

3. Appendix

3.1.1 Interview 01

20 Oct 2018

Canteen of National Archive, Kew's Garden, London

C, B: Interview subjects

Q: Interviewer

Q: When did you first join the project?

B: I did not join... It happened two years ago, I have been a member of *Liber Research Community*. Two years ago, in 2016, I just quitted my job and therefore travelled to London with M for leisure. Because *Liber Research Community* had been using archives from Government Records Service in Kwun Tong [in Hong Kong], and we knew there were files of Hong Kong in the UK, but we did not know much about the type of files and its values. Two years ago, when we came here, we just wanted to have a look. We used to concern issues about land use, because of MacLehose's visit to Beijing around the year 1978 regarding the end of the lease of New Territories in 1997, and that triggered the whole negotiation around the sovereignty of Hong Kong. To start from there, then we looked at documents related to the development of New Territories in 1970s. We realised these two things are closely related – land and the negotiation. Later it came to Basic Law and Sino-British Joint Liaison Group, what we regarded as formative years of Hong Kong now began in that era, but not many people are talking about that. Even we ask our parents, they don't know what they have experienced at that time, or they only knew we didn't have a say during the negotiation, but we can see what have happened in the archives. A lot of information regarding that history is under-researched, and what happened by then have a great impact on us now, on economy, government system, society development, and land use and housing, which are our research interest; all these can all be traced in the negotiation at that time. [...] As a policy researcher in Hong Kong, we always feel we do not have enough information to carry out research, we do not have enough documents from the past to research. For public, that is the lack of memory. Then we suddenly had the idea to scan all these files, it can be useful in many ways – we can carry out research, and help Hong Kong, as a place without Public Records Act and Freedom of Information Act, to fill in the lack in memory and information, at least with the information before 1997.

C: [...] I am a member of *Demosisto*. Decoding Hong Kong's History is initiated by *Liber Research Community* and *Demosisto*. [...] We have officially launched the project in Feb 2017, but we had started the conservation one or two months before that. [...]

B: I came here with M in around Sept and Oct 2016, we had been thinking and assessing the amount of material here. Even with the keyword "Hong Kong", there are around 40,000 to 50,000 files from Foreign & Commonwealth Office.

C: Now there are 50,000.

B: Yes, a huge amount of material is not yet discovered. Every month they would release some more documents. [...] Events that we have vague memories are slowly emerged. it's worth doing.

Q: Do you have any personal emotions while working with these files?

B: The feeling is very mixed. [...] In Hong Kong, every day we hear politicians and Chinese officers talking about their visions of Hong Kong, but when I compare to what reflected from

the archives – the society, the idea of UK government, and even what Chinese officers said, it is very much different. For instance, the reason for UK agreeing to handover Hong Kong to China, their understanding compares to Beijing’s understanding of taking back Hong Kong are very different. The reason for UK agreeing to handover is premised on preservation of Hong Kong’s economic and social system. [...] Once the premise is not fulfilled, the promise is broken. At least from what I saw in the archives, it had been a mainstream idea in the society. [...] Today we hear completely different story, and our memory is slowly being washed away. Here we see the power of archives. They are necessary to be read, as a reminder. I am not saying it is correct or not, after all it is the UK perspective, Chinese government has their own perspective too, but in Hong Kong now we only have one singular voice. [...]

C: Speaking of my feelings... it is a bit hard, because I was born in 1994, my first memories were in 1998 after the handover, therefore I don’t have personal memories of the times before handover. Though in 1998 one can still smell the aftertaste left from the UK rule, [...] that vague feeling becomes concrete when I read the archives, that is very interesting. I understand why it felt much better in the past, that makes me happy... but at the same time that makes me unhappy as many things have happened before. [...] That is a big contrast.

B: There was check and balance, the government would consider things in a more reasonable way. They would avoid [causing controversy in] media. They would avoid breaking the rules. [...] It seems today, I cannot read the documents nowadays, and do not know how would they twist that, but it seems many things have changed. [...] The way government does things have changed due to the change in the bigger political picture. It is a pity. When I read the files, it feels like reliving the history. I was born in 1988, of course I cannot remember anything from 1980s, but I can remember the mass migrant wave – we used to go to the airport a lot. In the early 1990s, relatives and my mother’s friends moved to Canada and UK, we often went to airport to say goodbye. A few days ago, I came across the files on the mass migrant wave, the UK government and Hong Kong colonial government were finding ways to slow down the trend of migrant, for instance to exempt the continuous period requirements, or to offer British Nationality Selection Scheme. One very interesting thing was them asking other European countries to offer passports to Hong Kong people so Hong Kong people would stay in Hong Kong until 1997, ensuring the stability of Hong Kong. [...] My childhood memories can be read from the archives, and I can understand what have happened by then in the archives. That complements my memory in the past.

[...]

Q: When I talked to other people I met in the Netherlands on this project, many were surprised that London housed the documents. Can you tell us what happened to the archives of Hong Kong?

B: It has to do with the fact that Hong Kong people have no opportunity to control their own fate, as a colony. And other colonies would go for independence, but the situation of Hong Kong is very unique. A lot of documents would also be missing – loss during transferring, or being burnt and destroy. The background of Hong Kong is not comparable to any cases in the world. Maybe Macau, but we do not know [how] Portugal [handled the archives]. I guess people have to understand the unique situation of Hong Kong, and therefore other countries have never had the same difficulties we face. With this project, we want to do our parts to tell the international world, like *Demosisto* also makes a lot of connections in the international world, so they can know better the situation in Hong Kong. Hong Kong people also should have the rights that were promised to them, the ways they live, and even the right to self-determination, as

some people mentioned. Shall we wrap up all these thing like what the Chinese government says? I don't agree, as a researcher. Political correctness aside, a lot of things can still be discussed from an academic perspective. That has nothing to do with challenging the power, it is purely a question. As a place that supposed to have freedoms of academic, speech and association, there should be [space to question], and I do not see why we should stop talking about it. Feeling unreconciled, I work for the project.

C: I want to provide some more information on the reason for looking for histories in other places. The Government Records Service in Hong Kong is very much unorganized. There are not many professional archivists there, but many of them are civil servants. If you ask them something, they might not be able to provide you with the correct documents, or they might not even know if those documents exist. [...] Also as B said, many documents are being transferred back to the metropole, then the local, Hong Kong, has lost them, since they [the archives] were being taken away, or they being turned into microfilm while the original copies were being destroy on site, therefore those files are only accessible in UK. Some sensitive documents, like those of Executive Council, are not possible to enquire from Hong Kong government, but there are copies of it in the National Archives in UK. It is much easier to access from here. It is a special case that, with a better archive management, it is easier to obtain these documents from the previous metropolitan state.

