



Navigating Belonging for Refugees and Asylum Seekers in Hong Kong

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Exploring Settlement for South Asians in Hong Kong through
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

SECTION 1 INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 Belonging in Hong Kong.....	1
1.2 <i>Navigating Belonging</i> Phase 1	2
1.3 Challenging belonging.....	2
1.4 Collaborative research	3
1.5 The warrant for critical ethnography.....	4
SECTION 2 BACKGROUND	6
2.1 Setting: The Centre for Refugees in Chungking Mansions	6
2.2 Introducing our participant co-researchers	7
SECTION 3 APPROACH AND METHODOLOGY	9
3.1 Relational methodologies: Decoloniality in/as praxis.....	9
3.2 Visual linguistic ethnography.....	10
3.3 The research process.....	11
3.4 Data summary	11
SECTION 4 RESEARCH ACTIVITIES	12
4.1 Photovoice workshops.....	12
4.2 Digital Stories	15
Digital Storytelling	15
DS Workshop 1	16
4.3 Interviews with Rosie and A.....	21
Rosie	21
A	23
SECTION 5 EMERGENT THEMES.....	26
5.1 Relational methodologies	26
5.2 A translanguaging space of belonging	32
Translanguaging.....	32
Translanguaging space.....	33
A translanguaging space of belonging.....	35
Belonging and the Storyboards.....	39
Summary.....	41
5.3 Narrative and identity	42
Migration narratives: the Rivers of Life activity	43
The personal and the political, the local and the global	44
Orientations to space and time: The chronotope.....	45
Summary.....	46

SECTION 6 RESEARCHER VIGNETTES	47
6.1 Christine	48
6.2 James.....	56
6.3 Ping.....	59
A L2 English learner	59
A person who hopes to know others and the world.....	59
A prospective researcher	61
6.4 Ahnaaf.....	63
6.5 Anish	66
SECTION 7 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION	68
REFERENCES	70
APPENDICES.....	74
Appendix 1 Participants’ DS Storyboards.....	74

SECTION 1 INTRODUCTION

Navigating Belonging: Exploring Settlement for South Asians in Hong Kong through Narratives and Participatory Photography (2022-2024) is supported by the Hong Kong Research Grants Council General Research Fund (GRF), grant number GRF 16600332. It is a collaboration between researchers at The Hong Kong University of Science & Technology and the non-profit organisation *be/longing*, a community arts-for-education lab that harnesses the transformative power of storytelling and the creative arts to co-create cultures of inclusion in Hong Kong.

This Working Paper was written by the project team, James Simpson (project PI), Ahnaaf Mohamed Lebbai, Jennifer Li Ge, Anish Mishra, Michelle Pang and Christine Vicera, with a contribution by Student RA Zhang Ping, who undertook much of the initial transcription work for this phase.

This introduction begins with an account of the theme of belonging that motivates the *Navigating Belonging* research, and includes a preliminary discussion of our collaborative and critical approach to the study. In Section 2 of the Working Paper we describe the setting for the research, and introduce our participants. Section 3 gives more detail about our methodology, and in Section 4 we offer detailed examples from the different parts of the research process, the photovoice workshops, the digital storytelling workshops and the individual interviews with participants. In Section 5 we discuss three themes from the first phase, with reference to data and preliminary analysis: relational methodologies and what they enable; the social production of a translanguaging space of belonging; and narratives of belonging. The paper ends with five analytical vignettes (Goodson & Tagg 2018) written by team members.

1.1 Belonging in Hong Kong

The *Navigating Belonging* project explores belonging, asking what it means to belong, for people from South Asian backgrounds in Hong Kong. Our interest is in the space where human mobility, linguistic and cultural identity, and creative practice all meet. Using linguistic and visual ethnography, the project addresses our question through the sociolinguistic study of narratives and through participatory photography.

The project focuses on belonging in relation to integration, central to much critical scrutiny in Hong Kong and a concern in debates about migration and citizenship worldwide. The often-overlooked ethnic diversity of Hong Kong highlights the longstanding settlement of migrants and the descendants of migrants from South Asian (Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Sri Lankan and Nepali) backgrounds. We note, too, the presence of more recent arrivals from South Asian countries who are in Hong Kong as refugees and asylum seekers, forced migrants in other words, people who had to leave their homes through fear of persecution. The participants in the first phase of our project are from this group.

Our project combines the study of language (narrative that is emergent in interaction) alongside arts practice (participatory photography) to examine how new arrivals, long-term residents, and those born in Hong Kong are engaged in processes of belonging. That is, how do they dynamically construct different, multiple belongings at a time when established notions of nationhood, and associated ideas of linguistic and cultural homogeneity, are being both reinforced and disputed.

1.2 Navigating Belonging Phase 1

This working paper reports on the first phase of the *Navigating Belonging* project. We worked with five participants, all women, clients of Christian Action's Centre for Refugees in Chungking Mansions, TST. Gordon Mathews, in his classic anthropological study of the building, describes Chungking Mansions as 'perhaps the most globalised building in the world' (2011, p.7). In the sociolinguistics of migration, it would be characterised as a 'superdiverse' space (Vertovec 2007), where the linguistic landscape, soundscape and sense-scape are created by transnational and translocal mobility and exchange of people, information, and products (see Section 2.1).

The phase comprised eight workshop sessions, covering two broad and overlapping activities. First, through a set of five PhotoVoice Workshops, participants carried out participatory photography under the guidance of project researcher Christine Vicera, an academic, photographer and film-maker. With support from the team, participants took photographs connected to their experiences of belonging. In the workshops they described these and related them to their developing understanding of belonging in structured and informal discussions and interviews. In the second set of workshops, the participants, supported this time by project researcher Michelle Pang, worked with the photographs generated during the creative process, bringing them together in individual digital stories to be displayed online on the project website.

In this working paper, and in subsequent and associated publications, presentations and events, questions we address include:

- How does belonging for our participants emerge in and through narrative and photography?
- How can researchers, participants, and our partner organization work together to develop innovative approaches to researching belonging?
- How do these new understandings of belonging challenge and contribute to policy, practice and public debate in social integration and inclusion?

1.3 Challenging belonging

Belonging is a sense of external connectedness, grounded – as Mahar and colleagues put it (2013) – to the context or referent group to whom one chooses, wants and feels permission to belong. Hence it connects strongly to a person's experience and expression of identity in relation to affinity with a place, a space or a community. In some ways, therefore, belonging can be understood as the social dimension of identity. And as with identity, belongings are plural: we have and develop multiple belongings in the everyday domains, in our families, with friendship groups, in schools or universities, at work, in online spaces and places.

Despite this complexity, for many people and for much of the time, belongings sit in the background, in the unexamined landscape of life. But things happen, realizations occur, states exist, which entail a disruption in the sense of who one is in relation to the world. This is certainly the case with our first group of participants – Uzee, K:K, Rosie, A and Laxmi – central to this working paper, women from forced migration backgrounds who never expected to find themselves in Hong Kong as asylum seekers. Our work therefore challenges stable and unquestioned understandings of belonging, a concept with particular resonance for people in Hong Kong who have experienced the upheaval of forced migration. It is relevant too that Hong Kong itself has undergone profound political and social upheaval in recent years. Our attention is drawn therefore not only to

belonging but to non-belonging, un-belonging, no-longer-belonging and not-yet-belonging, and to belonging as existing primarily in the memory. Challenges to belonging can come from any direction, be it (im)mobility and migration (forced or otherwise), rapid political change, family trauma, a global health emergency. Any of one's multiple belongings can become salient, sometimes rapidly and monumentally. At such times we recognise too that belonging is an emotional need: without belonging, loneliness prevails.

We also note that belonging is a two-way street, involving acceptance by, and legitimisation from, already existing group members. For our participants, belonging in Hong Kong in its legal, political sense depends fundamentally on this recognition. The participants though, as refugees awaiting a decision on their asylum claim, are also awaiting the certainty of social inclusion. Like many others in Hong Kong, they also know first-hand of the systemic discrimination and unequal access to public services experienced by many if not most Hong Kongers who are members of cultural and linguistic minority communities. Moreover, as asylum seekers they are subject to a prohibition on employment and even volunteering, thus not being allowed to belong in a workplace, with work colleagues. While our research enables a developing understanding of belonging, we continue to ask how it might support the amplification of our participants' voices in the spheres of policy, practice and public debate on social integration.

1.4 Collaborative research

As researchers, we have reminded ourselves throughout the design, planning, and execution of the project of our positionality as researchers. Tuhiwai Smith tells us that research is not objective, something that researchers can distance themselves from. All research, she says, has something at stake "that occurs in a set of political and social conditions" (2021, p.5). In the case of our research, which depends on collaboration with the individuals and groups we work alongside, it is important for us to ask ourselves, during the process, how we can understand and navigate the ways in which power and control are negotiated.

To address this question, we reflected, identified, and named the privileges offered to us, and the different positionalities that enable us access to those privileges. We did this first at a 2-day team training course prior to the research workshops. First Christine and then Michelle guided the research team through some of the activities our participants would eventually be asked to do. Our own team thus acted as participants in piloting the research process that we would later facilitate.

Experiencing the activities in our training enabled us to gauge how receptive our participants would be to the activities we had planned, as well as to think through any potential pitfalls in the design and adjust accordingly. We also reflected more deeply on our positionality, privilege, and our roles as researchers conducting a community project through engaging in a Privilege Walk, developed from Peggy McIntosh's 1989 essay *White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack*. At the end of the exercise, we (the researchers) took note of the unequal degrees of privilege that we each possess. We were then debriefed in a guided discussion, concluding that the point of the exercise was not self-abnegation; rather, it enabled an understanding that unless we recognize our commonalities, we will only be distracted from effectively addressing the asymmetry of power inherent in the dynamics between all participants in the project.

1.5 The warrant for critical ethnography

Our work is ethnographic in orientation, and – in alignment with the tradition of ethnographic research – we position our participants as co-researchers. The asymmetry of power noted above was, however, prominent when, during the first workshop, participant Rosie asked what she would be gaining by taking part in this project and how it would shed light on the conditions of refugees and asylum seekers in Hong Kong. This led to a discussion about voice and audibility. The audibility of team members on a project funded by a government, based in an institution, and headed up by a professor, is high, particularly in relation to that of participants, who – *prima facie* – do not have a legitimate voice in Hong Kong society. Is it the researcher's role and responsibility, then, to render the participants more audible? Do they hope for participants' voices to be heard, through their involvement in the research? Are researchers and participants cautious about this, given the precarity in which the participants live? These questions warrant an ethnography that is critical in its orientation.

If we hope to amplify voices, how also can we do so in a way that is not patronizing? We call to mind the question that Spivak (1988) raises in her seminal piece 'Can the Subaltern Speak?' Who is allowed to speak, and for whom? In granting our participants collective speech, is our project in some way complicit in the paternalistic logic Spivak speaks of? Will the means through which they speak always be filtered through the lens of the researcher? How do we evade the tendency to assume the 'subaltern collectivity' that Spivak warns of, and ensure that a nuanced understanding of their experiences of belonging emerge in the discussions that take place in the workshop setting?

A relevant example comes from a discussion with the participants on the fine line between marketability and authenticity, taking place during the workshops devoted to digital storytelling. Storytelling and narrative are central to the *Navigating Belonging* project. In storying her experiences of belonging, one participant raises the following question: how do we remain authentic in the telling of our stories while retaining the interest of those who listen? The activities in this specific phase aimed to enable a space wherein participants become more aware of their role as authors of their own stories. The design and praxis here, and in other phases of the project are inspired by thinkers such as the social critic bell hooks, and also Brené Brown, known for her work on shame and vulnerability. Brown explains the importance of exercising the art of listening to others' stories as well as that of being vulnerable enough to be listened to. In *The Practice of Story Stewardship* (2021) she writes:

Story stewardship means honoring the sacred nature of story – the ones we share and the ones we hear – and knowing that we've been entrusted with something valuable or that we have something valuable that we should treat with respect and care. We are good stewards of the stories we tell by trusting them to people who have earned the right to hear them and telling them only when we are ready. We are good stewards of the stories we hear by listening, being curious, affirming, and believing people when they tell us how they experienced something.

As Brown points out, being a steward of the stories we tell and hear requires proactivity and reciprocity. It asks for an active exchange between the person sharing the story and empathy from the person receiving the story. In this project, we – the research team – must grapple with the tension between the distance that the principled subjectivity of qualitative research demands, and reciprocity, a key principle of our workshops. To

reflect on the workshop series, being stewards of the stories our participants told us not only enabled the co-creation and co-maintenance of a safe space throughout. In many ways it encouraged our participants to claim the agency to negotiate what parts of their stories they want to share, and in what way.

SECTION 2 BACKGROUND

Here we describe the setting for Phase 1 of the *Navigating Belonging* project: Christian Action's Centre for Refugees, in the Chungking Mansions building, Kowloon. We then offer brief pen portraits of the five participants in this phase of the project.

2.1 Setting: The Centre for Refugees in Chungking Mansions

The international NGO Christian Action has a strong presence in Hong Kong, and among its activities is to staff and run the Centre for Refugees (CFR). This became the locus of the first phase of the *Navigating Belonging* project. The offices, workspaces, meeting rooms and kitchen of the CFR are spread over the 16th and 17th floors of Block E of Chungking Mansions. This famous – perhaps infamous – building is on Nathan Road, in the heart of Tsim Sha Tsui, Kowloon, a bustling space for tourists, shoppers, and foodies. Built in five tower blocks and on 17 floors, the building is a linguistically and culturally diverse space. English is prominent as a lingua Franca, as people from globally-spread backgrounds interact with one another for their business. The ground and 1st floors have shops selling groceries, electronics, phones, and restaurants serving South and South East Asian, Middle Eastern, and African food. There are barber shops catering to South Asian and African styles, as well as shops selling luggage and a whole assortment of things. The 2nd and 3rd floors of the building are now part of the Chungking Express Mall, named after Wong Kar Wai's 1994 movie *Chungking Express*. The mall contrasts with the lower floors of the Mansions, having regular chain stores familiar across Hong Kong. The basement has recently been revamped to play host to a range of contemporary restaurants and shops, more along the lines of the mall than the main building. From the 4th floor and up there is a constellation of privately owned (and often privately let) units. Here one will find numerous guest houses, a popular choice for backpackers and budget travellers, and lucrative because of the prime location of Chungking Mansions. The guest houses offer dormitories as well as private rooms with their own washrooms. There are also many so-called 'clubs' – joints operating with an official club license that allows them to serve food. Finally there are NGOs with offices in Chungking Mansions, one of which is the Centre for Refugees.

