's capitalist class: Implications for HKSAR governance, 1997–2012*. *The China Quarterly*, 217, 195– 220. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0305741014000307>

Giddens, A. (1991). *Modernity and Self Identity: Self and Society in the Late Modern Age*. Cambridge: Polity.

Halbwachs, M. (1992) *On Collective Memory* (L. A. Coser, Trans). The University of Chicago Press. (Original work published 1952)

Hall, S. (Ed.). (1997). *Representation: Cultural representations and signifying practices*. Sage Publications, Inc; Open University Press.

Hillary, G. (1955). *Definitions of community: areas of agreement*, *Rural Sociology*, 20(2), 111-124

Ho, M.-S.. (2019). *Challenging Beijing's Mandate of Heaven: Taiwan's Sunflower Movement and Hong Kong's Umbrella Movement*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.

Heike Holbig (2020) *Be Water, My Friend: Hong Kong's 2019 Anti-Extradition Protests*, *International Journal of Sociology*, 50:4, 325-337, DOI: 10.1080/00207659.2020.1802556

Jenkins, H. (2012). *"Cultural acupuncture": Fan activism and the Harry Potter Alliance*. *Transformative works and cultures*, 10. Retrieved from <http://journal.transformativeworks.org>.

Jenkins, H. (2006). *Fans, Bloggers, and Gamers : Exploring Participatory Culture*, New York University Press

Jenkins, H. (2012). *Textual Poachers: Television Fans and Participatory Culture* (2nd ed.). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203114339>

Jenkins, H. (2003) *Quentin Tarantino's Star Wars? Digital Cinema, Media Convergence and Participatory Culture*. In David Thorburn and Henry Jenkins, eds., *Rethinking Media Change: The Aesthetics of Transition*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press

Jokela, T. & Huhmarniemi, M. (2018). Art-based action research in the development work of arts and art education. In Coutts, G., Härkönen, E., Huhmarniemi, M. & Jokela, T. (Eds.), *The lure of Lapland: a handbook of arctic art and design* (pp. 9–23). Rovaniemi: Lapland University Press.

Kataoka, S. & Lee, Y.-P. C. (2022) *Selected Cantonese publications by Western missionaries in China (1828-1927)*. <https://cuhk.edu.hk/ics/clrc/kataoka/full%20text.pdf>

Ku, A. S. (2012). *The development of citizenship in Hong Kong: Governance without democracy*. In S. W. Chiu & S. Wong (Eds.), *Repositioning the Hong Kong Government: Social Foundations and Political Challenges* (pp. 123–146). Hong Kong University Press. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt1xwd4k.11>

Kumar, K. (1978) *Prophecy and Progress*. Middlesex: Penguin.

Lau, S.-K. (1984). *Society and Politics of Hong Kong*. Hong Kong: Chinese University Press.

Leavy, P. (2017). *Research Design, Quantitative, Qualitative, Mixed Methods, Arts-Based and Community-Based Particularly Research Approaches*. New York, NY: The Guilford Press.

Lee, F., & Chan, J. (2008). *Making Sense of Participation: The Political Culture of Pro-democracy Demonstrators in Hong Kong*. *The China Quarterly*, 193, 84-101. doi:10.1017/S0305741008000052

Leksawat, A. . (2022). Blurring the Line between Professional and Amateur Subtitling: The Case of Thai TV Series, English Subtitles and Spanish Fansubs. *Między Oryginałem a Przekładem*, 28(1 (55), 119–141. <https://doi.org/10.12797/MOaP.28.2022.55.06>

Lo, K.-C. (1998). *Look Who's Talking: The Politics of Orality in Transitional Hong Kong Mass Culture*. *Boundary 2*, 25(3), 151–168. <https://doi.org/10.2307/303592>

Luke, T. (1996) Identity, meaning and globalization: detraditionalization in postmodern time-space compression. In P. Heelas, S. Lash and P. Morris (eds) *Detraditionalization* (pp. 109-133). Oxford: Blackwell

Ma, N. (2020). *From Political Acquiescence to Civil Disobedience: Hong Kong's Road to Occupation*. In N. Ma & E. W. Cheng (Eds.), *The Umbrella Movement: Civil Resistance and Contentious Space in Hong Kong, Revised Edition* (pp. 27–50). Amsterdam University Press. <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctvzgb69c.6>

Ma, N. (2007). *Political Development in Hong Kong: State, Political Society, and Civil Society*. Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press.