B: To me, it is lucky that the files are not left in Hong Kong, just like British Museum collects, or steals, things over the world, including those from Syria, and last year in Syria there was terrifying destruction of cultural heritage. Everything is gone. That is risk diversification to transfer [the archives] to UK. Though UK would not release the archives of Hong Kong for now, at least they would not destroy the documents like the way Hong Kong does [...]. Once the files are gone, they are gone forever. That is historical proof. Of course, UK should not take our archives away, but in the situation now they are doing something good. We would keep on fighting for ... since now even UK says they are releasing the archives, but they only release part of it, they hold some. For instance, UK keeps the post-war archives of highest level, which Hong Kong does not have, and they do not release them neither. We would go on fighting for that, and hope that they would release these archives according to the UK laws.

3.1.2 Interview 02

24 Oct 2018

A Student dorm, London

J: Interview subject

Q: Interviewer

Q: How long have you been here [in London]?

J: This is the 5th year, I came here in 2014. In September, my second week here, Umbrella Movement began. I was studying graphic and media design in University of the Arts London.

Q: What did you feel during Umbrella Movement?

J: During Umbrella Movement, I felt very helpless. I saw all my friends in the occupy zone on Facebook, everyone slept on the street and suffered from the tear gas, meanwhile I was here living a seemingly comfortable life. I felt I could do nothing and I wanted to go back to Hong Kong. I told my family, and they said, "Are you stupid?" It was impossible. And I felt I could not help anything here. Yes. Suddenly I felt very far away.

Q: Then what did you do?

J: At that time, I just start studying in university. All my classmates in high school went to different places like Taiwan and Australia. A few classmates, I cannot recall how many, maybe 5, started a Facebook page, titled Supporting Yellow Ribbon. Back then the term umbrella was not there yet. After that some Hong Kongers here contacted me and said, "There is a student from Hong Kong, will you be interested to do something together?" We met in a café, and said we would print some leaflets and so, we organized a few protests. We made umbrella origamis outside Hong Kong Economic and Trade Office in London, then we talked about universal suffrage, and so on. Then on 1st October, we had a protest with 4,000 participants. I went on a hunger strike with another man. Now when I recalled those memories, it was an expression that I was with Hong Kongers even being far away. I question as well, if it would be better if I used my talent as an art student to help. Of course, why not both?

Q: When did you start working with the archives?

J: 2017. February last year. At that time, the Hong Kong archive team came here to scan the archives, there were many of them, like 6 or 7. I met them here, and start helping them. Since this year I have been more involved. Apart from scanning archives, I have also helped them to manage volunteers, as well as social media, since I study design. I designed graphics for them, and I post on Facebook and Instagram.

Some analysis offers inspiring insights and makes one reflects. Gradually I feel I am doing something helpful. The essays reach to more people in Hong Kong, and people start to be familiar with archives. More journalists get to know what is archives, and reflect on the lack of archive law in Hong Kong. [...] The initiative has just begun by then, as someone joining from the start, or pioneers, sometimes I do not know what I am scanning, and not every archive would provide information I was looking for, and not every of them is interesting. After scanning more archives, gradually Hong Kong team release more analysis, then I realise things are useful.

Q: Have your views on history changed after being part of the initiative?

J: Now I have more feelings towards history, and understand better its importance. Before being part of the Decoding Hong Kong's History, I was easily dragged by the political situation or social issue at the moment, merely reacting on the situation. Now when I read the archives, the discussion was about the future of Hong Kong, in fact, it is the current moment of Hong Kong. I would think about how those discussions in the past influence the Hong Kong now? If we can decode anything from the archives?

Q: Do you have any thoughts or believed being demystified after that?

J: Hmm... I cannot say it was myth, but rather ignorance. I studied Chinese History for my DSE level examination, but I did not know much about contemporary history or Sino-British Joint Liaison Group. I had not tried to understand why Hong Kong would become like that after 1997. I did not think about it. I knew there was Sino-British Joint Liaison Group, I knew handover of Hong Kong in 1997. Now when I grow up, witnessing many political unrests, I did not try to understand what happened. Through archives I am not trying to dissect the problem in the past, but to genuinely know and understand myself.

Q: How old were you in 1997? Do you have any personal memory of that?

J: I was 1 in 1997. I was born in 1996, one year before the handover. I have BN(O). I have very blurry memory of the handover, but on the streets, I could see what the colonial past left.

Q: After reading archives, do you have alternative understanding to your memory or experience?

J: For instance, June 4 [the 1989 Tiananmen Square protests], if that did not take place, Hong Kong human right laws and the whole Sino-British Joint Liaison would have been different. At that time, Hong Kongers' fear generated from the incident, and their expectation of China changed the direction of the negotiation. Before I took it as something very distant, and only related to Chinese students, even I would think about it, still I thought it was unrelated to me. However when I read the archives, I realised that it was related to me, it was related to Hong Kong.

Q: Do you feel differently now in daily lives now? For instance, when you visit June 4 Tiananmen anniversary vigil?

J: Hmm... I have only experience one or two Tiananmen anniversary vigils¹ after being part of Decoding Hong Kong's History, and I was in UK. I would not reflect when I look at the candles, but I understand that differently now.

Q: How do you understand the distance of London and Hong Kong being part of the project, or social movement in London?

J: Being part of Decoding Hong Kong's History and social movement in UK, far away, that was closing the distance, because even I am not helping much, still I feel doing something, as a comfort. I do not know how much can I help in London, but still I am doing my best. I am not going to stay in UK forever, I will still go back to Hong Kong, maybe what I am doing is a way to wait for the time I return to Hong Kong.

¹ Ever since the Tiananmen Square crackdown on 4th June in 1989, Hong Kong people gathers at the Victoria Park for Tiananmen anniversary candlelight vigils to commemorating victims on the same day.

Q: Why would you still go back to Hong Kong? Many people would rather stay in UK.

J: Because of what I feel passionate about. I study art and design, I concern about art, art space and related policy of Hong Kong. I would want to do something in Hong Kong. Working for some other art spaces in London or elsewhere would not be the same. The essence is Hong Kong. That is why I want to do that, not the other way round. Another reason is many friends are based in Hong Kong, contributing to democracy movement. I want to work with them. I am not someone powerful, but I want to do my part with them.

Q: After working with many archives, do you ever read something special, or something that triggered your emotion?

J: I don't think archive is emotional. Archives accumulate. It is not one special essay that would make huge impact. I see how some people, some views, some thoughts and some events relate to now, like recently we released a post on the origin of Societies Ordinance. I realise things happened in the past would influence this moment.

Q: When is the first time you encountered social movement?

J: When I was studying in high school, a teacher brought us to the anti-capitalist movement Occupy Central² in HSBC, Hong Kong. I saw people doing different things in public space. I only watched and photographed. I didn't speak to anyone.

The second time was the protest against Moral and National Education³. Many Hong Kongers took part in it. This time I helped making banners. Later on, some friends invite me to join the Northeast New Territories development protests, to help in Kwu Tung North. That's why I have been going back and forth in Kwu Tung North for months, to build things and understand the reason to oppose the development plan.

After that it was the Umbrella [Movement], yes, and I was in London.

Q: Do you take scanning archives as a form of social movement?

J: It is a gear in democracy movement. If you ask if it is a conventional action? It isn't. But it would be one of the gears that facilitates democracy and helps people to reflect. Many people reflect because of that.