The CFR is a charged space, carrying the hopes and aspirations of many of those who come to Hong Kong fleeing life-altering and life-threatening circumstances, only to find themselves in limbo, as they wait to move on. In this waiting, the CFR plays a crucial role, tangibly and intangibly. The centre has three full-time case workers, and handles the asylum and refugee claims of 300 families. This includes providing procedural counsel, connecting clients to pro-bono lawyers as required, facilitating conversations through translation and interpreting service, hosting language classes, cooking classes, computer classes, holiday activity schemes for clients' children, African drumming classes, make-up workshops ...

The 16th floor office of the CFR works as a reception, a storehouse for donated products, an activity and recreational centre, and a distribution centre. Clients wait there before going up to meet their caseworkers. Another room that can accommodate 30 or so people functions as a space for workshops, speaker sessions and also for storage when needed.

The CFR refers to itself as a 'Home away from Home'. It also conducts numerous outreach activities, to combat stereotypes about asylum seekers and refugees in Hong Kong, as well as other prejudices about the space of Chungking Mansions itself and the deep-seated biases against those from minority ethnic backgrounds. CFR staff conduct

awareness-raising tours of Chungking Mansions, taking groups to the shops, restaurants and guest houses of the building, as well as introducing them to the Centre for Refugees. A further activity run by the CFR is the refugee walk, where members of the public are guided through a simulation of a week of living as an asylum seeker, and what it might involve: visiting a place of worship, checking in with the police station, and sometimes a visit to a client's house to show what living conditions might be like. This activity is carried out with dignity, coupled with an understanding of the necessity of awareness-raising, in a society where discrimination and marginalisation are the normal experience for minoritised people.

In the first phase of the *Navigating Belonging* project, we teamed up with the CFR, recruiting five of its clients of CFR who identified as 'South Asian'. In offering these clients the opportunity to be involved in the research, we addressed their motivation to discuss questions of what it means to belong to Hong Kong, keeping in mind the socio-political challenges to belonging that they face in the process of claiming refugee status. From our earlier work and from our interactions with Centre manager Jeffrey Andrews, we understood that they would also be keen to take the chance to tell their own stories in a way that suited them.

2.2 Introducing our participant co-researchers

For our first phase we recruited, through the help of Lorna at the Centre for Refugees, five participants: Laxmi, Rosie, Uzee, A, and K:K. Throughout we use the pseudonyms they chose for themselves.

Laxmi is originally from Punjab in Northern India. We find out in one of the workshops that she studied Business Management and Education for her undergraduate degree. She doesn't mention whether she has children, but she is here in Hong Kong with her husband. She practices Sikhism and mentions that her and her husband frequently attend prayers at the Gurdwara in Happy Valley. We discover at one of the final workshops that a team member met Laxmi's husband, back in 2016, which means they've been in Hong Kong for quite some time now.

Rosie is originally from Sri Lanka and Tamil is her first language. She used to run a restaurant business before she left for Hong Kong fleeing political persecution. Her family, including her three sons and their wives, are here with her in Hong Kong. All three sons have been brought up in Hong Kong and have gone through the local education system. She mentions that her eldest son, now 32, was an active athlete throughout high school. Her second son is 28, and her youngest 24. Two of the three sons are married to women who are local to Hong Kong, who she speaks of quite fondly. Rosie's appeal for refugee status was successful and she is currently waiting to receive the final documents that will allow her case to be closed. Once she receives a work permit from the Immigration Department, she hopes to open a restaurant business here in Hong Kong selling Kanji.

Uzee is from Pakistan and, with her family, follows the religious tradition of Ahmadiyya. Prior to moving to Hong Kong, she was educated in Nigeria where her father was carrying out missionary work. She now lives in Hong Kong with her husband and her two sons who are attending an international school here. She is a writer and is in the process of publishing her first poetry collection which covers themes of motherhood, feminism, and women's empowerment. She is a staunch feminist and never shies away from sharing experiences pertaining how her identities as a Pakistani Muslim woman formed her critical consciousness. Uzee has had extensive experience speaking in public

events through the Centre for Refugees and was invited as a guest speaker, with Jeffrey Andrews, on an HKUST undergraduate course in the fall of 2022.

A is also from Pakistan, and we find out early on that A and Uzee know each other because they are part of the same Ahmadiyya Muslim community. Unlike Uzee, A is here in Hong Kong alone. She has been in Hong Kong for seven years, arriving soon after Uzee. Her mother is in Germany and other family members are in Pakistan. A was also in Nigeria and was connected to Uzee through a relative. After hearing of the sizeable Ahmadiyya Muslim community in Hong Kong, she chose this as a place of refuge. When the research began, she was waiting to hear back from Veda, a vegetarian restaurant in Central that specialises in South Asian food, where she hoped to be employed as a chef. Her dream is to one day become an event planner, a job which would remind her of festivities she celebrated back home. Like Uzee, A writes poetry in Urdu. She says it's a *good way to express your feelings, your thoughts, your anger or something that you're holding*.

K:K, who is of Punjabi descent, joined us in the second workshop. Punjabi is her native language, and the language she uses to communicate with us, through the help of Laxmi and Uzee who interpret throughout the workshops. Her reasons for fleeing Punjab are not completely clear to us: she describes in the second Photovoice workshop how she once worked as a policewoman in India and how she was once a member of the national Kabaddi team. Nonetheless, she is vocal in expressing the frustration that comes with navigating the process of applying for refugee status. The very first thing she talks to us about is how telling the same story many times over is exhausting. She is a convert from Sikhism to Pentecostalism, an evangelical branch of Christianity, and she considers herself a religious person. This is evident in the storyboard she created during the Digital Storytelling workshops, which outlines her journey to conversion, among other themes such as family, food, and community.

SECTION 3 APPROACH AND METHODOLOGY

We begin our section on approach and methodology with a section about our stance on (de)coloniality in research. We continue with an outline of our research approach, visual linguistic ethnography, and an account of the research process. Finally we present in summary form a list of the data generated in Phase 1 of the *Navigating Belonging* project.

3.1 Relational methodologies: Decoloniality in/as praxis

In revealing how our thinking informs our "doing" (and vice versa), we call for researchers to be wary of how processes of decolonization require us to engage with imperialism and colonialism at multiple levels (Smith 2021, p.20). There is an associated need to recognise that research contexts are populated by colonizers and colonized. At the scale of our own work, we strive to understand the underlying assumptions, motivations, and values which inform the ethics of our research practices. In the context of *Navigating Belonging*, this entails continually revisiting the question of consent, considering consent to be dynamic and contextually grounded. Our participants' lives are precarious, and we prioritised their safety and privacy in the workshop design and its facilitation, especially since our project is dependent on participants' stories. At each stage of production in the research, we reminded participants that it is they who should decide which parts of their stories, by what means, and with whom, they would like to share them. An active and legitimate decision is to decide not share a story at all.

We prioritise prolonged engagement with the communities we work alongside. Choosing the Centre for Refugees as a collaborative partner was not a spontaneous or ad hoc decision. Rather, in the months and years prior to the project, members of the team had already volunteered with the Centre and participated in its activities. Anish and Christine volunteered as photographers for public-facing events run by the CFR such as World Refugee Day. Linda Tuhiwai Smith reminds us that prolonged engagement such as this is necessary as it is impossible to know all that is possible of a particular community on the basis of briefer encounters that might be limited to the research setting (2021, p.1). In the same vein, engagement should not end after the official project dates have passed. One of our participants described a common pitfall experienced by organizations offering one-off engagements: these organizations fail to communicate the expected outcomes of their project work, and/or fail to follow through with the commitments that they had made. To address this concern, team member Anish has worked from the CFR for one day per week since the end of the project's funded period, as an embedded volunteer / research assistant. Prolonged engagement gives us and our participants the opportunity to build mutual trust rooted in relationality, forging relationships that go beyond a project's end date.

In the process of analysing the data we collect and generate in the workshops, it is also crucial to recognize the fine line between our desire to see the world through the eyes of our participants, and our position as observers analysing their worlds. To forget this runs the risk of submitting to the colonial impulse of research, whereby research reflects the interest of researchers rather than the communities where the research is carried out (Wang and Burris, 1997, p. 371). Understanding how both researchers and participants can mutually benefit from taking part in the project requires first acknowledging that as researchers, we have our own interests too. These interests need to be disclosed early in the process, and be rendered open to suggestions and

considerations from those who we work alongside. Research outcomes can be shaped, to some extent, by the needs of the communities that research engages with.

There is no blueprint for decoloniality. The point we make here is that constant, critical, and collective reflection and discussion is necessary at all stages of a project, to navigate the colonial roots of research, at whatever scale. This deliberation needs to be done in combination with action – praxis indeed – whereby participants who are equipped with the tools with which they can challenge the conditions of their own marginalisation and might develop an amplified voice.

3.2 Visual linguistic ethnography

Visual linguistic ethnography (Copland & Creese 2015, Pink 2013) informs our inquiry. Ethnographers study situated social and cultural practices from an insider perspective, and the relationships between these practices and broader contexts. In our case, ethnography has allowed us to examine the process of creative production from start to finish, within the context of ethnographic workshops.

Linguistic ethnography stems from the US-based tradition of linguistic anthropology, and from seminal work in the ethnography of communication (e.g., Hymes 1974, Gumperz 1982, Gumperz & Hymes 1986). It offers the possibility of micro-analyses of language use (Copland & Creese 2015) in the critical examination of interaction in the social and cultural world. Linguistic ethnography combines ‘the commitment within ethnography to particularity and participation, holistic accounts of social practice and openness to reinterpretations over time’ with ‘a more formalist framework from linguistics, with its powerfully precise procedures and terminology for describing patterns within communication’ (Rampton et al., 2004). As Karin Tusting puts it:

This combination is seen, on the one hand, as having the capacity to ‘tie ethnography down’ through pushing for more precise, falsifiable analyses of local language processes, while it can also ‘open linguistics up’ through stressing the importance of reflexive sensitivity in the production of linguistic claims, foregrounding issues of context and highlighting the primacy of direct field experience in establishing interpretative validity.

(Tusting 2023, p.293-4)

The practice in our case is visual, and our ethnographic approach involved the generation of photographic and video data as well as audio-recordings of interaction, and the participant observation, field notes and open-ended interviews that are defining features of ethnographic research.

Embedded within the project are elements of co-production. The team worked closely with the project partner, Christian Action’s Centre for Refugees, to identify and recruit our participants, and to secure the meeting room and establish the schedule for the workshops. The project thus became a space for exploring the opportunities and limitations of co-production. Co-production, as Bell & Pahl (2018) maintain, has an important role to play in rethinking and remaking the world for the better. Citing Facer & Enright (2016) they suggest that the turn to co-production ‘offers possibilities to academics and communities interested in working together to further the aims of social justice’ (2018, p.105). Although not co-produced at absolutely every stage, the principles of co-production are relevant to our project, as the outcomes are inextricable from the collaborative processes and the relationships we established. We explore this further in the section on relational methodologies.

3.3 The research process

The workshops took place at the Centre for Refugees, housed in Chungking Mansions in Kowloon (see 2.1). We held eight workshops in meeting room of the CFR offices. The first five, held weekly between 19 January and 23 February 2023, had a focus on participatory photography (Photovoice). The final three, on 16, 23 and 30 March 2023, were on the development of the participants' digital stories. This process was documented principally by project researchers using audio-recording, field-notes and photography. Towards the end of the early workshops, we carried out repeat semi-structured interviews with two participants, A and Rosie, in a side office. After each session the team held a debriefing, usually in Didi's café (Karaikuddi Akka) on the ground floor of Chungking Mansions. We describe these processes in more detail in Section 4 below. Pink & Morgan (2013) describe how ethnographic research takes on characteristics of the people and places under investigation, following the rhythm of what is being observed. Hence the timing of our workshops was dependent on the participants' availability, and the topics and content of both the photographs and the talk around them was driven by our participants' interests and concerns. While some activities of the workshops were pre-planned, others were negotiated collaboratively.

3.4 Data summary

We made 14 audio recordings of the workshops, ranging from 2 minutes to 2 hours 42 minutes in length, 13 of which were transcribed, yielding 1129 minutes (18 hours and 49 minutes) of transcribed workshop interaction. Initial transcription was done verbatim. This allows researchers to identify broad themes and extracts for further analysis, which can then be transcribed in more detail, according to purpose. Five semi-structured interviews with participants were recorded, ranging in length from 11 to 28 minutes, giving a total of 97 minutes (1 hour 37 minutes) of transcribed interview data. Seven debrief sessions were audio recorded (8 recordings), a total of 389 minutes (6 hours 29 minutes) of recorded data. During the workshops, participants themselves uploaded a total of 141 photos. The team took 132 photos of workshop activity, 64 photos of the storyboards developed by the participants, and 188 short videos. Finally, 17 sets of fieldnotes taken by the project team were uploaded into the database.

Data	amount	time
Group discussions	14 recordings (13 transcribed)	1129 minutes (18h 49m)
Interviews	5	97 minutes (1h 37m)
Debriefings	8 recordings from 7 sessions	389 minutes (6 h 29 m)
Participant photos	141	
Researcher photos	196	
Researcher videos	188	
Fieldnotes	17 sets	

SECTION 4 RESEARCH ACTIVITIES

4.1 Photovoice workshops

The first five workshops, facilitated by team member Christine, employed the photovoice method in the process of storytelling. Photovoice was developed by Caroline Wang and Mary Ann Burris (1997) originally to examine environmental health risks, explore community resilience, and understand the experience of marginalized populations. Wang and Burris cite Paulo Freire in their argument that one means of "enabling people to think critically about their community, and to begin discussing the everyday social and political forces that influence their lives [is] the visual image" (1997, p. 370).