Madden, R. (2010) *Being Ethnographic: A Guide to the Theory and Practice of Ethnography*. London: SAGE

Malinowski, B. (1922) *Argonauts of the Western Pacific*. New York: E. P. Dutton.

McCargo, D. (2021). Disruptors' dilemma? Thailand's 2020 Gen Z protests. *Critical Asian Studies*, 53(2), 175-191. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14672715.2021.1876522>

Micheletti, M., Follesdal, A., & Stolle, D. (2004). *Introduction*. In M. Micheletti, A. Follesdal, & D. Stolle (Eds.), *Politics, products, and markets: Exploring political consumerism past and present* (pp. ix–xxvi). Transaction Publishers.

Miller, V. (2011) *Understanding Digital Culture*. SAGE.

Mika, B. (2015) *NETWORK SOCIETY: The Polish amateur fansubbing community as an example of online collaboration project*. *Miscellanea Anthropologica et Sociologica* 16(2), 143-168

Morimoto, L. M. & Chin, B. (2017) *Reimagining the Imagined Community: Online Media Fandoms in the Age of Global Convergence*. In J. Gray, C. Sandvoss, & C. L. Harrington (Eds.), *Fandom, Second Edition: Identities and Communities in a Mediated World* (2nd ed., pp. 174–188). New York University Press

Muratovski, G. (2016) *Research for Designers: A Guide to Methods and Practice*. SAGE.

Murphie, A., & Potts, J. (2003). *Culture and Technology*. Red Globe Press London.

Paez, D., Basabe, N. & Gonzalez, J. L. (1997) Social Processes and Collective Memory. In J. W. Pennebaker, D. Paez & B. Rimé (eds.) *Collective Memory of Political Events: Social Psychological Perspectives* (pp. 147-144). Psychology Press.

Pennebaker, J. W. & Banasik, B. L. (1997) On the Creation and Maintenance of Collective Memories. In J. W. Pennebaker, D. Paez & B. Rimé (eds.) *Collective Memory of Political Events: Social Psychological Perspectives* (pp. 3-20). Psychology Press.

Pérez-González, L. (2014), *Audiovisual Translation: Theories, Methods and Issues*, Routledge, New York.

Rodríguez, J. & Fortier, T. (2007) *Cultural Memory : Resistance, Faith, and Identity*. University of Texas Press

Sides, J., Tesler, M. & Vavreck, L. (2019) *Identity Crisis: The 2016 Presidential Campaign and the Battle for the Meaning of America*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Simmel, G. (1950) *The metropolis and mental life*. In K. Wolff (trans and ed.) *The Sociology of Georg Simmel*. Glencoe, ILL: The Free Press

Sinpeng, A. (2021). Hashtag activism: Social media and the #FreeYouth protests in Thailand. *Critical Asian Studies*, 53(2), 192-205.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/14672715.2021.1882866>

Snow, D. A., Rochford Jr, E. B., Worden, S. K., & Benford, R. D. (1986). *Frame alignment processes, micromobilization, and movement participation*. *American Sociological Review*, 51(4), 464–481.

Sussman, N. M. (2010). *A short history of two hundred years of Hong Kong migration and identity*. In *Return Migration and Identity: A Global Phenomenon, A Hong Kong Case* (pp.11–36). Hong Kong University Press.

Suárez-Orozco, M. M., & Qin-Hilliard, D. B. (Eds.). (2004). *Globalization: Culture and Education in the New Millennium* (1st ed.). University of California Press.  
<http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1525/j.ctt1pnvk4>

Stolle, D., Hooghe, M., & Micheletti, M. (2005). *Politics in the supermarket: Political consumerism as a form of political participation*. *International Political Science Review*, 26(3), 245–269. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0192512105053784>

Tajfel, H. (1981) *Human Groups and Social Categories: Studies in Social Psychology*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

The Janissary Collective (2014) *Fandom as Survival in Media Life*. In L. Duits, K. Zwaan, S. Reijnders (eds.) *The Ashgate Research Companion to Fan Cultures* (pp. 77-90). Ashgate Publishing Limited.