Q: What kind of people join the volunteers?

J: Most of them are students. There are also Hong Kongers living in UK. Going to the National Archives every week does not cost much, but it can help.

Q: What is your plan after this year?

² Occupy Central hereby refers to the occupation protest in 2011-12. Influenced by Occupy Wall Street, protestors occupied the space in the HSBC headquarter in Central, Hong Kong. Most of the time there were 10 to 20 campers in the space.

³ In 2011 to 2012, Education Bureau of Hong Kong proposed to revise the moral and civic education into moral and national education, with material biased towards PRC government and Communist Party. In mid-2012, several protests and occupation happened in Hong Kong against the curriculum.

J: This is the last year of my master degree. I would treasure my time studying and then go back to Hong Kong, but I have not figured out yet what to do after that. Shall I get a stable job and do something meaningful after work? Or if I shall work on something as full time? I don't know yet, since it depends on the social situation and myself, I am open to options, but I want to make a change to the society, no matter big or small change it is.

3.1.3 Interview 03

26 Oct 2018

A Outside National Archives, Kew's Garden, London

S: Interview subject

Q: Interviewer

S: [...] Apart from that woman, and you, other people are all younger than me. When I came here to study, I was alone. [...] I come here to study curation, every student has to curate a show, since I really like Hong Kong so I want to curate a show about Hong Kong. I want to curate a show showing issues of Hong Kong and what the people are fighting for, for instance democracy, but then I did not know what to include. At that time, I met my hall mate who is an activist, he always goes to gatherings related to Hong Kong. One day, when we walked to the laundry, he mentioned he would go to the briefing of the archive, and that was related to Hong Kong. I didn't pay attention, but given that I was free and that was about Hong Kong, so I went anyway. I didn't know anything about it. Before that I only put my focus on art and commercial things, even I read politics and I like Hong Kong, but I didn't know much about the politics. Then I went there with him and saw the presentation, then I realized it is quite useful since they talked about the ways to understand the archives, and how these archives reflect to the current news. [...] It was interesting. Since I read history in high school, going through these archives are like answering DBQ (document-based question). [...] And it is also a commitment, after the briefing people would go to help, I quite like it. I met some friends there, some Hong Kong friends, and we can go together. It would be a bit hard for me to travel [to the National Archives] alone, since it takes more than an hour to travel from where I study. The transport fare is expensive. [...] Last time was the first time I come here, there was a full-time staff [from *Decoding Hong Kong's History*] taught us how to scan and call the archives, it was great since I was quite confused. They also reminded us to bring documents for registration. It was nice.

Q: You said you talked to your classmate about that (scanning archives)?

S: Yes, we usually chat about what happened in weekend, I told them I visited the National Archives, usually classmates would visit museums and they asked me what was that, they did not know much about the archives. In my class, I told my classmates from Korea and mainland China, whom I am close to, that I scanned the documents in the National Archives and uploaded them to a database. They are surprised by that as they don't have that from their home countries. Hong Kong used to be a British colony, they would keep the Hong Kong's files in UK. Usually, a country keeps its own archives, some people might be interested, but most people would not go and read that. I think Hong Kongers are more eager in reading those files. Besides, that is better that UK brought the files here and we can easily access them as public. Now we cannot easily access [Hong Kong] government's documents. Under this historical background, we can easily access that. I am fascinated, but my classmates only said, "Very interesting." They have not much feelings towards that, as they don't have to do so.

I don't know, more people concerns with Hong Kong politics, that's why there is such thing [*Decoding Hong Kong's History*]. In order to change Hong Kong, apart from what we have done like Umbrella Movement that was failed and proven not working, we also have other ways, like reading these archives.

Q: What did you scan in the first time?

S: I have check... Last time I have only stayed for two hours and scanned one file. It was about... something very boring... government got a complaint and how they dealt with that... I cannot remember the content. I wanted to finish scanning that in a short time, so I didn't read into that. I would scan quickly and read the copy afterwards. [...] I want to scan quickly. Other core members would read into it and do other things, I am not going to do that so I prefer to get it done quickly.

Q: What did you feel afterwards then?

S: I was happy, since I worked as a part time in Home Affairs Department before, in 2011, I felt very familiar as the files [in the National Archives] were the same with those in the Home Affairs Department - the same hard paper, the same string. I still remember how to staple those paper... when I was in Home Affairs Department, I had to do filing. The oldest documents are put at the back, and on the cover, there is a hand-written content, numbered 1, 2, 3, 4 so on. And I read those language only government would use, if you want to work in the government, you can come here and read... Ha-ha...

[...]

S: Since you are doing this project, there are core members, and there are unprofessional ones. Even so among those who are unprofessional, because of diverse experience, people have different feelings towards scanning documents. For example, I have worked in Home Affairs Department, and someone who has never worked there would feel differently. Last time I was a bit bad. I wanted to make a neat scan, so I removed each paper from the document, but I shouldn't do that so I got warned. [...] Even so I know how to file it correctly, since there are markings. That was why I just remove them, since I knew that. They also like hand writing in the note even the texts are typed. It is quite nice to read. Some older documents are typed by typewriter. But I am not particularly interested in any topic, and I am not motivated to get any creative solution for Hong Kong. I just come here and help when I have time.

3.1.4 Interview 04

26 Oct 2018

A Student dorm, London

L: Interview subject

Q: Interviewer

Q: Why did you start participating in activism?

L: It was simply ... curiosity. I have to talk about my background. After graduation, I had worked in an emerging creative studio for 3 years, the working condition was terrible. I learned a lot, but I didn't want to leave my office every day at 2AM. [...] I wanted to seek for more possibilities, so I studied in Japan. Coming back from Japan, I thought to myself, I had got so much education ... as a kid, I often heard people saying, "you should contribute to the society when you finish study", "be a good civic citizen", but I had no concept. My parents apparently are not... they even need a long time to understand what is election. Then I realized I cannot compare myself to my parents, they flee to Hong Kong due to Cultural Revolution and so on. Then I asked myself what was I doing? At that time, I had a relative stable job in Design Center, then I thought to myself, "You have now more space and resources to participate in public affairs, then you shall think of how to do that."

In the beginning, I was curious to see what was Ma Po Po doing over there, because I thought it was a special case. It was very sad to be part of the Northeast New Territories development protests. Why people still stay in the village given that the plan is going ahead? Who are these people? And why do they think so? I went to the tour in Ma Po Po, and I found these people interesting. I would walk around. Then I thought, it wasn't very difficult. It was pretty much the same with my job as a producer – talking to people, planning things, making deadlines. It seemed I could also do that.