Using photovoice, our participants shared their diverse experiences of belonging through structured activities which were centred on dialogue and storytelling. At the outset we explained to the participants the importance of creating and maintaining a safe space. We began the very first workshop with an activity that was centred on questions like 'what kind of space do you want to create throughout the next eight workshops?' and 'what values would you yourself and others in this group to commit to that would keep this a safe space moving forward?' We distributed sticky notes on which the participants and members of the research team could write down their answers. Some of our responses were, 'to be patient,' being 'honest,' 'care and love,' 'try to be in their shoes,' 'value privacy.' One participant expressed how if something is shared in confidence, that people should be 'careful' with this information. Each of us then took turns sticking these up on a wall where everyone could see, forming a community contract.



Figure 1: Christine in the first Photovoice workshop, January 2023

The first activity involved discussing, as a group, these questions:

- How do you understand your belonging in Hong Kong?
- What challenges are there to your belonging?

- What role does language play in your belonging?
- How is belonging different across generations?

This initial discussion primed our participants to think about and speak of belonging, and to create – in this case, take photographs – guided by their lived experiences of belonging. After the discussion, Christine facilitated a segment that summarised the basics elements of photography: lighting, composition, and framing. Participants then had to put into practice the knowledge they had learned about how different elements of photography allow them to change the mood and message in their photographs. Their task was to take five photos of an object they had been asked to bring in, something that might tell us about their sense of identity and culture, or their experience of belonging. To our surprise, the participants brought more than one object each. These included old family portraits, a government document that had allowed one of the participants' sons to attend school in Hong Kong, jewellery, paintings, paintbrushes, and paint in tubes. We ended the workshop by sharing the photos we took in a story circle, a method developed by John O'Neal (Davis, 2019), using Wang and Burris' SHOWD technique:

- What do we **see** here?
- What is really **happening** here?
- How does this relate to **our** lives?
- **Why** does this situation exist?
- What can we **do** about it?

The second workshop was centred on the importance of our stories and how in telling them, they have the power to act as counter-narratives to any discourse that marginalises us. To illustrate this, we started the session by watching the first five minutes of Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's TED Talk, *The Danger of a Single Story*. We then explored different ways in which people told stories of their own or of others by doing a close reading of three texts: Marjanne Satrapi's *Persepolis*, Khaled Hosseini's *Sea Prayer*, and finally a series of photographs from Open Society Foundation's project *Another Way Home*. The texts were selected for their relevance to the experiences and lives our participants. They were then guided into an introspective activity called Rivers of Life (which the research team had done as part of the pre-workshop team training). Originally developed by Joyce Mercer, Professor of Theology at Yale Divinity School, the activity prompts participants with questions designed to enable them to visualize their life as a river. Prompts included the following:

- If your life were a river, what shape would it take?
- Where are the bends and turns, when your situation or perspective changed? Was the transition smooth or sudden?
- Chart your river of life with its bends and turns, smooth waters and rough spots, strength and vitality.
- Think about the various people who have accompanied you along this river's journey. Record these key relationships and losses in the appropriate places on your river of life.
- Using words and/ or symbols, place life events in the appropriate locations on your diagram.
- What values, commitments, causes, or principles were most important to you at a given point in your life?

While recognising that the activity imposes a chronological perspective on a life story, we made the point to our participants that no one 'river' shape can ever capture the depth and range of their rich, unique experience. We were not surprised to find that the participants found this task quite difficult, as A noted in the discussion that followed, and in her post-workshop interview. At the end of the workshop, we assigned participants a take-home task, to take five photos from the perspective of someone who had never been to their home.

We scheduled photowalks for our third and fourth photovoice workshops. Photowalks involved leaving the workshop space for somewhere nearby, to allow participants to put into practice the elements of photography they had learned. The venue of the first photowalk, Kowloon Park, was decided collectively. Before the photowalk, we introduced one more photography technique, about the importance of foreground and background for providing context and conveying a message. After the photowalk, we shared our photos in a discussion forum (story circle) again guided by the SHOWD structure. The second photowalk (workshop four) was originally to take place in Chungking Mansions itself. For some participants, the ground floor of Chungking Mansions resonates positively with the places in South Asia where they had spent their earlier lives. One participant, Rosie, however, felt differently. For her, home is in Hong Kong, and a reminder of the home in Sri Lanka that she had left behind her triggered unsettling feelings. To maintain a psychologically safe space, we therefore stayed only briefly in Chungking Mansions, and spent most of the second photowalk at nearby Kowloon Park.

The final photovoice workshop was a bridge to the Digital Storytelling workshops to come. This was a discussion-heavy session, where we talked about the things to consider when crafting one's story, issues such as self-censorship and how to navigate it, ethical concerns such as informing people we want to include in our photos, language issues, including encouragement for the participants to write their digital story outlines in whatever language they wish. To help them think about the story of belonging they would want to present, we facilitated two letter-writing exercises. The first letter prompted them to share an experience relating to their sense of belonging to the person they trusted the most. We were not prescriptive and encouraged them to think about diverse experiences of belonging. This could be a moment where they felt liked they truly belonged to a place, a person, or community, a moment when they felt they had to question their belonging, or a moment they felt like they did not belong at all. The second letter prompted them to write a letter to themselves about that moment, to serve as an emotional resolution. We asked them to share initial themes they would like to explore for their digital story pieces. We had a discussion about stories, using the following questions as a guide, to understand how they see themselves as storytellers as well as how they think their stories might impact those around them:

- Why does this story matter to you? Why did you choose it?
- How do stories help us understand our sense of belonging? (cultural celebrations, religion, gender, food?)
- How does this story help me understand myself?
- How does this story help others understand me?

The session ended with suggestions about how to convey one's key message in a structured way.

4.2 Digital Stories

The Digital Stories are a collection of digital photovoice narratives supplemented by multimedia/multimodal elements, co-created by the participants and research team. Built upon the foundation of the photovoice workshops, the Digital Storytelling (DS) Workshops took place over the course of three weeks, facilitated by Michelle Pang. The workshops introduced concepts of multimodal digital storytelling and narrative authorship to the participants in order to facilitate their digital story creation. Each participant created a physical storyboard during the final workshop (see Appendix 1). These were displayed at a World Refugee Day event on 25 June 2023, hosted by project partner Centre for Refugees, at PMQ in Hong Kong. In this section we describe this phase of the research and provide a detailed account of the first DS Workshop.

Digital Storytelling

Digital Storytelling (DST) is a form of narrative that incorporates multimodal and multimedia elements, such as text, images, audios, videos and interactive components in its creation. This form of narrative enquiry does not limit storytellers to verbal or textual narratives, and is often employed in tandem with other visual methods such as photovoice (Mitchell et. al, 2017) to provide accessible and diverse means for narrative co-construction and co-creation. This makes DST effective in facilitating intersectional social dialogues, including asylum seekers' migration and marginalisation (Sawhney, 2009); HIV & AIDs health workers (Mitchell et. al, 2018); and familial trauma against the backdrop of the Cold War ('Elizabeth's Story' in Lambert 2013, p. 85).

DST's potential of introducing agency, autonomy, criticality and reflexivity (Lambert 2002 p.145; Tacchi 2009 p.169, Lowenthal, 2009; Mitchell et. Al, 2017, p.12) to participants (co-creators) is actualised in the creative process:

In this case, the author of the document brings the technical and artistic know-how to produce a complicated media artifact ... It is understood it is the documentary artists' version of the story. But in order to honour the storytellers or subjects, they provide a mechanism to co-construct a narrative with as much engagement by the subjects/storytellers as they can manage.

(Lambert, 2013, p.40)

The principle of encouraging and facilitating co-creation served as the backbone of the design of the DS workshops, where time was allocated for participants to create their own physical storyboards. Participants were also assigned with take-home tasks to prepare for the sessions.

	DS#1: Drafting & brainstorming your digital stories	DS#2: Multimodal moodboarding - creating your storyboard	DS#3: Completing the storyboard & Gallery Walk
10:30 - 11:00	Intro Walking through different types of digital stories	Intro Visual communication: meaning in form, colour, fonts & symbols	Intro Completing the physical storyboard:
11:05 - 11:20	5 elements of storytelling (adapted from Lambert 2002, CDS) Interrupting linearity	Refresher on multimedia multimodality 'Voices' in narratives + hearing your 'inner voice'	Printed photovoice photos Graphics Text (if needed)

11:25 - 12:55	Brainstorming for the digital story	Creating the physical storyboard	Audios/videos (if needed)
12:30 - 13:00	Debrief + take home task: gather materials & finalise photovoice photos	Debrief + take home task: facilitator will communicate the digital drafts of the storyboards with participants	Gallery walk + story circle Debriefing + wrapping up: "Heartful autoethnography" (Ellis, 1999)

DS Workshop 1

The research team present were Michelle (facilitator), Christine and Jennifer. All the participants were present. The goal of the first DS Workshop was for the participants to brainstorm and create an initial draft of their digital stories, in relation to the photovoice work from the earlier workshops. To prepare participants for the creative process, the session comprised two main stages: discussion of digital stories and their variety; and a consideration of voice and autonomy in storytelling. This second part, covering storytelling, authorship, and interrupting linearity, generated a lot of talk. We introduced *The Five Elements of Digital Storytelling*, adapted from *The Seven Elements of Digital Storytelling* (CDS, Berkeley), but rewritten to place an emphasis on authorial agency. This adaptation generated the following discussion:

(M: Michelle; U: Uzee; A: A; L: Laxmi)

M. [...] Third thing, deciding your story. You can decide what and what not to put in [...] I just want you to remember that your vulnerability is not a token for [awareness]. Our hearts are sacred [...]

U: What if people like [a certain way] of writing a story? Like, you think that if I write in this way, people will love it or enjoy it?

M: It's a very good question. Because sometimes I feel like it depends on how comfortable you are with it. Sometimes you feel okay talking about an experience, and [some experiences], you don't.

U: Yeah, but still, if I don't talk about it, people won't understand that is the point. You're... you're uncomfortable, but there is every reason behind that. So how do we decide?

A: When people are going to tell their story, we [might think about] how people like it [...] or not be bored of it. Maybe that's a way of telling a story, [which might be] different from the intention they have.

M: It's a very complex topic. Because at the end of the day, we live in a society where we try to be attractive or appealing to, let's say, someone with a higher power. [...] And if our purpose is to garner attention or awareness, and you are comfortable with it, that's absolutely fine. I think it depends on your intention. But if you're saying "I just want to write a story for myself and enjoy it", maybe then that's when you can move away from the conventional stuff, [and write for yourself].

L: But sometimes other people don't take interest in [your story]. That's why I think we have to do something to make them attractive.

The discussion then moved on to interrupting linearity, supported by this quotation by Britzman, which we found in Brushwood Rose & Granger's 2012 paper:

From an early age, children are instructed in the art of telling tidy and coherent narratives. We are admonished to “get our stories straight”, and we learn early on that changing a story is the sure sign of a lie, an untrue story, a false self [...] Yet, we know that a central dilemma of any narrative inquiry is that: “our voice is always contingent upon shifting relations among the words we speak, the practices we construct, and the community within which we interact.”

(Brushwood Rose & Granger, 2012)

This prompted a discussion of ‘objective truth’ and perspective:

M: I want to show you this one really nice quote. I feel like we are always told to tell our story in a way that makes sense and is sequential-

L: Sequential, and you have to make everything you have to say [the same].

M: Yeah, and you have to tell a story that doesn't change. Because they think if you change some details, you are lying-

U: You should tell that to the officers.

All: (exclamation) Yeah!

U: [...] I hear my video like eight years after saying [what I said], and ask the questions again, expecting the same answer.

K:K: (in Punjabi)

R: What she said?

U: She said, “She said the truth will never change whereas sometimes the perspective changes as you age. Somebody forgot the date or the time or the colour of the clothes [...]”

The particular topic raised here by the participants echoed throughout the workshops: how asylum seekers are supposed to tell the same story on multiple occasions, consistently. The implication is that if an inconsistency is found, it will be assumed that the claimant is unreliable and possibly untruthful in the telling of their story: their claim will consequently not be viewed as legitimate, and deportation could follow.

This conversation marked the end of the informative segment of DS Workshop 1. In the second half of the session, we brainstormed and drafted digital stories. Participants used blank A3 paper, felt-tip markers and element cards to create their initial drafts. They were also given guiding questions, prompts, and tips to help facilitate their brainstorming. They were also reminded that their drafts do not determine the content of the final storyboard, and also that the writing on the storyboards does not have to be in English, and can be multilingual. (The storyboards themselves can be found in Appendix 1).

The research team assumed an interactive role in facilitating the creative process, mindful to offer suggestions or input when explicitly requested by the participants. The creative process varied between participants, in terms of how they found and built upon inspiration to identify the theme and the narrative flow. Here we summarise our notes on how each participant responded during this phase of the first workshop.

Rosie

Rosie, who came in with a fully stacked clear folder of inspirations, textual material, and photos, and had a relatively smooth drafting process, steadfast with momentum. Her communication with the research team mostly involved sharing anecdotes surrounding her materials. At the top of her draft she wrote *'My Story About My Family,'* embellished with calligraphic flair. Underneath the title in the centre of the draft was a radiant sun, overlaid with a note reading *'Always remember that your present situation'*. When Michelle remarked: *your handwriting is beautiful*, she replied: *yes, I love my handwriting*. This calligraphic and aesthetic flair would, in the subsequent workshops, play a substantial and defining role in the visual presentation of her final storyboard.

The centre sun stems off into 5 other notes/element cards, which read: *'my loving husband with my sons'*, *'my life story'* (in a heart), *'cook food'*, *'take every chance you get in life'*, and *'is not your final destination, don't give up'* (underneath a sketch that appears to depict a group of people on a boat). The scenarios etched in the *'branches'* portray S's life after migrating to Hong Kong and suggest that she expresses a positive outlook on the possible future. Her final storyboard retained much of this content.

Laxmi

Laxmi brought in pictures from Facebook of her family playing during Holi, Bollywood songs for Holi, and images of diyas being lit. Laxmi's draft resembled a poster on traditional Indian festivals, both in terms of textual presentation and content organisation. The texts were written as definitions of different elements of Indian festivals and presented in bullet points. Sub-bullet points were also used to subcategorize certain items and activities.