Tong, C. T. M., & 唐子明. (2016). *The Hong Kong Week of 1967 and the Emergence of Hong Kong Identity Through Contradistinction / 1967 年的香港週與因抵禦心態而浮現的香港意識*. *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society Hong Kong Branch*, 56, 40–66.  
<http://www.jstor.org/stable/jroyaaisasocihkb.56.40>

Tönnies, F. (1955) *Community and Association* (trans C. Loomis). London: Routledge & Keegan Paul

Wang-Kaeding, H., & Kaeding, M. P. (2019). *Red capital in Hong Kong*. *Asian Education and Development Studies*, 8(2), 149–160. <https://doi.org/10.1108/AEDS-02-2018-0032>

Weber, M. (1978) *The city (non-legitimate domination)*. In G. Roth and C. Wittich (eds) *Economy and Society*, Vol.2 (pp. 1212-1372). Berkeley: University of California Press

Wellman, B. (1979) *The Community question: the intimate networks of East Yorkers*. *The American Journal of Sociology*, 84(5), 1201-1231

Wellman, B. (2002) *Little boxes, glocalization, and networked individualism*. In M. Tanabe, P. van den Besselaar and T. Ishida (eds) *Digital Cities II: Computational and Sociological Approaches* (pp. 10-25). Berlin: Springer

Wellman, B., Gulia, M. (1996) *Net surfers don't ride alone: virtual communities as communities*. In P. Kollock and M. Smith (eds) *Communities in Cyberspace* (pp. 167-194). Berkeley: University of California Press

Wirth, L. (1938) *Urbanism as a way of life*, *The American Journal of Sociology*, 44(1), 1-24

Yew, C. P., & Kwong, K. (2014). *Hong Kong Identity on the Rise*. *Asian Survey*, 54(6), 1088–1112. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1525/as.2014.54.6.1088>

## 8. Figures reference

[Dennis G D]. (2017, May 20). *Enabling community contributions for youtube subtitles* [Video]. YouTube. [https://youtu.be/cLqpwFN3HaE?si=LmhoK0m\\_hdp5f7Py](https://youtu.be/cLqpwFN3HaE?si=LmhoK0m_hdp5f7Py)

[GMMTV OFFICIAL]. (2020, April 10). *[Eng Sub] เพราะเราคู่กัน 2gether The Series | EP.8 [4/4]* [Video]. YouTube. <https://youtu.be/p8pefCGMKqg?si=RV220clt47cuxLwr>

Kongji Production (n.d.). 字幕製作方法及投稿. 登製港字翻譯組. Retrieved October 20, 2023, from <https://sites.google.com/view/kongjiproduction-subtitles>

連登港字組 (n.d.). *2gether the Series*. 2gether the Series 連登港字組. Retrieved October 20, 2023, from <https://sites.google.com/view/lihkg-2gethertheseries>

登製泰劇港字字幕組 (2021, September 13). 身為香港人, 關於2021泰國示威你需要知道嘅五件事. 獨立媒體. <https://www.inmediakh.net/node/%E5%9C%8B%E9%9A%9B/%E8%BA%AB%E7%82%BA%E9%A6%99%E6%B8%AF%E4%BA%BA%EF%BC%8C%E9%97%9C%E6%96%BC2021%E6%B3%B0%E5%9C%8B%E7%A4%BA%E5%A8%81%E4%BD%A0%E9%9C%80%E8%A6%81%E7%9F%A5%E9%81%93%E5%98%85%E4%BA%94%E4%BB%B6%E4%BA%8B>

[登製港字組]. (2020, May 15). *[連登港字組] ต้นกัญ - Ost. 2gether The Series* 片尾曲 | 香港粵語版 Hong Kong Cantonese Cover [Video]. YouTube. [https://youtu.be/Z13ZbCl0\\_LA?si=fmvFAlseuPhewn\\_9](https://youtu.be/Z13ZbCl0_LA?si=fmvFAlseuPhewn_9)

-quote digital activism: 壞處易被帶風向 好處 廣傳消息

喺香港protests完, 同

D fan

Ch17 a decade in the life of online fan communities

- 唔一定要好大, 因為其實由國安法以嚟, 好多細細個

reflections:

how are you trying to improve what you are doing

- Thinking about the work and learning how to do your work better
- How to influence others to do the same thing

Sustaining collective identity in a fan subtitle group

<https://support.google.com/youtube/thread/61967856/saying-goodbye-to-youtube%E2%80%99s-community-contributions-feature-after-september-28-2020?hl=en>

## Conclusion

or. What matters most, therefore, is the form- the process of juggling and transforming certain serious ideas into comical signifiers

s. Language has the power to seize and change human desire, and to unite a community with the bonds of its symbolic commerce.