Meanwhile I came across Facebook posts of HKBU's Academy of Visual Arts, they had really nice visuals. As a alumni, I didn't know there was such a beautiful campus. The school had to move, and they even kept the student in dark. I felt I had to help. I decided to sit in their meeting to see what they were doing out of curiosity – it was my first time being part of public affairs. [...] Now I am still friends of many of them. If you take it in a hierarchical way, I got a lot of inspiration from these people younger than me. Happy activism works too. Many people see leftists as stupid, of course I understand there are always stupid people in all sorts of political spectrum, but what will you get from stigmatizing leftists? Why don't you work with them and see what are the possibilities? The case of Academy of Visual Arts has proven to me that, a systemic and tactical yet happy protest works, since no one can stop you. What it delivered also encourage people. Their intention was altruistic – "If we lost this campus, our fellow students would not have such nice environment, and it would be huge loss to the school and art education." They had a selfless intention and it was respectable. If you want to change the society and make it into a better place to live in. These people prove that they are good citizens, good, right? They are selfless and what they ask for is also reasonable. It is only because of Energizing Kowloon East, so the government wanted to build hotels, there were developers interested, so they wanted to kick the students out and build hotel and clubhouse. They have done nothing wrong. Even UNESCO awarded their revitalization of the heritage building. A group of pioneers did so well with art and education, and then the government wanted to kick them out. It pretty much explains the essence of the government. Use and dump people. Money minded. If you think that is not alright, as an alumni you should help them. I won't lose anything anyway. Even if it failed, I lost nothing, they would lose their campus. I joined their movement.

Fortunately, I made use of my network and administration knowledge, I worked with them and taught them the importance of discipline, why we should send registered mails even there are emails, how to give pressures, and how to talk to media. The success not only saved the campus, extend the rental for 10 years with a rent concession, HKD 10 each month, also motivated the local visual artists so they knew we had some very good art students. Staffs sometimes might not want to get involved, sometimes they might even blame students for stepping up, when it succeed, their attitude also changed. Well I don't know what is it for now. Local artists also realized art is powerful. Students led auction fundraised more than HKD 600,000. Hey... it was funny that the fundraise department spied on the auction. [...]

The good result from my first experience motivated me to do more, so I went deeper... Sigh!

[...]

L: [...] I realized being an independent producer, I could work aboard without being part of institution, that's quite nice. Then something happened to my family. My mother found out she got cancer. It... then I couldn't stay aboard. I had to stay in Hong Kong. It was something. Since it was already stage 3 when she found out. [...] So I would just take whatever full time job, Apply Daily hired me, so I joined them. Everything was arranged like that. I also remember when my mother was diagnosed, Hong Kong Federation of Students and Scholarism called for 922 class boycott campaign. It was on the same day. I remember as well, since I knew many architects from work, they told me about Maggie's Centre in Tuen Mun Hospital, it was a ward for late stage cancer patients. I remember when they called for class boycott, I took my mother to Tuen Mun Hospital after her CT Scan in Causeway Bay. My mother was giving up on her life. The society was giving up on its future. I felt under huge stress. The first date I worked in Apply Daily was 29th September [2014]. My life is full of strange moments. The timing for things... it is not planned ahead. Who knew there would be tear gas on 28th September? I worked on 29th September... I felt very mystical. You can't plan for that. It is how the world works.

Before Umbrella Movement, my friends and me were thinking if we could do anything. I like asking why, and if things are really happened in certain ways, and I am good at communication. I set up a group on telegram for people to check in, if someone lose contact for an hour, we would contact their families and do what we have to do. The group was also full of fact check, like there were rumors about hospitals, I used all my network ... I knew someone working in that hospital, so I called him/her and asked, "Someone said this and that, is that true?" S/he said rooster did not say so. Nothing happened. Then... I finished each fact check within 30 seconds to 5 minutes, it was very hard. I learned something from that too. Everyone has their limits. You have to know yours. After 90 days, I found out my limit was 3 months. More than that I would die – I would not be able to think and sleep. When you know your own limit, then you know how to adjust or go beyond that... Of course, we all know the result of Umbrella Movement wasn't a happy one, but there are growth and things to learn.

[...]

Q: How did you start to work with archives and *Liber Research Community*?

L: After working in political party for a while, 2 to 3 years, I realised only very few people genuinely want to contribute to the society. There are 70 members in legislative council, maybe only 4 of them, or 4.5 of them are like that. People who have the resources are not doing anything, does it mean people in public sphere are unable to do anything? I had... a lot of

disappointment... since my friends were in prison, we didn't know when would the appeal take place and the result of it. I also know the friends and partners of them in person. Everyone was very sad. I felt I was very useless. I knew something about campaigning and policy, but when I see someone sad, I can't do anything. I was very confused [...], I felt very disappointed. And I wanted to do something, which gives me freedom to contribute to the society.

At that time, Kim Ching posted on Facebook, hiring someone for campaign. The salary was only one third of my previous job, not even half. It doesn't matter. I don't have to pay [...]. These people are so motivated in one thing, I should help even I have to pay. I am not going to starve to death. If you are not doing the right thing at the right timing, but thinking back and forth, you would lose those chances. [...] Yes. I remember, on 1st of January, I have talked to Kim Ching for the whole evening. We assessed what we could do in the public sphere. He wanted me to help promoting their findings to general public, then I started going through and understand the organization, I found there were plenty of rooms for improvement. By then they had a lot of nice workshops [...], but those were still quite demanding. Can we combine something enjoyable, in-depth and easy to understand? I started to work out with them in these directions. They are very sensitive to politics and news, and very eager in researching. It is very precious. You know as well there are lots of think tanks, they have been there for a long time, but these people [*Liber Research Community*] are as sharp as eagle, they would ask, "This plan shouldn't be like this." "No, I found something else." While many think tanks do not have the sense and courage to criticize, these young people have that. Kim Ching is not young but... they are young in the spectrum, if you compare that to academics, think tanks. [...] After talking, we just decided to do it. Kim Ching was very free-style. [...] Therefore, I set up things for editing films, dealing with media, live broadcasting, which I want all researches to know since these are basic skills nowadays, just like using Microsoft word. It is as simple as that. I joined *Liber Research Community*. The atmosphere was great... I feel very thankful for the researchers at that time... they were... the saviour for my [confidence for] civil society. No matter how difficult it is, there are people devoted and selfless ... we can still do it. When politics are not ours, lives are, knowledge are, the pursuit of truth are ours. Have we done our part? That makes me prioritizing again ... no matter what people say... [...] Have we done our part?

People in the system are entrenched like parasites, they even haven't done their responsibility. I am fluid in different organizations. You can say I am an outsider, but that's the way for me to be aware. Upon joining the *Liber Research Community*, I see how they research – no matter that's land policy, tax policy, or housing policy ... for instance, when I was editing videos, a few researches would come and learn. They are very eager to learn. For example, [...] the way they use map is also fascinating, so why don't you let me include that in video? No one has seen that. [...] I think that is very interesting and juicy. [...] They would be surprised. I was happy to work with them, since we could learn from each other and make something new. Every research topic of them relates to our daily lives, for instance, why someone receive more right at birth under the small house policy, when I don't have that? [...] That doesn't make sense. [...] Those people who said that are highly regarded in the society, scholars and so. [...] Many facts are only revealed because there are people like *Liber Research Community*. Shouldn't we help them? They are doing things that are related to every single person in Hong Kong. If more Hong Kongers know these people receive profit from all ways, the anger would shut these people up. Shouldn't we help them? Maybe it is not help, since help sounds very arrogant, but to work with them. [...]