Interestingly, her initial draft did not mention anything about herself, apart from the opening sentence *'my belongings are the culture, festivals and rituals at our country, India'*. When asked about the elements of her draft (e.g. diya, fireworks, gujiya), she happily explained what these were and how they were used – with a heavier focus on disseminating information than sharing anecdotal experiences.

L: I want to make it like a diya... like the Diwali festival.

M: Do you feel like Diwali is the centre of your story?

L: Yes, yes!

M: (sees D's sketch of a diya) What is this? Do you have a name for this?

L: Diya.

M: Do you feel like everything stems from Diya?

L: Yeah! People, make a stick of cotton, in a bowl made out of clay, we put oil in this way. We put oil and then we put this one made of cotton [...] We have six [diyas], like one by one. [...] Now I like moving forward to the fireworks, firework image. I'm looking for that – that's what I want to make [...]

M: Would you like to have six diyas lined up in front of the fireworks? Like [having the fireworks] as the background...

These features would be evident as she shaped and defined her final storyboard.

K:K

K:K was jovial throughout this workshop segment, entertaining everyone with a playlist of her favourite Bollywood music. The first song she played was a modern EDM adaptation of *Sochenge Tumhe Payaar* by Aysha Eria and Rqaibul Hasan Rana. She began singing along to the music, and was later joined by Uzee. K:K and Uzee chatted a lot in Punjabi (K:K's mother tongue), and Uzee would help translate K:K's words into English for us.

Uzee relayed to the research team that K:K's draft storyboard was rooted in her experiences since conversion to Christianity. It was adorned with illustrations of flower wreaths and candles. K:K also said that she had Christian festivals like Christmas and Easter in mind, but was not particularly set on either. Her creation process was free-spirited, as she would write or sketch out imageries or texts that came to mind spontaneously with a smile on her face. Her calm demeanour during the DS Workshops contrasts starkly with the rage she displayed in the earlier photovoice workshops when talking about her experiences in India and about her dealings with Hong Kong's immigration authorities.

Uzee

Uzee was prolific in filling up her draft sheet. She explicitly mentioned a preference for writing (as a form of creative practice) and noted that once she starts writing she cannot stop. Her draft, which was predominantly textual, was an autobiographical narrative rooted in the themes of religion and gender equality, arranged chronologically. The titular statement 'a daughter, a mother, a wife, a woman, a muslim woman, an Ahmadi Muslim woman' set the tone of her draft: all her subsequent recounts of her memories were tightly intertwined with the exploration of these aspects of her identity.

The purpose of her narrative was also clearly communicated in the draft. The 'my future' segment reads '→ give talks, debates what is like being a Ahmadi Muslim woman' and '→ the equality / justice for woman'; and the draft ends with a call-to-action to 'let's all come / stand together for peace.

A: We struggle, [we are] lonely, because it's true we have to fight for own right.

U: You have to fight, you have to come out and if you don't talk, people won't realize.

A

A was initially unsure where to start, with her storyboard, and was hesitant to pen anything down. She thought she might start the storyboard's chronological narrative in Madagascar (i.e. before coming to Hong Kong), but ultimately decided to start in Hong Kong.

While A was not comfortable with writing, she is well-acquainted with artistic practice and self-expression as a painter and crafter of homemade jewellery. Her knack for visual/symbolic thinking and nuanced self-introspection was evident in her opening line: 'Hong Kong is a beautiful cage.' She expressed her sentiments to the research team:

A: We have wings, like we have a lot of things to do, but we have been tied-

U: Restricted, restricted.

A: Yeah! We cannot fly, [we don't have] freedom.

The melancholic overtone of her description of experiences in Hong Kong ended on a more optimistic note on the storyboard: 'waiting for new sun to change my identity refugee to citizen.' This text is accompanied by an image of a caged bird which appears to turn into a boat floating on the open ocean. A initially wrote 'to fly without any ...', but then ended up with a blend of Romanised Urdu and English in her two final text blocks. This hybrid text, however, did not appear in the final storyboard.

4.3 Interviews with Rosie and A

Here we offer an account of the interviews we carried out with two participants, Rosie and A. The interviews took place in a small meeting room in the Centre for Refugees, following the Photovoice workshop sessions. The participants met with the research team individually, and at times more than one member of the team was present.

Rosie

Departing Sri Lanka

A prominent theme for Rosie is the contrast between her life in Sri Lanka, where she had run a restaurant, and the freedom she is offered in Hong Kong. She takes many opportunities to express her gratitude to the Hong Kong government for offering her sanctuary: *I want to thanks to Hong Kong government, they protect our life with my family. So, I was in Sri Lanka, no freedom at all*, she says, in the interview after the first photovoice workshop (PV1). She compares her life in Sri Lanka to a confined existence. She notes the danger and corruption that she experienced: *she faced many problems, because of jail, this thing, that thing, politicians. I can't be free, always attacking. If I want to do something, government, oh no, most of the politicians, they are going to be involved for what the people are doing. And they need to take money, need to pay (PV1)*. The complex political landscape, and the Sri Lankan Civil War, prompted her family's departure. Her poignant account of leaving behind her possessions and starting anew, underscores her sacrifice for a safer future: *But another part I lost my property, you know, what I earn, my properties, everything. I leave there. But I always keeping my positive way. I can earn. If something happened to my family, I can return (PV1)*. This resolute mindset influenced her decision, alongside her husband, to leave their homeland. She is resolute in her commitment to a future in Hong Kong: *Because the thing is that I lost my future. But I want to develop my future in Hong Kong. That's what I'm keeping energy, talking with my husband and my children no need to give up anything. We can get it (PV1)*. Rosie affirms that she wishes to start afresh and provide for her family. This concern takes centre stage in the narratives in her interviews, suggesting an individual who confronts the challenges of her situation.

Navigating legal challenges

When Rosie arrived in Hong Kong, she had little knowledge of how to seek help from the UNHCR offices or of how to find immigration assistance generally. As she puts it: *I faced in keeping focus in my case, no one helping writing, even lawyers really. I'm sad to say about this. I win my case 2015. But my lawyer did not tell me (PV1)*. The lack of transparency and the difficulty of communicating with lawyers generally is highlighted by her asylum claim succeeding without her knowledge. She reports a disconnect between herself and her lawyer, by whom she appears to have been poorly served. She describes the perplexing circumstances surrounding her lawyer's absence at crucial points in the legal proceedings: *Because my case in hearing time my lawyer pregnant. She say she will not going hearing that time then she want to postpone my case two years when she come back (PV1)*. This two-year hiatus was at odds with the tight timeframe for the case hearing set by the Hong Kong immigration system.

And then after that, she came back. This one happening, then she went to the High Court and then a hearing came. She was giving judgment, saying my case in the appeal board was successful, and I was given a chance to appeal my case in the

High Court again. But that application, she did not inform me. My application was granted in the High Court (PV1).

Rosie's struggles relate closely to her competence in English, from her perspective. *I came to Hong Kong and I faced difficulty about speaking English, reading, and everything (PV1).* Her determination to understand her case despite having limited proficiency in English was evident when she brought her legal documents home. *My English isn't strong, she explains (PV1), but my children are studying in Hong Kong. They study English.* She sought assistance from her son, who played a crucial brokering role in bridging the language gap. *I asked my son to sit and explain what is in the document, she recalls, then I found out my case was already successful in 2015. No lawyer let me know (PV1).*

Ultimately, Rosie's legal representative abandoned her, marking another hurdle in her journey. *She withdrew my case. She didn't want to (PV1).* Rosie trails off with a mix of frustration and resignation. This tumultuous phase, with its legal difficulties, linguistic challenges, and the disheartening episode of being abandoned by the lawyer, exemplifies the arduous legal territory that refugees like Rosie must navigate in a new land. Through it all, she clung to the evidence that she had, about her case. She summarises her years of uncertainty:

Yes, that's right, that's fine this part. I have evidence with me. I'm keeping it. One day I will see. That's why I've been enduring this suffering from 2015 to 2023, still I am here. Otherwise, I would be somewhere else with my family (PV1)

After the lawyer withdrew her case, Rosie, alongside her husband, independently submitted all the required documents to the High Court in 2018. Within just six months, her application was granted by the High Court without a hearing. It is difficult to ascertain the timeline for this: she claims that the case had been deemed successful in 2015, which is before (she says) the lawyer withdrew the case, and quite a long time before she submitted the documents herself, in 2018.

Building a life in Hong Kong

Rosie has been in Hong Kong since 2011, bringing with her some financial resources: *I bring money to survive with my family. So one thing I did. And I came and I stay two months in the Chungking Mansions guest house (PV2).* The family explored their surroundings, capturing moments through photographs that she still keeps to this day. She remembers her early time in Hong Kong as not unhappy: *We stay in two rooms and looking around. We are enjoy going around (PV2).* She did not immediately seek asylum (and indeed under Hong Kong's immigration law, it is not possible to submit a claim for asylum until one has overstayed one's tourist visa). Their primary focus appears to have been to occupy themselves with the pleasure of being tourists.

Rosie describes how the two youngest of her three sons went to school in Hong Kong: *My son study in Delia Hip Wo. My eldest son cannot get studies because he already finished studying in Sri Lanka. Yes. And then my second son and third son, they go to school in Hong Kong, function to go to school (PV2).* The achievements of her children in their new environment are a source of pride for Rosie, and are also a recurrent topic in her talk. Despite the challenges of adapting to a different education system and language, according to Rosie they excelled academically, socially, and athletically. Rosie reserves special mention for her second son:

He come five times top 10 student in school. He do sport and keeping record in Hong Kong. Running 200 meters, he keeps very good record. Still no one break the

record. Still always every month, going gathering outside eating because the thing my children are never do anything bad, keeping record for school, name is there, so really everyone loves my family (PV2).

Finally, aspirations are woven into her plans for the future. With visions of a takeaway business, Rosie shares her dreams of selling her version of Kanji (Congee) from Sri Lanka: *Now, I am already success everything, but I made for last final document come to my head, then I can do what I want. But I am planning to do some business. I'm businesswoman. I want to open real business and sell good food to people, not killing life, very clean, very nice (PV1).*

A

A has been in Hong Kong for seven years, after religious persecution in Pakistan forced her to migrate first to Africa and then to Hong Kong. She told us that she nonetheless still loves her country because Pakistan is where she was born. She described her dream of becoming an event planner and how she hoped to train for this in the future. She had already done some work in this area, through helping a client of the Centre for Refugees decorate his wedding venue and cook food for the guests. Getting involved in such activities reminded her of home and enhanced her sense of belonging to her home country. She used to celebrate and create events and festivals back in Pakistan.

During the first photovoice walk in Kowloon Park, A took photos of flowers and a fountain, similar to those in Pakistan, which – she says – reminded her of her hometown. She views herself as not being a very talkative person, as someone who prefers writing poems and drawing to express her feelings and thoughts. She would write poems about her sadness, about places she had visited before, or about refugees.

The lives of refugees: We face many difficulties in Hong Kong

A believes that the lives of refugees are totally different from those of other people in Hong Kong because of the many difficulties they face.

I feel that because I am becoming refugee and that kind of thing, which is not belongs to normal life, which is very different from the normal life (PV2).

Because many people I meet they don't know who is refugee. Because our life I can say that it is totally different for normal people in Hong Kong because we face many difficulties with (what we are doing) anything (PV1).

Every day we feel that we passed over that difficulties. But you know, some rules, some problems, so we have to also pause. But sometimes I can say it is unfair (PV1).

A describes the experience of how she tried but failed to join the gym as a result of her refugee status, not having a Hong Kong ID card, and her passport having expired by then (an extract discussed in detail in Section 5.3 below). It also appears that despite wanting to learn about event planning – her dream job – and having searched for training courses, nothing is available for her. She also mentions that making new friends and getting used to a new community is the most difficult thing when one moves to a new environment. However, having friends is not enough. She also needs spaces where she can pour out her feelings or emotions. Joining our *Navigating Belonging* workshops has given A this sort of platform, one where she is able to reflect on herself, and tell people her story of what she experienced when she came to Hong Kong, and how she survived.

Communities: Crucial for survival

Members of established communities provide new arrivals in Hong Kong with opportunities to acclimatize and survive in the new environment. A belongs to a minority sect of Islam. Her brother-in-law contacted members of the sect before she and her family came to Hong Kong, when they were still in Africa. She made a good friend, research participant Uzee, through her religious community. She considers Uzee to be friendly and supportive. She shared everything she knew with A and her family. A felt really appreciative of Uzee's broad support and help when she and her family first arrived in Hong Kong:

She's the first person in Hong Kong we met. And she was really good. And you know, very friendly. You see already, she's really friendly. And yeah, so she told us how to come to Christian Action, how to use Octopus, how to travel in train, how to go anywhere (PV2).

After coming to Hong Kong, meeting Uzee enhanced the sense of belonging felt by A and her family in Hong Kong because they perceived their new friend to be a special person, like a sister to them. For one thing, they both had had the experience of living in Africa. Uzee helped them in all aspects of life, inviting them to her home and making food for them. She also made chapati to entertain them: this reminded A of her peaceful earlier life with her family. The food that Uzee gave them enabled A to recall her memories of home, and of friendship.

We are feeling that oh, we are alone that we come here, because when we came here, we live in a hotel, a small restroom. ... We message her that we are coming to meet you. Then she come and she like, it's like sister to us. You know, in our communities, we feel like we are sisters. ... And she's very talkative. And she likes to help us. ... So then Uzee brought us to her home. She makes some food. Then I have that feeling, when we came, nobody like we have. But when we came, she gave us home, to sit, to eat, and to wash your clothes. And then I use her toilet to wash my clothes. That's the amazing moments, which I came up. ... So this is something special she have. So she really helped us that time (PV2).

First time I eat Chapati again at Uzee's home and she gives us you know, I just take one piece of roti and I am crying... Before, I was very good in Pakistan, I don't need that kind of thing to think. ... And she was 'What have ever had happen to you?' And I say, Chapati, after one year, I am eating, so she's like 'Really?' (PV2).