It is very important to be sane, even Hong Kong is only going to be worse.

I didn't often scan archives before, it was only because I received a scholarship and studied in London. I don't have to work for them full-time, I still have a lot of readings, then I commit

going to the National Archives twice or thrice each month. I went yesterday. It takes a whole day there every time. But then, it's only two days a month, still less than menstruation, right? You shouldn't look down on the contribution. *Do not fail to commit an act of kindness just because it is small in scale.* Doing that twice a month for a year, means doing that for 24 times. It's easy calculation. There is difference between 0 and 24. And I just do my best. Now I am in UK, if they want to talk – since many of them did not have a background in media and production – we talk if they encounter some difficulties. The relation is still here. It is not like, “Oh now I am not in Hong Kong, so bye.” And it is very happy. Last time when they were here in UK, we also spent a long time here until late.

While general public are very upset, these small bits... some people might say it is like staying around a fire⁴, but what's wrong with that? That doesn't harm anyone. Finding like-minded people and supporting each other, I think that is only the foundation of human as social animal. Billy Fung also said, “That's nothing wrong with staying around a fire, as long as the crowd is big enough.” When the crowd is big enough, then we can change the society, if we are being very ideal. It doesn't matter, as long as you are not harming anyone, you don't have bad intentions. I think anyone in a group should have their own positions and support, that is fundamental to any improvement and advancement.

Q: Many of your previous experience are reacting to current issue, but working with archives seems quite different as everything recorded have happened already, do you feel differently?

L: I have to ask you, what do you mean by “happened”? And what do you mean by “truth” and “existed”? In many of the documents released, there are many things we never knew before. For instance, Margaret Thatcher have circled and put a lot of question marks and exclamation marks in documents related to Sino-British Joint Declaration. Since we have never known that before, this is completely new knowledge. First of all, it is one thing we should have known 30 years ago, but instead we were being kept in dark. It still relates to our situation today, and every day. For instance, I was scanning documents on housing policy. That was the colonial government commissioning Hong Kong University. A professor from Hong Kong University and some students explained to people in a very humble manner, “Be humble when you approach the people, because it is closely related to Hong Kong's housing policy. We are not spying on them, but [the data including] amount of population, size of homes, and the number of working members in a family are very important.” They made a bilingual note. You can see from that, the attitude of academies towards social policy research and participation, their humbleness in operation, and their pursuit of precision and truth – Hong Kong's map is such, the developed area is such, the area that should be redeveloped and renewal are such, or new towns should be like that. You can see they were very serious about their research and social policy, and they cared for the people. Then when you look at the 38 economic scholars who signed the petition to throw a trillion HKD to the sea, and they don't even know agricultural land have levels from A to D. Then you see the difference. Political parties always claim Hong Kong is getting worse, but what does that exactly mean? These truth, found from archives, and comparing past with current, I found many new angles, interpretation and cause and effect. Why we have Hong Kong in such way now? I think all these are very pioneer. If you don't know about past, or what we have done right and wrong, how can you position or reshape our future? Decoding Hong Kong's History itself is all about future. We comb through the current moment from the past, and it is something we do for future. [...] Maybe you would think it is very different from being a campaigner, in fact they have the same essence, that is to respond what is happening right now,

⁴ In Hong Kong internet culture, that phrase also can mean people who prefer to stay in their own circle or people who have similar political ideas, and refuse to open up.

and what can we do. [...] I am very fascinated – wow, a westerner profession being this humble, in fact s/he had so much privilege, s/he could look down on people, but s/he didn't do so. Even this can be written as a fun fact.

Q: Have you ever come across something in archives that differ or overlap with your experience?

L: So far, I am scanning documents according to priority decided by the researcher, it is not something I chose by my interest, but it doesn't mean I am not interested when I scan these documents. Yesterday the documents I scanned were for research. It is also related to, in 1990, UK government, after 1989 Tiananmen Square protests, thought they would draft a ICCPR, that is similar to International Bill of Human Rights, and include Hong Kong as part of it. [...] That was a big portfolio. 200 to 300 pages. It includes the origin, the first draft, and all the appendix, when I flipped through it, because I have to make sure of every second so I scan rather quickly, but when I flipped through it, I felt these things may relate to my own research or thesis, it may not be something I want to go in depth, but it is interesting to know more. For instance, Hong Kong has signed the International Bill of Human Rights, but why there is still have political trial? According to the ordinance, how can we have more bullets in the US-China Trade War? "It is not only the Sino-British Joint Declaration, but they also violated this and that!" Because when you view that in the international level, both countries would not look into these details, it relies entirely on these people reading these archives.

[...]

Q: Do you have some personal feelings towards political figures?

L: I am not a sentimental person. Of course, I do have feelings. I don't think we should summarize that everything is getting worse from that, we shouldn't disapprove the possibilities of a generation, a profession or a situation because of a single person, and certain behaviour patterns. [...] What we should think of, with due respect, I like Margaret Ng very much, but does that mean she is perfect? She is the most ideal condition of a politician? Personal experience, execution, sensitivity, 200% we should learn from them, but working with communities, layman language, easy to be understood, and the importance to be grassroots – maybe no one work with her on that, that is something we should think about. For example, when Lydia Dunn moves to UK, she refused to join the parliament because she didn't want to pay tax. This is the typical money-mind attitude in the DNA of Hong Kongers. Even being clever as her, she still refused to be part of the house of lords because of tax. That's it. I am not saying noble people have no flaws, but no matter what we can reflect on if we are going to the right direction? Who are we? Where should we go? It is something I consider as critical thinking. [...] You choose an uncomfortable way of life, how long can you stay there entirely depend on you, and if you can be who you want to be. [...]

Q: Have you become someone you want to be?

L: I haven't become someone I don't want to be. [laugh] I know very well that I have many flaws [...]. If I can repress my own frustration, but that is a bit inhumane. [...]

Q: Have archives changed you?

L: I think it is about the interpretation of truth. The number of archives they [the National Archives] release is also a power. Why do they let you know something at a certain time or not? It has no difference from a political campaign. [...] The fear of people having too much

knowledge, they forgot that they should be the one serving people. It sounds quite high-end and noble, but that's really the point. I think it strengthens as well me as a journalist or researcher, or as a student now, I remind myself to question something until it gets closer to the truth. The truth doesn't mean to make you comfortable, but if you can't get most out of the truth, how can you ensure you can do the right thing in future?

[...]

Q: Do you feel the same when making decisions in personal matter?

L: Now I am more determined, before I would drag on with an undesired partner or relationship for a while, or hold on to resentment. Now I am clearer "Don't lie to yourself, if that person treats you in that situation, the relationship is problematic. If you can't do anything with it, then just let it go. Why do you spend so much time in that sort of stupid things if you don't really enjoy?" Unless if you were a masochist, but I am not. Why don't I meet friends for drink or food? That is happier. When making decisions on study and relationship, I am getting more straightforward.