I don't know who I should blame. Or should I blame or not?

While we were carrying out the workshops, A's mother and brother came to visit from Germany for two weeks. It had been 14 years since she and her mother had seen each other. A feels that she had missed many years spent with her family and that things had changed. She doesn't know who she should blame, or indeed whether any blame is needed. She tells us that she was a little bit shocked to see her mom after such a long time. She notes that something had happened to her mom's appearance.

She becomes old and before she was a little fat, or maybe a heavy person. But now she's very slim and her bones you can see, so I feel I lost many years. ... Before she is healthy when I was with her. She was healthy, even I talked to her on WhatsApp and I chat in video call also. But it is a bit different to see in real life. So she's very slim now. And her hands have nerves and you can see the wrinkles and bones also. So she's a little old I can say, so that I feel on that moment, that's what I lost (PV5).

Many years I can be with my mom. And I can be spent but I don't know who I blame to about that. Or should I blame or not? ... And we lost many things to be together. ... It's just time already gone. And then I feel that, who will be able or who will take that responsibility about the time we cannot... (PV5).

Another change in these 14 years was how A and her mother spoke to each other. She describes how they had been very close before her mother left, but now she feels a sense of distance between them.

When I was talking to her, I was very close. And now I have a little distance...And I try a little. I try to hug her and hold her hand, but what I feel is something so difficult. And she tried to be 'Why you don't talk much?' 'And talk to me more. I'm your mom.' You know, she try hard. And I also did, but I feel that there is something I am facing (PV5).

In addition, her mother's visit reminds A of her childhood. A's mother and brother live in Germany now and her brother works there. She says she is supposed to move to Germany in the future, or maybe to Canada or the USA. She is not currently allowed, though, to move due to her refugee status.

SECTION 5 EMERGENT THEMES

5.1 Relational methodologies

In this section, written by Christine Vicera, we discuss how aspects of the photovoice (PV) and digital storytelling (DS) workshops enable space and spaces for storytelling and narratives of belonging to emerge.

The late Hong Kong writer Leung Ping-kwan famously asked, "Why is the story of Hong Kong so difficult to tell?" The enduring nature of the question and its unanswerability is partly due to the city's constantly changing identity and the various factors that influence how its story can be told, or whether it can be told at all. In the case of asylum seekers and refugees in Hong Kong, the question of why stories are difficult to tell was a relevant concern throughout the course of the first phase of our *Navigating Belonging* research. Through participatory, collaborative storytelling, the workshops aimed to facilitate conversations pertaining to one's experiences of belonging in Hong Kong (see Sections 4.1 and 4.2). It became immediately apparent that for our participants, who identify as refugees and asylum seekers, storytelling is associated with traumatic experiences. In the second of the PV workshops, one of our participants, K:K, describes the exhaustion tied to her experience of applying for refugee status, particularly how she and others like her needed to tell the same stories many times. A discrepancy in the retelling of a migration story to immigration officials meant compromising a claim for refugee status. In our very first interview with her, participant Rosie made a firm point about how important it is for those applying for refugee status to stay consistent in the telling of their stories: *That's why they are rejection, failure. (...) Today saying something, after six months is the immigration calling to interview, saying something else.* There exists a tension between the need to tell a story coherently and accurately, due to the level of scrutiny that these stories are subjected to, and the desire to interrupt linearity in the telling of a story. Our participants, who come from a range of South Asian backgrounds, share rich cultures and traditions of oral history and storytelling. This contributed to the co-creation of a space wherein storytelling was encouraged, and where stories themselves flowed. Yet what demands further attention is the way in which relational methodologies (our collaborative methods which encourage reciprocity and relationality e.g., Photovoice, Story Circles, Rivers of Life) as well as the use of the arts (photography) as a medium enable such a space. The workshops were adapted from our partner non-profit organisation *be/longing's* Storytelling x Community Creative Arts programme. In the workshops, collaboration and co-creation were centred across all stages including ideation, planning, design, execution, and knowledge sharing. Grounding arts-based practice, specifically photography, in relational methodologies, enabled the co-creation of a space and spaces wherein rhizomatic narratives of belonging emerged. In this section we explore the limits and potential of relational methodologies and arts-based practices in enabling creativity and criticality with regard to narrative formation.

The project's Story Circles, originally developed by Free Southern Theater (FST) and rooted in black traditions of culture and protest, are a core element of *be/longing's* programme, and adapted well to the *Navigating Belonging* workshops. The practice of story circles dates to 1963 when John O'Neal, cofounder of FST, Doris Derby, and Gilbert Moss decided theatre could be a "powerful way to engage rural Black communities frequently excluded from the planning tables of the civil rights movement" (Davis, 2019). Our use of story circles is indebted to John O'Neal, the practices of many

Indigenous populations, as well as the liberatory pedagogies of educators such as bell hooks (1994) and Paolo Freire (1996). Our first workshop began with a Story Circle that allowed us to map out how our participants understood belonging. Considering our participants to be co-researchers in the process, each co-researcher took turns in answering the following questions:

1. How do you understand your belonging in Hong Kong?
2. What challenges are there to your belonging?
3. What role does language play in your belonging?
4. How is belonging different across generations?

The purpose of this Story Circle was two-fold. Since our project aims to generate understandings of belonging from an emic or insider perspective, it was crucial that we allowed our participants to first share their thoughts and experiences pertaining to belonging. This approach is in contrast to an alternative, where the research team might have explained, didactically, what – in the researchers' views – constituted belonging. Secondly, foregrounding this discussion at an early stage in the workshop schedule functioned as a way through which participants could be primed to think about, speak of, and take photographs related to their experiences of belonging in Hong Kong. Upon asking the first question, the activity transformed into a co-constructed discussion between the participants and the research team. One of the participants, Rosie, asks, *I really want to know that the true meaning of belonging. What is it doesn't mean?*" to which the research team responded: *your attachment to a place or a person* (James) or *your feelings towards Hong Kong* (Michelle). It was a principled decision on part of the research team to actively participate in the discussion by responding to the questions we posed, asking our co-researchers follow-up questions, and sharing our own experiences relating to belonging. This was particularly useful for difficult questions such as the third one listed above, on language and belonging.

In the spirit of reciprocity, during one workshop I shared an anecdote about hearing my dialect, Bisaya, on the MTR, and how in those moments where I hear my mother tongue, I feel a sense of belonging to the city. Immediately after I shared this, A shared a similar anecdote about the guard at her residential building sparking a simple conversation with her in Urdu, expressing how she is *really surprised and sometimes [she] feel[s] like home*. As Rey Chow (2010) suggests, ethnography is always auto-ethnography. In reciprocating, we are denying claims to 'objectivity' in the field of ethnography, thus enabling a space that allows not only for our co-researchers to build trust with us, but for them to reflect on similar experiences of their own.

A concept I develop in this section is an understanding of belonging as rhizomatic. In their seminal text, *A Thousand Plateaus*, Deleuze and Guattari (2004) describe a plateau as 'any multiplicity connected to other multiplicities by superficial underground stems in such a way as to form or extend a rhizome' (p. 24).

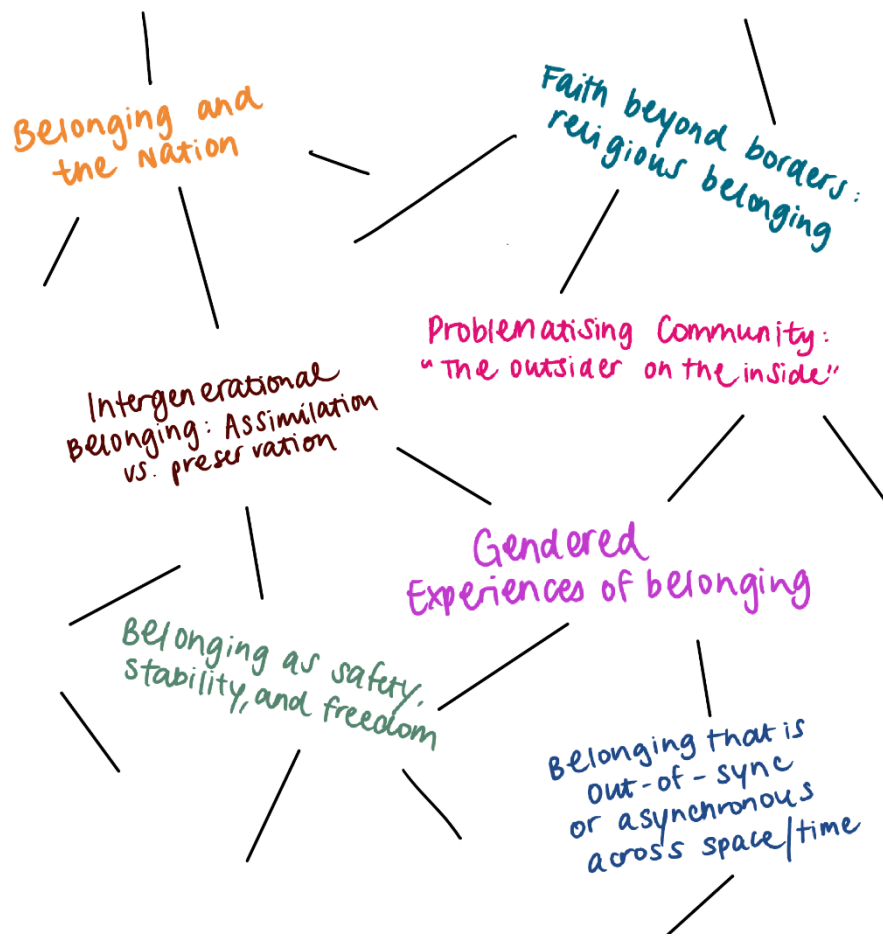


Figure 2: The Plateaus of Phase I of Navigating Belonging (incomplete)

Unlike a traditional mind map, each of the nodes in figure 2 are depicted such that they have 'multiple entryways and exits, to demonstrate their rhizomatic nature (Deleuze and Guattari 2004, p.23). The rhizome metaphor is particularly useful in expanding our definition and understanding of belonging, which – as evidenced in the story circles – is fluid, contains multiplicities, and changes depending on context. This idea that belonging is shaped by context was evidenced in participant Uzee's explanation of the 'outsider on the inside' dilemma experienced by people from her country: *even when you're among your own community, you're judged very quickly*. A and Uzee note that although they were forced to leave Pakistan due to the persecution of their Ahmadiyya Muslim community, they feel a strong sense of belonging to the nation of Pakistan, foregrounded upon meeting compatriots. A states: *For me, [belonging is] meeting my own people from my country, when I'm sitting next to them when I'm talking to them*. She elaborates in the interview we carried out with her after the first Photovoice workshop that she still loves Pakistan because it's the country she was born in, but at once she also sees Hong Kong as her second home: *I can say this is my second country because it's the holy world we have*.

The incomplete nature of Figure 2 demonstrates how the stories of belonging that have emerged within the space of our eight workshops are neither finite nor complete, but they are interrelated. Something we emphasise in one of our later activities is the ways in which relational methodologies and arts-based practice allow for the disruption of

linearly structured narratives and instead make room for narratives that are multithreaded and resist closure.

There are several notable things to highlight from what A shares here. Firstly, that what she says points not only to her national identity as a Pakistani, but to her religious identity as a Muslim. This evidently shapes her worldview, which in turn shapes her decision not to see her identity as a Pakistani as separate from a Hong Konger. She later elaborates: *We all have our world, because God gave us Holy World to live. [...] It is for us. So why we separate it?* At first it seems paradoxical, and even ironic, that her sense of belonging is a reason for her non-belonging. That is, her identity as an Ahmadiyya Muslim makes her a target for persecution in the very country to which she feels a strong sense of belonging. In response to the second question we asked in the story circle, she asserts that *it's really hard to belong* because of her religious identity. What this nuance points to is the emergence of the postmodern subject whose identities are unfixed, fragment, and even contradictory. As Hall (2015) argues, and what emerges throughout the workshops are identities that are subject to the continuous play of history, culture and power are reflective of the “different ways we are positioned by, and position ourselves within, the narratives of the past.” This warrants the relevance of the rhizome and plateaus in our discussion of belonging as well as the Deleuzian paradox of memory: The “past and the present do not denote two successive moments, but two elements which coexist: One is the present, which does not cease to pass, and the other is the past, which does not cease to be, but through which all presents pass’ (1988, p.9). In other words, it is impossible to study belonging without acknowledging the interweaving of past and present in each of our co-researcher's narratives. Their belonging is not only situated in the present moment but continues to be shaped by it as well as by the way in which they perceive their past experiences.

As our co-researchers incorporated the narratives of belonging that emerged throughout the workshops through Photovoice, it became evident how these different elements working in conjunction fostered a space of both creativity and criticality. Incorporating what Wang and Burris (1997) refer to as photo-elicitation into our story circles, we discovered as early as the first workshop that our co-researchers could apply what they learned about the basics of photography quickly and effectively.



Figure 3: A's photo from Activity #1: The Power of Perspective



Figure 4: A's photo from Activity #2: The Power of Perspective

U says in response to a comment about composition, *We just learned about how lines can (...) give details of the subject of the photo. (...) it's, it's like they're all verticals and then you can find that there's an object in the middle of that line so they, it's more visible to see. We apply what we learned. We are very good students. In the third digital storytelling workshop, where we ask them about which element stands out in their final pieces,*

many of them expressed that photography allowed them to envision certain thoughts that were too complicated to verbalise orally or in writing. Photography is an effective medium of storytelling particularly for A, who, in an interview after the first workshop, says that talking in a group setting is difficult and that it takes time for her to warm to people.

Engaging in the process of digital storytelling immediately after the first five photovoice workshops guided our co-researchers into thinking reflexively about their role as storytellers. The digital storytelling phase is designed to facilitate the process of weaving parts of the narratives they've shared in the photovoice workshops into a story which would be shared with the wider community (see Section 4.2). Using multi-media elements, their narratives would be brought to life on our NavBe website. Throughout this process, we asked our co-researchers three main questions:

- Why do you want to tell the story?
- Who are you telling this story to?
- What is the message you would want to convey through your story?