Q: Isn't it a bit inhumane?

L: I think it is more humane. [...] I have been bringing chopsticks with me when going out. OK, if I want to stop the climate change, what would I do? Just bring the chopsticks with me, I can do it. I am not criticizing others, but I see many leftists, or even classmates, they sound like liberalist or environmentalist, but when they eat in the canteen, they choose plastic fork even there are aluminium ones. If you learn something new and want to make a change, but your behaviour is silly, why so? Maybe it is humane, but I don't think it is right. [...]

I am keeping my hair long, because I donate hair. [...] It is my third time keeping hair long, even I know I look better in short hair. [...] You may think it is really shallow, but if the person in need is your mother, sister or daughter, can you say so? [...] To a teenager, losing hair is something very sad. Getting a wig one owns more dignity.

[...]

While umbrella movement, my mother went through a surgery, [...] I was in a suffocating situation. After leaving Tseung Kwan O after work, I would immediately go to the city centre to visit my mother in hospital, then I would go to the occupied zones. After all these then I still would have to go home and start working on fact check. It is really crazy. I didn't get enough sleep with a lot of stress. There are two things happened when she was sick.

After the surgery, there were a period of time she couldn't wash herself, she couldn't stand it. The hospital was understaffed due to lack of budget, so the people working there were very irritated all the time. [...] I visited my mother and she felt very uncomfortable, she asked if I could wash her hair. Since we couldn't get any special chair for that, my mother just sat on a small plastic stool, and I washed and dry her hair. I remember, when we finished and she got back to the bed, she said, "I have never felt this comfortable in my life." That moment I cried. To an unhealthy person, being clean is so important. Shit. So I wanted to visit her more often... in fact I visited her every day, but I would ask if she wants her hair washed ... [...]

The other time my mother told me something that touched me. To her, I am active in public affairs and on the frontline, of course that's not how I feel, what do I do? I am only doing fact

checking... I don't think it is anything great, but I just do it since I am good at it. She never likes it, and she never appreciates that I work in the legislative council. "Such a tough job." She would say this when I got back home from work at 2AM or 3AM. "Can you quit the job?" The day she felt happiest was when I quitted that job, my mother was saying "Great, take a rest! You can get any job you like!"

That day I visited her after work. Since after surgery she had difficulty in digestion, she couldn't do anything. "I feel bored, let's take a walk." It is a short walk from the ward to the lift lobby, and back to the ward. I brought her yakult drink, so each of us had a yakult drink in hand, and we walked to the lift lobby and drank that yakult. I was very tired as no one knows when would the umbrella movement end, and everyone was very tensed at work as well. [...] In that stressful moment, my mother said, "What you are doing is right." I immediately broke into tears, my mother cried when she saw it. It looked really stupid, a mother and a daughter crying with yakult drinks in hand. I realised, when feeling stressed, having your family saying something like that is extremely important. That... you would suspect if what you are doing is meaningful and useful... every moment and every time... when you have friends being arrested, when you know someone being beaten up by police only because having a go pro, what did s/he do? We are just ordinary citizens... [...] A person who never approved you, said "You are doing something right."

[...]

3.1.5 Interview 05

Oct 2018

A community centre, south London

U: Interview subject

Q: Interviewer

U: I never cared about politics as a kid, I only first protested on 1st Jul in 2013. Then my first participation in politics is the Umbrella movement in 2014. In the beginning, I joined the students' strike and I was very inspired. After that, if you are asking about participation where I have a real role within, then it would be 3rd November [2014], the Battle of Lung Wo Road⁵. I was at frontline, got hit in the head [by police with baton] and arrested, then I got so-called a bit famous. Then Mr. Fung came and asked me if I want to be part of Student Union of Hong Kong University (HKU), that's how it began. I was part of the committee for a year, but I still helped the union after that.

After that I was part of election campaign, and I could have been legislative assistant, but the Legislative Council member got disqualified, that's it.

Q: How do you define your political view?

U: I wouldn't define myself with a group, because it is too overarching and meaningless, but if you are asking, so I would say I am rooted in being Hong Konger, the sense of local, and Hong Kong going dependence is a right direction. As time goes by, I think we should be more open and embracing different ways to protest.

Q: When has you started to have such feeling?

U: 2014, that's it.

Q: Is there a particular event?

U: The Civic Square protest⁶ on 26th. I wasn't there in the square, but that was the first time I realised there are a group of people named Hong Konger. That moment was very striking, since all people aimed for the same thing – to occupy the square and those police are all dickheads. It was striking. Since I wasn't active in politics but I got pepper sprayed twice on one day. If we are talking about hard core participation in politics, then that is the first time.

Q: When we were drinking coffee, you mentioned after being in the student union, people around you started thinking study is very important, can you talk more about that?

U: At that time when I was in the student union, I thought being a journalist may help, then when I became one I realised it is useless to be a journalist in Hong Kong, because in Hong Kong it is all about speed but not digging deep into the truth. When I was part of the student union, I thought I could make a change in the society, for instance, for the first time our student

⁵ During the umbrella movement, Scholarism and Hong Kong Federation of Students announced to escalate the protest by surrounding the Central Government Offices. Protesters clashed with the police in the Lung Wo Road and led to injuries of protesters.

⁶ Civic Square Protest refers to the civil disobedience action in Hong Kong on 26th September 2014. The action was to reclaim civic square, the hotspot for protest. The dozens of people occupying the site, mostly students, have been surrounded within the area by police overnight.

union hosted a memorial for the 1989 Tiananmen Square protests. Let's not talk about if the narrative is a correct one, but at least we were trying to make a new narrative. At that time, it seemed I had to keep up with such magnitude to do something more active, to me being journalist is a passive one. Then I felt I had to participate in politics, but then the freedom and capacity is tiny in Hong Kong, I felt meaningless again. You also see even a lot of young people got in, but they couldn't return, the disqualification bans them from doing anything in the government forever. Then I feel it isn't something I want.

Among our friends, we are capable to study and also have the money to do so, so we feel study is something we can do. I was only thinking to do a master degree, but then I became a research assistant and my boss was a well-known commentator in Hong Kong. [...] I realised these scholars have done a lot even we don't often realise. Some people want to go to the frontline, but there are also people contributing a lot with their professions. Then I feel knowledge can make real change in the society. After working for that person, I find study useful.

Q: Is that also the job where you start working with archives?

U: Yes. While the professor is a commentator, s/he was researching the issue of concubine in Ming and Qing dynasty. S/he asked me to go Hong Kong Public Record Building in Kwun Tong, to look for the progress of reforming marriage laws in 1971, how the government banned concubine and what were the jargons in traditional Chinese marriage. That was the first time I encountered a standard archive, and being inside touching the documents. However, archives are systematic arrangement of things for people's future use. From that I got some inspiration, since I lived in the Halls of Residence in University of Hong Kong. Some of these halls have histories of 100 or 80 years. The one I lived in has a 30-year history, therefore I feel the urge to do something. The one with 80 years history has been working on its archives for 4 years, that was the one where Stanley Ho⁷ used to live in. I see the impact it brought to the society and its own community. So I started my own archival project to organize the histories and things.