Even before this process began, our co-researchers questioned the long-term impact of our workshop, with Rosie asking, *What will this workshop do for us?* in the very first session. Perhaps this is due to their involvement in the Centre for Refugees programmes, and their proximity to funders and social impact initiatives in the broader context of the non-profit industrial complex. In any case, the aforementioned questions that guided the digital storytelling phase allowed our participant co-researchers to reflect on the ways in which they would be telling their stories. A key concern Laxmi brought up, which the others agreed with, was striking a balance between making their stories appealing without having to adjust to the audience's taste. In thinking through the best way to provide our participant co-researchers with an overview of the elements of digital storytelling (conceptualized by the Center for Digital Storytelling (<http://www.storycenter.org/>)), we bore in mind that not all these elements were relevant to their contexts. Elements such as maintaining a clear narrative point of view, economy (i.e., ensuring the viewer is not overloaded with content), and using emotional content to connect with the audience are some examples. As we talked through these elements, we made sure to emphasise that perspectives can be fluid and multiple and can change over time. We also stressed that it is not essential for a story to include emotional content: we were particularly keen to avoid fetishising traumatic experiences. Our participant co-researchers found that the idea of nonlinearity resonated with them, and Uzee even noted: *You should tell that to our immigration officers. Sometimes they ask us the same questions and expect us to say the same answers.*

In storying their experiences of belonging, our participant co-researchers' initial notions surrounding the term were challenged and reimagined. Over the course of the eight sessions, they all expressed a change in their understanding what belonging means to them. Laxmi, for instance, suggested that instead of drowning in her homesickness, she realises she has the agency to celebrate the festivals she celebrated back home here in Hong Kong because of her connection to the Sikh communities at the local Gurudwara. According to her, celebrating these religious festivities doesn't make them *any less fulfilling*, but instead she experiences them now with a newfound sense of gratitude.

5.2 A translanguaging space of belonging

Language plays a very particular role in discourses about national identity, and also in policy itself, in Hong Kong as elsewhere. Hong Kong's national language policy states that:

Chinese and English are the official languages of Hong Kong. Committed to openness and accountability, the Government produces important documents in both English and Chinese. Correspondence with individual members of the public is always in the language appropriate to the recipients [i.e. English or Chinese]. Simultaneous interpretation in English / Cantonese / Putonghua is made available to meetings of the Legislative Council and Government boards and committees as needed.

(Government of HKSAR Civil Service Bureau, 2023)

This official bi-literacy, tri-lingual approach contrasts with translingual and trans-semiotic communicative practice on the ground, in linguistically and culturally diverse Hong Kong. This everyday practice is well described and considered through the admittedly diffuse prism of translanguaging. Translanguaging offers a powerful lens through which to understand settlement and belonging for people who are or have been on the move. In this section we extend the discussion of space and place that is a feature of this report. We do so by advancing the idea of a translanguaging space of belonging. We maintain that – as a concept – it might help to challenge more established (not to say cemented and deficit) perspectives of belonging that are at play in public, media and political discourse. We invoke the notion of a transformative translanguaging space: as Li Wei puts it, a space enabled by translanguaging for translanguaging (2011, see below). We maintain that a sociolinguistic account of belonging – one which utilizes the concept of emergent translanguaging space – might usefully inform policy and practice on belonging in the contexts of mobility and immobility in which our participants find themselves. In our examples we describe the deliberate and explicit support of the emergence of translanguaging spaces of belonging, through the creative practice of our Photovoice and Digital Story workshops, and the affordances of such spaces. Our main argument is that the notion of a translanguaging space, where belongings are fluid, negotiable in interaction, translocal and not necessarily even bound by the word, contests homogenizing political discourses of belonging.

Translanguaging

Translanguaging is the sociolinguistic term now commonly used to describe and account for how people bring into interaction, according to their needs, their different histories, biographies and repertoires – verbal, visual, gestural and embodied – as they communicate with one another in linguistically and culturally diverse places. It is a popular concept, though multiply defined, and is aligned with a general orientation towards a 'trans-' disposition. In applied linguistics, this, say Hawkins and Mori,

signals the need to transcend the named and bounded categories that have historically shaped our thinking about the world and its inhabitants, the nature of knowledge, and communicative resources. Thus, from a 'trans-' perspective, we must consider movement across nations and cultures, spaces and places, modes and semiotic resources, and autonomous named languages.

(Hawkins & Mori 2018, p.1)

The appeal of translanguaging lies in how it so well describes the fluid multilingualism which is characteristic of the multilingual spaces where many people live and work. In their day-to-day interaction people deploy their communicative repertoire flexibly – in the memorable words of Otheguy et al. (2015, p.283) – ‘without regard for watchful adherence to the socially and politically defined boundaries of named (and usually national and state) languages.’ This contrasts sharply with the monolingual (or officially bilingual) norm encapsulated by the quote at the top of this section from the HK Civil Service Bureau, and indeed maintained in many educational and bureaucratic spaces.

The debates about translanguaging, and its relationship with other linguistic and sociolinguistic accounts of bi/multilingualism, are quite well-worn. Does a bilingual speaker’s translanguaging encompass a duality – as maintained by Jeff McSwan (2017), or is the repertoire unitary – as proposed in their seminal book by Ofelia García and Li Wei (2014)? Do languages have a reality in the brain and the mind or are they socially constructed and thus only socially real – the stance of García in much of her work, and in the work of others such as Makoni & Pennycook (2007)? These are of course important questions. We might also regard translanguaging as conceptually aligned with code-switching: an overlapping if not synonymous notion. From Gumperz (1964) onwards, research in the code-switching tradition notes the patterning and systematicity of alternations of languages, styles, registers and varieties across and within utterances, analysis of which plays a part in understanding translingual processes. One might say, though, that while code-switching has a focus on the code – the linguistics of the talk itself – translanguaging is perhaps more about the person, why (as well as how) people deploy their multilingual repertoires in the way that they do. In an early, useful definition, García refers to translanguaging as the ‘multiple discursive practices in which bilinguals engage in order to make sense of their bilingual worlds’ (García 2009: 45). For García *how people make sense of the world* is foregrounded, over the (admittedly still salient) attention on the precise linguistic processes involved in their translingual practices.

Those practices go beyond language as well. Attention on communication beyond language and across modes used in acts of meaning-making is far from novel in applied linguistics: *viz.* interactional sociolinguistics, discourse analysis, literacy studies and SFL-inspired multimodal discourse analysis, all of which encompass the para/non-linguistic within their scope. So even where language is the original referent in these applied linguistics sub-fields, it is by no means always the only one. A trans-orientation towards language – or rather *linguaging* – however, with its spotlight on the speaker, encourages the range of study to extend to the many ways humans interconnect, and encourages too a softening of the distinction not only between languages but between linguistics and everything else involved in communication.

Translanguaging space

Jackie Jia Lou, in her paper about navigating the multilingual spaces of Hong Kong, makes the point that those semiotic spaces are constructed by language (written, spoken, in a range of modalities) and its relationship with other semiotic resources (visual display and spatial arrangement). Quoting Saint-Georges (20014:71), who in turn quotes Lefebvre, she notes:

It seems evident that sociolinguistics and discourse analysis have an important role in understanding how space carries on socio-cultural meanings and is

transformed into a place. As succinctly summarized by de Saint-Georges (2004): “On one hand, discourse is bound to spaces of actions and interactions. There is no discourse, knowledge or social practice that stands outside of a social, historical and physical space. On the other hand, discourse is also ‘about’ space (Lefebvre 1991, p.132). It can formulate it, appropriate it or participate in its transformation.

(Lou, 2017, p. 514)

Back in 2011 Li Wei introduced the idea of a translanguaging space, a kind of interactional space created both *by* and *for* translanguaging. Translanguaging spaces are spaces where a broad communicative repertoire can be deployed. They foster transformation in terms of ‘opportunities for innovation, entrepreneurship and creativity’ (Li, 2011, p.1224): they operate in the service of the creation of new identities and values. Li Wei describes the creative potential of translanguaging spaces as lying in:

the ability to choose between following and flouting the rules and norms of behaviour, including the use of language, and to push and break boundaries between the old and the new, the conventional and the original, and the acceptable and the challenging.

(p.1223)

This suggests something of a celebratory free-for-all, an emphasis on “a free and active subject who has amassed a repertoire of resources and who activates this repertoire according to his/her need, knowledge or whims, modifying or combining them where necessary” (in the words of Lüdi & Py in 2009). But the freedom and the ability to interact in an unconstrained way are not possibilities that are available to everyone all the time. It pays to remember that ours is a world characterised by sharp inequalities along every dimension imaginable, including in the control of space. The sociologist de Certeau (1988) and the cultural geographer David Harvey (1989) both distinguish between the spatial practices of powerful agents who manipulate space and those of users who are, however, not simply subjected to the domination of powerful agents but also appropriate and make over spaces for their own purposes. Thus, as T. K. Lee (2015, p.3) views it, a translanguaging space is “a politicised space, a space for the encounter and negotiation of different forces.”

The politically contingent nature of interactional spaces suggests that as well as opening up (through translanguaging and to enable translanguaging), they can be closed down. There are instances when translanguaging is *not* enabled, where certain languages, varieties and registers are *not* allowed, when certain discursive practices are legitimised but others are not, and hence where creativity, audibility and resistance to social inequalities are restricted. In the spaces of our workshops, we encourage the use of any and all communicative resources, as our participants strive to make meaning, inevitably entailing ad hoc interpretation and translation, and the exploration of what resources are shared. In the more official spaces of Hong Kong, for instance the offices where our participants have to navigate the bureaucracy of asylum, the scope for deploying the full repertoire is far more limited. They are obliged to use one of the official languages, usually the colonial or de facto international language, English. This in some cases consequently obliges them to rely upon friends or family members to interpret.

So what of translanguaging and belonging? In our project we conceptualise belonging as relational and situated, embedded in lived power relations, social structures, and personal struggles; constantly felt, negotiated and contested, and embedded in fluid processes of being and becoming (see Section 1). We turn now to what a sociolinguistic account of belonging – one which utilizes the concept of translanguaging space – might offer to our understanding of belonging in contexts of mobility. Our project, exploring as it does belonging and settlement through practice where languaging might be present but is only sometimes paramount, obliges us to pay attention to multimodal, affective, embodied and spatial ways of understanding. In the practices we analyse, the visual (participants’ photographs) are foregrounded and language – as Thurlow puts it – is decentred. The point, Thurlow says, “is not to deny language but to provincialize it: to recognize its limits, to acknowledge its constructedness, and to open ourselves up to a world of communicating and knowing beyond – or beside/s – words” (2016, p.503).

A translanguaging space of belonging

The *Navigating Belonging* project brings together the idea of translanguaging space and notions of belonging in interaction in narrative and arts practice. We maintain that the project itself supports the emergence of translanguaging spaces of belonging. As we suggested in our introduction, *Where or how do you belong?* is a hard question for everyone, even when linguistic resources are shared. So how do the participants engage with their sense of belonging through participatory photography in the context of our workshops?

In Section 4.1 we described the processes and practices of the Photovoice workshops. To go into further detail we bring in an example, an episode in our third workshop, where we did a Photowalk – trying out the techniques we had been learning, on a walk around Kowloon Park. Participant Rosie took a photo of a waterfall there, and talked about it when we returned to the Centre. We can note that the space of our workshops extends beyond the physical space where we carried out our main work. We moved into the spaces and places of the streets of Kowloon, and also back through time, to explore memories of belonging.

Here are James’ fieldnotes from the workshop alongside Christine’s post-workshop notes:

12.58 We have uploaded our photos to the Padlet, and end the session by talking about it.

A, talking about her photos, comparing HK with home (Pakistan). Inevitable comparisons? She makes these spontaneously. More or less everything she says, it seems, prompts her to compare HK with ‘my country’.

Rosie took a photo of a waterfall in the park, and tells us of being at the same place 28 years ago, when she accompanied her husband to HK on a business trip. She took a photo there at the very same place with her son who was 3 years old at the time.

(JS fieldnotes from Workshop 3)

Photowalk

Teaching them the photolock on the phone + lighting

- As we were walking to Kowloon Park, we noticed how Sam Bhai opened up a new store. A and D stopped by to see the pani puri stall.

- Suggestion that we do our next photowalk at CKM

- A agreed saying that there are things at CKM reminds us of home

- Rosie says she'd rather not think about Sri Lanka, home is where she is now. Home was painful for her, the kidnapping, the torture

R's photo of the waterfall and her story about her visiting Hong Kong with her son and husband in the 1980s

(CV post-workshop notes from Workshop 3)

And this is the actual photo that Rosie took on the Photowalk:



Figure 5: R's photo of a waterfall

When we returned to the centre, we uploaded our photos so we could see them on the screen and talk about them. Here is an extract of what Rosie said

- R: and one is very important one this one this this waterfall
I remember for 28 years back (.) when I my son [was
J: [really really
R: yeah when my son elder son three years so we will come
back to the Hong Kong to visit
J: yeah
R: then that time same place I took the photo I have with me
next time I will bring in show to you

(Post-walk discussion with Rosie from Workshop 3, 09:00)

She goes on to say how she took this photo when she and her son had joined her husband on a business trip, a habitual occurrence.

- J: tell us more about the first time you saw this pho- this waterfall
R: waterfall really my son very loudly and he said mom I want take
photo come come then yeah he's very young and small yeah three
years old (.) that time
J: Was this when you first arrived in Hong Kong
R: no no my son yeah 28 years back when my son was three years old
so my husband take us visiting to Hong Kong
J: so you visited
[...]
R: visiting I went many times (xxx) yeah Singapore Malaysia Thailand
India and China Hong Kong so er that time I carry with my son also
because he's alone three years old so my husband always used to bring
me and my son together when he was doing business
J: so he was working and you were with your son just to be tourists
in Hong Kong
R: yes because my son er order goods from China you know there so
many material and er textile we have shop also in [home country]
so that time my son want to purch-
[...]
R: so he's ask me to okay let's go together three of us then visit
Hong Kong and go China and

(Post-walk discussion with Rosie from Workshop 3)

Finally she tells us how she liked Hong Kong and decided that it would be the place to come to when she had to leave her home country.