Q: What do you mean by organize the stuff?

U: My hall has a relatively short history of 30 years, but I think archive carries a few functions, the first is to arrange things in a nominal manner, to organize things. What I think is more symbolic, is to connect people throughout the 30 years. I think that is a psychological and symbol aspect. The reason I want to make an archive, is quite similar to *Decoding Hong Kong's History*, is that you have rediscover the history of this place through archives and so to understand this place, and to build an identity and sense of belonging. Of course, the scales are different. I think we have to build our society from these smaller communities, and connect these people as Hong Kongers.

Q: What exactly do you mean when you talk about psychological impact?

U: It connects me to people that seem far away, like what you said, there was a person proposing to move all people [in Hong Kong] to the North Ireland, that is the affinity and proximity. To me, I found out something what I have been taken for granted is actually created by someone at a certain point of time. When I talk to that person about that, you would see that person staring at that object with excitement. [...] That gives me a strong feeling. And in where we live, it seems our lives are so mundane and banal, something that is everydayness, but in fact that carries decades of histories of 30 years, 100 years, depends on how you view that.

⁷ Stanley Ho is an entrepreneur, best known from his casino business in Macau.

Q: Can you tell me something more concrete, that illustrates your discovery in the archives of Hong Kong, or your residence hall?

U: For instance, hmm... I remember there is a tutor living in my hall, she has been there for a long time. Because in the old kind of contract, one doesn't have to be a staff of the university to live here. She started living here in 1996, and met her husband here. They are both tutors living here and she gave birth to 4 children who also live here. One time I talked to her about what happened in the old days, like names and histories. There are two people sharing with same name but they do different things. As a person from 2018, I don't know anything, but when we talk about those things we get closer to each other.

There is something that might seem silly to others, in the Chinese University of Hong Kong they call it "dem beat", but we call it "dem cheers"⁸. I realised a song that I valued a lot, is composed by someone. As many people know, the orientation program in HKU is harsh like boot camp, when I was being forced to learn this in my first year, I questioned why I had to spend so much time on this, but later I realised it carries histories of 20 years, and even the move is a connection to all these people. I am very happy to become part of it.

Q: What is that song about?

U: That song is talking about... for example, when Americans sing their National Anthem, they would be reminded of American Civil War. Our song is about... telling others who we are. Of course we have always thought the song has always been there. It is a myth as if everyone knows it. In fact it has only been here for 20 years, then how does it become something that is always there?

Q: Is it something localist? Like creating an identity?

U: Yes, the identity is being created, and even when we are not aware of it, we are creating something. I agree with Judith Butler's notion of Gender Performativity, I don't think it is limited to gender, we all perform other forms of identities.

Q: Most people I have interviewed for so far, are tend to be more on the leftist, although I understand these labels are rather limiting, but as a rightist or localist, what do you think about the project, or the act of going into the archives?

U: I think ... The question is very tricky, what does it mean by leftist and rightist? We don't really have a border in Hong Kong, so what is leftist? We can't be leftists if the Chinese government keeps sending people to Hong Kong. My stance is rather leftist, I really buy many classical leftist ideas.

As a so-called localist, I think it is something essential. No matter if it is leftist or rightist, what it is trying to do is to reconstruct Hong Kong's subjectivity, the understanding to Hong Kong's history, it is something we have to do no matter we are leftist and rightist. I am not trying to blame anyone, but the general impression to rightist are poor, populist, extreme. I think there are always both sides of things, we always have to combine the mass public with the other side, no matter if we call these people intellectual or leaders. It is impossible to ask the mass to do that, since it requires a certain level of intellectual, even I sound very hierarchical here.

⁸ "Dem" is a short form for demonstration, "dem cheers" and "dem beat" both can involve movement and chanting. Usually it is done in groups to show encouragement and belongingness.

No argument can say it is unnecessary to do so, it only matters who is doing that, so this time it is the *Decoding Hong Kong's History*. A few years they had this idea and started doing it. I don't see it as particularly leftist or rightist, since it is something for everyone. I don't think we need to see it in that way, as being someone growing up from here, it makes sense.

Q: Why so? Why does it make sense for someone growing up in Hong Kong?

U: I know, it will take a long time to explain... I am not an individualist person, I don't really know how to be with myself. I can't do anything in the Western individualistic framework, like now I am living alone in my room, I can't really take that. I think it is weird. I am used to living with many people in the 4 years [in residence hall]. I don't really know much about self-identity, I am U, so I am U. When you talk about yourself, it is inevitable that you have to relate it to the society or a greater community. I don't think I can deny that. Everything we do is culturally embedded, we can't really separate ourselves from society. [...] In the end, everyone has to situate themselves in a community. For me, I situate myself in Hong Kong, and it makes sense. I can't explain why you are not like that.

Q: Why is Hong Kong different?

U: Maybe Hong Kong [people] are more money-minded, that makes the difference. [...] The young people must look down on the mainlanders, even they go there every month, they know China is problematic. There is only difference in scale. [...] You have to create many possibilities to let people see their subjectivity. I think it [*Decoding Hong Kong's History*] is one of the way to create such situation. Of course, there are also other possibilities - maybe rebellious protest is a possibility, and peaceful protest is another. You have to do many different things to let people choose. I don't think it is meaningless but latent, awaiting a spark. Everyone must have an identity, it is only they haven't felt that very vocally yet.

Q: If we compare protest and scanning documents in archives, both are some sorts of social involvement but also very different, how do you see that differences?

U: I think the issue is the participation [of the project] is low, we can't have a lot of people reading or scanning, even *Decoding Hong Kong's History* invites people to scan the document, still the participation level is rather low, in the end they would have someone else to analysis those documents, make arguments and see the histories in new light. To me protest can be quiet and dynamic, there is no contradiction, like Camel protests by writing books, it is as well necessary. For example, the people who write *Hong Kong Nationalism*⁹ may not be valiant, but the book brings a huge impact, to me that is a type of protest, so archive is as well a protest.

⁹ *Hong Kong Nationalism* (香港民族論) is a magazine published by the student union of University of Hong Kong, exploring the possibilities of Hong Kong nationalism and localism. Former chief executive of Hong Kong, CY Leung once openly criticized the magazine in his policy address.

3.1.6 Interview 06

Oct 2018

A kitchen in student residence hall, south London

S: Interview subject

Q: Interviewer

Q: What is your first experience in activism?

S: It is 2014, I was an editor in Ming Pao [a newspaper], since I write and read news every day, and after work I would go to Central, or read in the library. I felt I was more involved. When I worked I also wrote about the Movement, and I felt very happy to do so. Before that, I was almost leaving that company since it had been repetitive, but at that moment I felt my work was important and I didn't want to quit anymore. I felt being at the center of politics. That's it. [...]

I studied politics in university, but it doesn't count. [...]

Q: What about after the movement?