- J: and did you like it when you [visit it
R: [yeah yeah really
J: yeah
R: **I I thought safe that's that's ri- that's the reason
I came back to again**
J: and that's why you came here
R: yeah came
J: you what you thought of [Hong Kong as a place to come
R: [yeah yeah yeah
J: when you left XXX

(Post-walk discussion with Rosie from Workshop 3)

In the next workshop, Rosie brought the first photo she'd taken, on that much earlier visit, as James noted in his fieldnotes

Today's atmosphere in the workshop is very friendly, familiar. **Rosie brought in photos of her family in HK from 25 years ago**, when she came as a tourist/accompanying her husband on a business trip. She took photos of her little son, then aged three, in Kowloon Park. Last week, we took photos in precisely the same place, 25 years later. The photos she showed us were old, battered, water-damaged...

(James' fieldnotes from Workshop 4)

And here is that original photo:



Figure 6: R's original photo of a waterfall

The photographs that our participants take are not just generative of narratives but are integral to their telling. As with the familiar practice of leafing through a family photo album, the stories that emerge are about the photographs we are looking at, and would not have been told without them.

Belonging and the Storyboards

The workshop environment is multilingual and multimodal, and relates well to Li Wei's understanding of a translanguaging space, "a space for the act of translanguaging as well as a space created through translanguaging" (2011, p.1223). This is evident and indeed prominent in the storyboards that our participants developed for their digital stories, drawing on the narratives and themes that they discussed in the first part of the project. Here is what three produced (and see Appendix 1 for all the storyboards).

Laxmi makes effective use of colour, and foregrounds her religious identity as being inextricably intertwined with her sense of belonging:

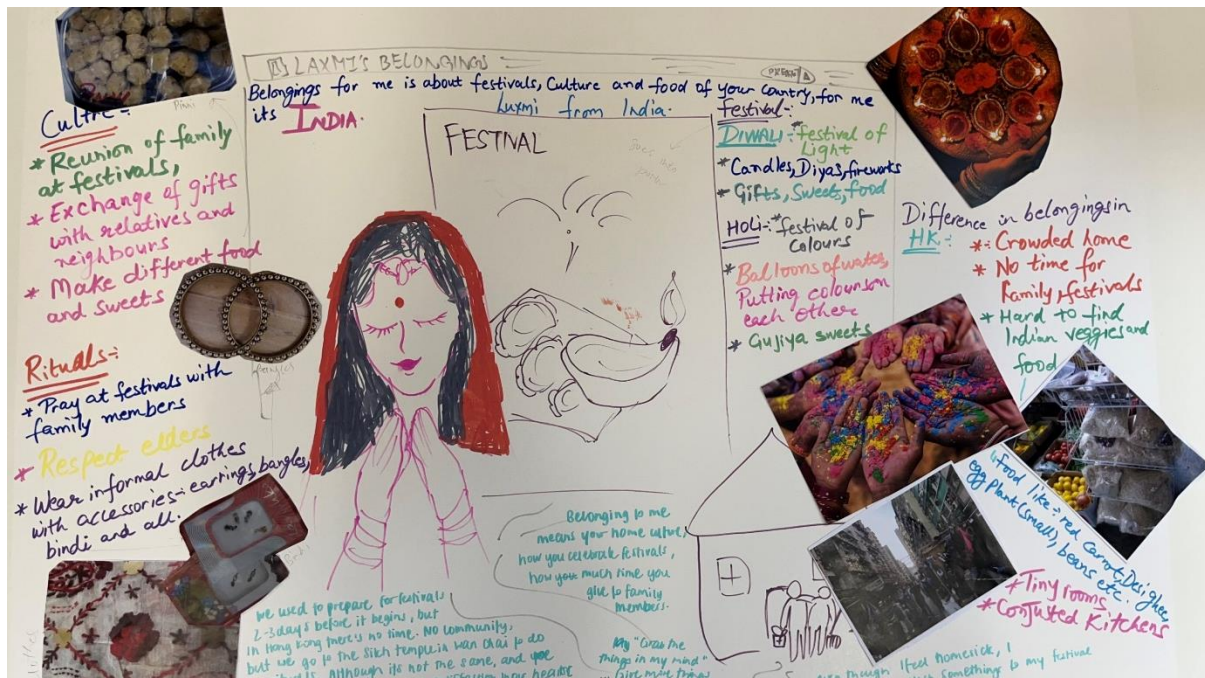


Figure 7: Laxmi's storyboard

Uzee has engaged with her lack of political belonging, alongside notes about the inequities of being an asylum seeker in Hong Kong. She too makes interesting use of the visual:

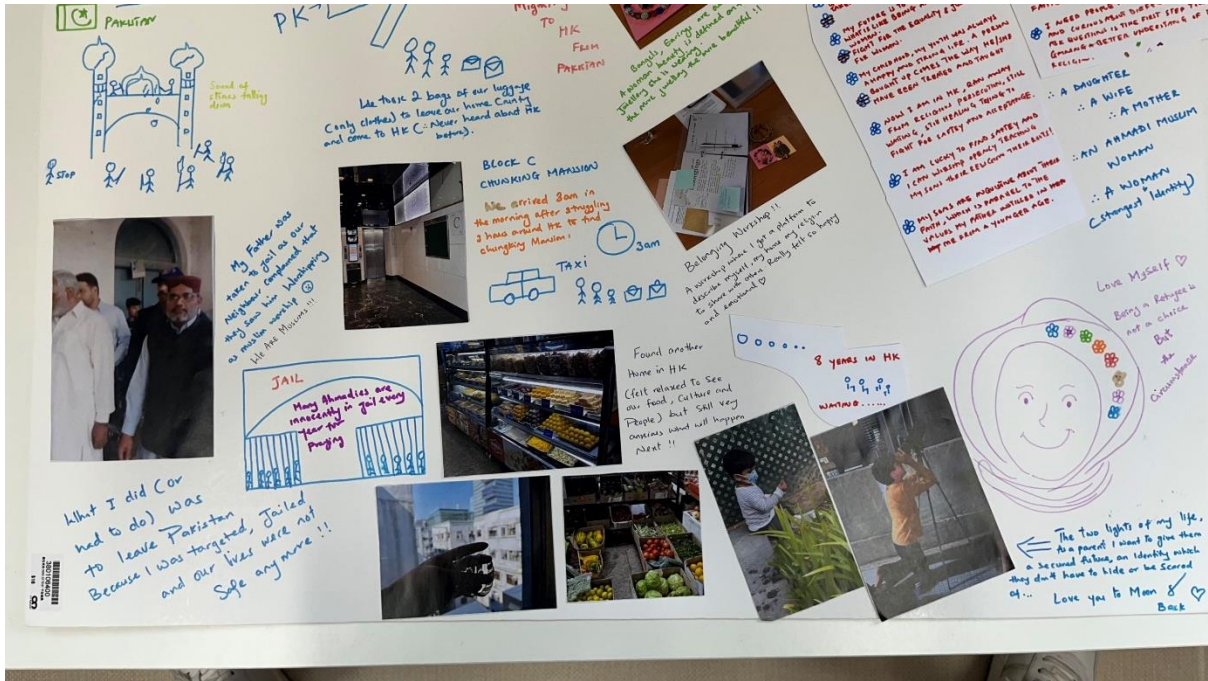


Figure 8: Uzee's storyboard

K:K has used Panjabi, the language in which she is literate, to develop her storyboard:

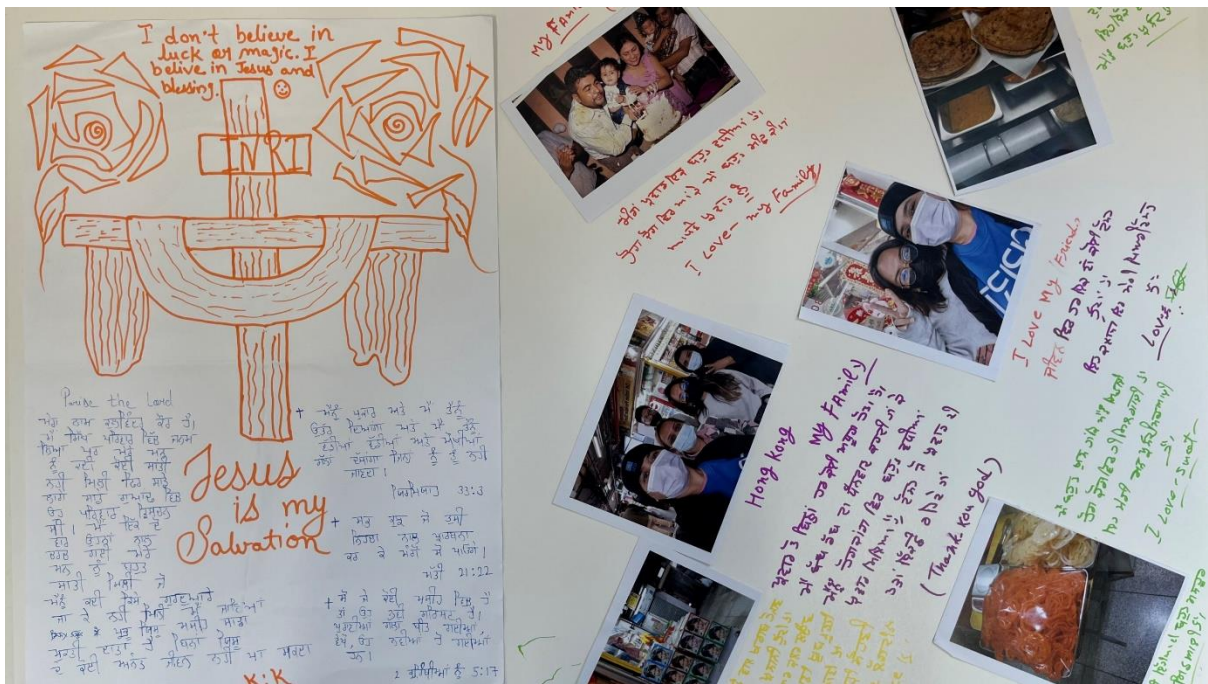


Figure 9: K:K's storyboard

It is also fair to ask how and whether the participants felt their belonging was enhanced and represented in the ways they wanted, whether they experienced some kind of new agency, and what aspects of the project enabled it. What indeed did the integration of narrative with participatory photography enable, in our translanguaging space of belonging? Christine writes in her fieldnotes from the third Digital Stories workshop:

At one point I asked each of them how their idea of belonging changed pre-workshop to post-workshop. Here's what I recall from our very brief conversations

D: For her, there was a change. Instead of drowning in her homesickness, D realises she now has the agency to still celebrate the festivals she celebrated back home in Hong Kong. This doesn't mean this is "any less fulfilling," and she mentioned how she now has a newfound sense of gratitude.

U: Before the workshops, her sense of belonging was understood from an individual perspective. But after sharing her stories with everyone, she feels that there is a shift from "me" to "we." She mentions that everyone she shares her story with is now included in her expanded definition of belonging.

Summary

In this section we have outlined the potential of a creative translanguaging space of belonging, emergent in work combining narrative and participatory photography. We raised the point that language, as a means of meaning-making, need not be considered central: It is provincialised, possibly even decolonised. In the spaces of our research – indeed the place created by our research, and by what our participants and the team bring along with them to the research, the visual is at the fore, and where language is present its deployment is fluid and free of constraints. This perspective stands in contrast to established and politicised understandings of the role of language for belonging, as articulated in state or national language policies. There appears to be a contradiction then between the sense of belonging of people on the move (and how they strive to express this) and wider political contexts and social structures.

5.3 Narrative and identity

Talk in the form of narrative is a linguistic resource which individuals draw upon to construct presentations of the self (Baynham 2000). The narratives that arose in the course of our workshops had hallmarks of autobiographical narratives, snapshots of life histories told to willing listeners. Many were very brief, resembling Georgakopoulou's 'small stories' (2006; cf. Bamberg, 2004, 2006; Bamberg & Georgakopoulou, 2008; Barkhuizen, 2010; Giaxoglou and Geogakopoulou, 2021): the umbrella term that covers *inter alia* snatches and fragmentary tellings of past, ongoing and hypothetical events. Others resembled in style and genre Labov's canonical formal narrative and its familiar stages (Labov, 1972). The conditions of the particular event within which the narratives emerged shape their characteristics, as we argue below. By definition they were migration narratives, stories of dislocation and relocation (Baynham & De Fina, 2005): telling of histories in the distant and more recent past, of migration and its current and future implications; and as such they entail the work of identity construction.

A 'narrative turn' was taken in discourse studies in the early years of the twenty-first century, which has since become well-established if not mainstream in sociolinguistic studies of migration. Georgakopoulou suggests that the narrative turn:

allows for, indeed sees the need for a scrutiny of fleeting, contingent, fragmented and multiple selves "deriving their definitions through relations with others, [. . .] becoming on the boundaries of self and other" (De Peuter 1998, p.32) in narrative tellings in situ.

(Georgakopoulou, 2006, p.128)

Our approach to the analysis of narratives likewise orients towards their status as an interactional event, by definition at the boundary of self (the teller) and other (co-participant), with a setting, ends, norms and so on. We thus align with an ethnographically-informed view on the analysis of narrative-in-interaction that requires context (and not only co-text) to be accounted for. Adopting the 'action orientation' towards narratives involves an explicitly constructivist perspective which accords with an understanding of identity as emergent and situationally contingent, as identities-in-interaction, in fact (see Bucholtz & Hall, 2005). The narratives we examine in the *Navigating Belonging* project are stories of emergent translocal belonging, of finding one's place in relation to the place one has left. These belongings are expressed and re-presented across modes and through time by our participants, in the space of/created by the workshops. Consequently, when belonging is understood as the social dimension of identity, we might characterize it as *belonging-in-interaction*, what Simpson and Bradley (2024) describe as a dynamic process of negotiation and, to an extent, of contention.

In a constructivist view, identities-in-interaction are "the product rather than the source of linguistic and other semiotic practices" (Bucholtz & Hall, 2005, p.585). We can suggest, therefore, that our workshops afford the negotiation of identities and belongings that by implication would remain under-constructed if there was no workshop talk. Hence – in this view – the interaction within the workshops constitutes the actual construction of a discursive space of belonging.