S: I felt very sad. I just mentioned I felt my work was meaningful because of the umbrella movement, but after that I felt my passion was missing so I left my job. I returned to the life of ordinary citizen, of course I do discuss with people and read news, but I have less passion towards the society and politics. I would protest when I was a new editor – before that I joined memorial of tiananmen square protest as some friends are going – but what impressed me most was the protest at MingPao when Kevin Lau being stabbed¹⁰. We were colleagues and he was there in my job interview. Everyone in our company protested and voiced out the repression of freedom of speech, and I realized the government and triad could have work together. I had a strong motivation to protest. Those were the days I was more involved in the politics, but when the wind changed in the society, then I became less involved and focus on my own career.

[...]

Q: Why do you involve in Decoding Hong Kong's History?

S: Oh... Since I live in this residence hall, I met a Hong Konger who very much involved in politics, he is U. He always participates in this kind of localist events, one day he told me he was going to this briefing of Decoding Hong Kong's History. I didn't have much to do, so I just tag along. I read curation, and was planning to curate a show about Hong Kong, so I went there to take a look, see if there was anything related to my exhibition. I was also curious on the organization, since I didn't pay much attention to that when I was in Hong Kong. I also wanted to meet some more new friends from Hong Kong.

Q: Being in London, why do you want to curate an exhibition about Hong Kong?

S: I feel very much belonged to Hong Kong, I like Hong Kong a lot, and it is my home. Since Umbrella Movement, I have been thinking we should do more for Hong Kong, if we are not doing anything and thinking Hong Kong is going to vanish... of course even if we do something Hong Kong may vanish. It also depends on the people I meet here, since I met U and we got close to each other. I also want to tell other people about our situation of Hong Kong. [...]
Every time when I travel I would ask people if they know what is happening in Hong Kong? It is

¹⁰ Kevin Lau, the former chief editor of Ming Pao, was being attacked and stabbed on 26 Feb 2014,

somehow like promoting Hong Kong, or telling others the political situation in Hong Kong. It is always better to have more people understanding how it is like in Hong Kong. [...] To other people, Hong Kong's politics is quite interesting, since it is the product of one country two systems. Then... other people are also interested, and I would tell more. My exhibition ... that's what I want to tell, the situation of Hong Kong.

Q: What do you like about Hong Kong?

S: Me... I like Hong Kong... hmm... In the beginning, I didn't feel much about Hong Kong, it is just a place I grew up in. Then I had a boyfriend from the States, he as a foreigner told me Hong Kong is a great place with nice food, people are actually very passionate. As an outsider, he appreciated Hong Kong a lot, then I also started to aware Hong Kong is a nice place. When I travel, I still want to go back to Hong Kong. Hong Kong has a lot of nice food, getting around is easy... the time I like Hong Kong most was during Umbrella Movement, we built a utopia there. When you visit the toilet [in the occupied zone], it was spotless clean, people were very considerate and helpful. For example, if you need to get over the fence to the other side, there are people giving their hand to help. I felt Hong Kong was a lovely place and the people could be this nice... I don't know. That made me feeling Hong Kong is a great place.

Q: But then you don't want to go back?

S: I work in the arts and Hong Kong is still very much commercial even in the arts. They see artworks more like products. The audience are foreigners and rich people. [...]

Q: What do you feel being in the archives for the first time?

S: I felt... two things... the first is about the place, we had to do a lot of things [to get inside] – bring address proof, register with the archive, and go through security ... but at the same time I think it is nice to be able to access the archives. You can easily access some rather confidential documents in the past, it feels brilliant. I feel happy to be part of the project.

When I was at the briefing, the researchers taught us how to call and scan the documents, so I got the idea to do it. When you get the documents then you can start reading and scanning. When I was studying in university, I had a part-time job at Home Affairs Office, and I would also do filing. Therefore, when I get the documents, it reminds me of the experience in Home Affairs Office. Filing... they would have documents, and they would use pencil to mark on the right top hand corner, 1, 2, 3... [...] If you want to read the earliest one, you have to read from the bottom, there is a directory on the top, and it is also hand-written. [...] When I get the documents, I remember the process of filing. People from *Liber Research Community* told me to scan documents from the bottom, maybe it is something new to others, but the government has been filing in this way and it is familiar to me. They also like ... the older documents are usually typed by typewriter.

When I was working in the Home Affairs Office, we were using computer. They also like to write comments on the documents. I find a lot of common characteristics. What the Hong Kong government is doing now, is similar to the system and format from colonial government. They also heavily rely on the physical copies. They don't have a system to store these files, but just putting them on shelves. You have to follow the number to trace the files. I can imagine if we want to read the archives of Hong Kong government, we would do the same: go to an archive and find the files... instead of going through computer, even we are used to use computer now, but they still use a rather traditional way, to read the hard copy.

Q: You mentioned you were being warned [in the National Archives]?

S: Yes, since I opened a folder... I have experience in filing. So I just naturally removed the treasury tag, and start scanning the documents, since it would be nicer and faster in this way. [...] I didn't know the archive forbids people from doing that, and no one told me. The staff only noticed that when I was putting them back together. I would follow the directory and number to put them together, I am very experienced in that so I am not worried to mess up the files... but maybe they are afraid of people messing up the order. In the end, there were people warning me. But I don't think it is a huge problem, since I can follow the number, and the logic is simple... ha-ha.

Q: Did you meet other people from Hong Kong in the National Archives?

S: [...] The second time when I go there, there wasn't anyone from the project, I saw two Hong Kongers, thinking they might doing the same thing that I do, I went and asked if they are from Hong Kong. They said yes, but they were only reading the colonial archives for interest. They were a couple in 40s, coming to the UK with their children who study here. When they have spare time, they would go to the archives and read the colonial archives, since they still care about Hong Kong even being away. We have briefly discussed the politics and policy address at that time. Even being in the UK, they still cared a lot about Hong Kong, they were also very helpful and gave me their contact.

3.2 Script of A Room of Oblivion

The dialogue in blanket is a voice in lower volume/far away.

The more I stare, the more I realise, I can't even tell how things happened.

Maybe it is because, she lost the memory card in one of those islands.

We have walked back and forth alongside the sea and looked for it,

Still, we lost almost everything from her perspective... or if I am just a forgetful person.

(And I cannot remember by heart.)

“Oh, that's video...”

This is one of those surviving videos left. I saw myself.

(She saw me.)

That looks like a stranger to me.

(I had such form.)

As much as how I am a stranger to her now.

(I had such feeling.)

I can't even remember any of these things and places.

(I had such perception.)

They lose their shapes.

(To me.)

(To her.)

(To you.)

“As a gay person, everything we do becomes a political act.”

What about forgetting?

What should one remember, after all?

That's all I have got.

(What is past - is left behind.)

Now it comes to an end.

(The future - is as yet unreached.)

When we walk out, probably we will forget

(Whatever quality is present,

You clearly see right there,

Right there.)

Everything happened in this room.

(Not taken in)

Right here.

(Unshaken)

Right now.

(That's how you develop the heart.)