This is not to say that the identity positions claimed in any narrative in interaction are entirely novel. They might be new in a particular interactional event; however, they may well have been rehearsed on other interactional occasions – perhaps many other

occasions – and hence might be quite well established for the teller. We observed, during the fieldwork, that some events were described on different occasions in the workshops themselves and the accompanying semi-structured interviews. This adds an interesting layer of complexity to the idea that we can study how people use narratives in interaction to construct, or perhaps further develop and extend, a sense of who they are, of who they are becoming, and of their belonging – or their belongings (plural). If the narrative differs from telling to telling, as it inevitably will, this suggests something about the nature of identity as understood from a constructivist perspective: that identity itself is not only emergent in interaction but is contingent and context-bound.

The workshops in our project were sites of multilingual engagement and were also very important sites where identity work was done. They offered the participants opportunities to negotiate identity positions from which they might claim a rich range of identities. We contend that this presents a challenge to the limited set of identities typically imposed upon them by policy and institutionally: they might no longer simply be ‘individual as displaced person / asylum seeker / failed citizen’. Hence the questions addressed in the analysis below: How does the opening up of interactional space in ongoing workshop talk, and the accompanying interviews, afford the emergence of belonging-in-interaction? What are the interactional features that shed light on participants’ understanding of belonging, from this perspective? We look at three extracts of narrative talk: a story generated in the course of a workshop activity explicitly designed to elicit life story narratives; an account of a personal experience in Hong Kong into which the political reality of being an asylum seeker intruded; and a fleeting fragment of narrative in interaction, again in the course of an interview, where the *there and then* of the story event becomes fused with a *here and now* recollection of an experience in the story.

Migration narratives: The Rivers of Life activity

In the second Photovoice workshop the participants undertook an activity called Rivers of Life (see Section 4.1). They drew their life history in the form of a river, annotated with notes about key events that had occurred. They were then invited to talk about some of these events, which they did one by one, with discussion and supportive comments from other group members. The talk was thus about their earlier belongings in other places, as well as about the challenges of belonging in Hong Kong. They typically framed the events in the story as a distinct there-and-then universe of narrated actors and agents (Perrino, 2015, p.140), with the characteristics of the classic Labovian narrative (Labov, 1972, p.363): abstract – orientation – complication – evaluation – resolution – coda. These stages are evident in this extract, at the beginning of A’s telling of the story of first becoming a refugee and leaving her home country.

[Workshop 2, 2:03:50]

1. but after she decided to leave there like just a refugee or::
2. but in that time I was in seven year er seventh grade so:
3. I must be what er 13 to 14 years old maybe (.) so:
4. and I er am the last kid at my home and um
5. I used to be very close with my ↑mom
6. so it was a very er big er ↑change in my ↑life
7. it totally: er changed me and like it was really hard to digest
8. that er now I had to wait my mum
9. and it's horrible situation for me

10. because I'm only close to my mom and er
11. that's why I feel er ↑lonely in whole in whole in er my family
12. but but it it's still working and I got a friend
13. and I used to be normal and maybe share my things and er
14. then after that your time is just passing but my mum didn't ↑come
15. and I cannot ↑go so it is er of phone ring (.)
16. and we have boundaries
17. so [sigh] after that er this time is passing passing passing and
18. hh nothing happen at at least I have to wait

This story is the talk of a single narrator, and the circumstances of its production are such that there is an expectation that one speaker at a time will tell the story. It fits Labov and Waletzky's "informal" definition of narrative (1997, p.12) quite tightly as "one method of recapitulating past experience by matching a verbal sequence of clauses to the sequence of events that actually occurred." So in line 1, the abstract (*after she decided to leave there like just a refugee*) is followed (in 2-5) by the narrator's attempt to orient listeners to the background information necessary to understand the story. In 6-8 the complication is described: A describes how her mother's departure was a *big change* and *hard to digest*. The complication also comprises an evaluation, which continues in 9-11 as she describes her closeness to her mother and the loneliness she then felt. The resolution (12-16) is no happy ending, more a sense of acceptance and recognition (alongside description) of how things are. The coda – a footnote to the story – is a summary of the pervasive sense affecting all asylum seekers awaiting the outcome of a claim, of time *passing passing passing*.

The personal and the political, the local and the global

The participants' talk of the challenges of belonging in Hong Kong, doubtless a problematic place in terms of its asylum policy, is personal but at certain moments the political interjects, intrudes.

So here is participant A, talking about her non-belonging in Hong Kong.

[Workshop 1 interview with A, 09:30]

A: so I want to join a gym
 or something like er um community centre (.)
 so I go to my near er place I found on Google
 and I am I was really excited
 I go there and it is they said I see that it's so (xxx)
 and they have everything
 they have machines people and everything
 and I feel wow I can join it yeah
 so because I I feel I need I want so er so it is
 because for me it is just okay
 just two things you want you need it's okay and you can do that
 so when I go to the reception area and I talk about that
 then I'll feel good all the things I got it's okay okay okay
 I have to do I have to do that like that okay so I will join (.)
 then er the part of then it comes to my identity
 like the actual us
 so it is not I'm not Hong Kong resident so I cannot join (.)
 so:: that moment y- it is when you like you are at home [hhh]
 you think you can do something you want want to do something
 you picked up that step
 and when it happened when you are going there you'll see
 wow I can do that it is it is how I want
 it is so when you are starting to pull yourst- pull yourself

er to what you want to do
and then you see oh my god I'm refugee
I cannot because I don't have Hong Kong ID (.)
time step back (.) not forward

C: oh

A: because it's it is you don't lost that you are not refugee
just your identity (.)
you lost your your encouragement your your thoughts

C: yeah

A: what being you so then then I feel so:: sad (.)
I go I go ho::me and I think that oh:: I (.) because then li-
I try to contact with my other friends
who who join the gym or other (.)
so they said they apply with the passport copy
or something like that
so my passport has expired
so so I feel that no way there is no way
because m- because many years I also f- er er
searching for for erm study or some courses
like I I I am interested but there is no [hh]
so er:: so that's why I'm no I'm just waiting
I I still have hope I in the future I will do

The political decisions at scales beyond the local restrict access to services only to those with the right documents, to those who are politically legitimate. A articulates how the lack of the correct documents – no ID card and an expired passport – relates in a clear and personal way to not being able to join the gym and beyond that to her sense of *just waiting*, albeit accompanied by a sense of hope. The interaction that is contingent and locally produced is heavily influenced by the large-scale global processes and inequalities of forced migration and asylum.

Orientations to space and time: The chronotope

How our participants orient towards space and time in their narrative explorations of belonging is salient, as we saw with Rosie and the development of her storyboard (Section 4.2), the retrieval of the old photograph, and the account of how experiences of the past led her to being in Hong Kong in the here-and-now. The past and the present intertwine in her experience, and they do so in her narrative. The chronotope – literally space time – is the concept developed by Bakhtin to point to ‘the intrinsic connectedness of temporal and spatial relationships that are artistically expressed in literature’ (1981, p.84-85), drawing attention to the inseparability of space and time, and the way the entanglement of the two are constructed in different literary materials and genres (Perrino, 2015, p.142). It’s deployed by sociolinguists for the empirical analysis of time-space framing found in real-time oral narratives. Migration narratives certainly foreground and problematize space in narrative, and we are reminded of de Certeau’s claim that “every story is a travel story – a spatial practice” (1988, p.115, cf De Fina et al, 2020). As we’ve noted, our data are suffused with narratives of belonging and non-belonging in spaces and places and at different times. Our participants will talk about their earlier belongings, as Rosie did.

Sometimes these emerge in tiny narrative moments, as small stories, to use Bamberg and Georgakopoulou’s term (e.g. 2008). We have already noted that we conducted informal and largely unstructured interviews with participants Rosie and A following the early Photovoice workshops. This short extract is from the second such interview

with A. She has been telling Christine about the migration trajectory that brought her to Hong Kong. she mentions how she had chapati, and the emotion that eating it released.

[Workshop 2 interview with A, 15:10]:

A: then we came here in Hong Kong
and first time I eat er chapati again at er [xxx's] home
and she give us you know like like a
I just take a one er piece of roti and I am crying [hh]

The verb forms shift from past (*came*) to present (*eat / give / take / am crying*). The moment of shift comes at the point when the narrative moves from the general life story to the description of a specific event. The latest in a series of dislocations in her migration trajectory (*then we came here in Hong Kong*) is narrated in the general past. *Experience in Hong Kong* is potentially a salient chronotope, characterised by slippage from the storytelling there-and-then of the past. The particular event, the eating of the chapati, is narrated in a way that foregrounds the immediacy of the occasion (using present tense verb forms), bringing it into the here-and-now. A fuses the past and present: she narrates the past as if it were co-occurring in the present. Exploration of the chronotope in the participants' narratives is worthy of further analysis and investigation, perhaps using the analytical approach that Lam and Christiansen (2020) used to identify different chronotopic frames in the interviews with transnational Mexican youth.

Summary

One cannot study oral narratives in their contexts, considering both the story and the storytelling event, by only focusing on the narrative's literal content, i.e. the denotational text, such as information about what characters exist and what events occur. The denotational text needs to be studied in relation to the flow of the interaction itself, the interactional text. Stories emerge dynamically in interaction between interlocutors: an interviewer and an interviewee, or participants in a workshop. The conditions of the communicative event (setting, participants, etc: Hymes, 1974) shape the form of the narrative. The stories that emerged from the Rivers of Life activity were more carefully told, were more canonical as narratives, than the stories that appeared on the fly in the interviews and in the less structured workshop interaction. The other participants – the interlocutors – play an active role in regulating and controlling the form of the narrative.

The participants are typically positioned in a restrictive way by and in the dominant discourses of Hong Kong's immigration and asylum regime. Further exploration is needed for the discussion of how narratives are implicated in that regime. Participants themselves noted how it is unreasonable to expect the same story to be told in the same way on separate occasions, yet this is the expectation of the police and the immigration authorities. Officialdom is on the look-out for inconsistencies in repeated re-tellings of migration narratives: however usual it might be for stories to vary from telling to telling, inconsistencies in narratives of dislocation and forced migration can provide the rationale for deportation. We can also explore how narratives relating to concerns beyond the legal sphere (to family, community, friendships, enjoyment) might work to counter and resist the negative and deficit positioning experienced by our participants and others like them.

SECTION 6 RESEARCHER VIGNETTES

In this section we reproduce vignettes written by five of the project team. The vignettes are researchers' personal accounts of being involved in the project, and/or reflections on the themes that the project prompted in their thinking. Vignettes can be considered as a research method within collaborative projects with teams. They are also a tool for exploring – and revealing something of – the process of team research, as Goodson and Tagg (2018) note:

Vignettes emerge not only as a way of reflecting on the research process, but as a research method itself – a way of exploring how our understanding of superdiversity is in itself the product of diverse perspectives and the co-production of interpretations that have the potential to lead to new forms of knowledge.

(Goodson & Tagg, 2018, p.115-6)

Goodson and Tagg were writing about the vignettes produced in and for the AHRC *Translation and Translanguaging* project in the UK (2014-18), which – like the *Navigating Belonging* project – involved working with a team of researchers, some junior and some senior. They identified a contrast in approach to the writing of vignettes: more junior researchers produced narratives that were more personal, and that focused more on the research sites. Senior researchers tended to recreate academic conventions in their vignettes, taking the opportunity that they afforded to think through some of the theoretical concerns that the process raised. Something of this distinction is evident here: Ping reflects closely on her experience of fieldwork and on the team relationships. Anish presents different sides of his experience of Chungking Mansions, the home of the CFR and the setting of our research. Ahnaaf writes of his family's history of translocal belonging in Hong Kong and in Kayalpatnam, Tamil Nadu. He also considers Islam, in relation to his interactions with participant Uzee.

Conversely Christine, a more experienced researcher, considers the *Navigating Belonging* project in relation to earlier work in similar areas, the success or otherwise of these, and the extent to which they have enabled her to address questions that puzzle her, about coloniality in the research process, and about supporting and enabling the amplification of participants' voices. James' thoughts are oriented to theorising: he dwells on his encounters with the participants themselves, as he speculates on their response to the research process, and how they might now approach questions of belonging.

6.1 Christine

Besides volunteering as a photographer for Christian Action's World Refugee Day event and Mother's Day, it had been a while since I worked alongside the local refugee and asylum seeker community on a project. The last time was an undergraduate research project that aimed to shed light on the lives of refugees and asylum seekers and "subvert harmful narratives propagated by the media," by compiling some of their stories into a digital publication entitled *20/20: A World in Movement*. According to our final report, we wanted to tell "stories of the[ir] [everyday] experiences that have left an impact on them in Hong Kong."



Figure 10: Cover of 20/20: A World in Movement

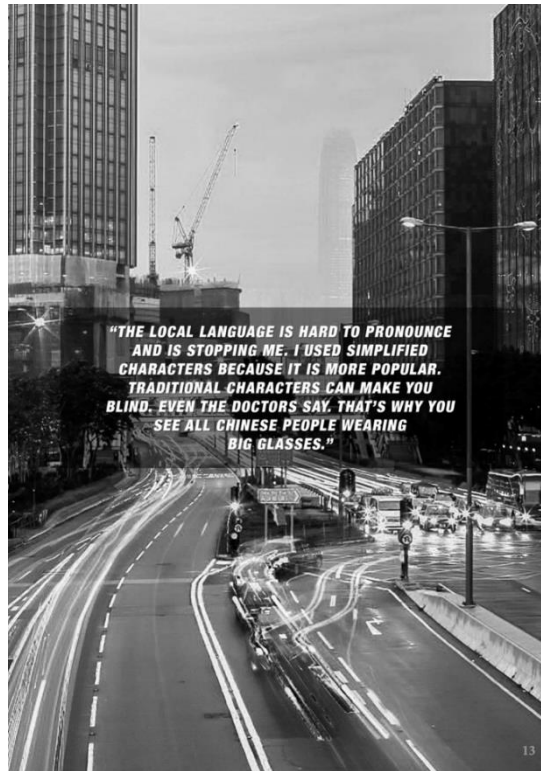


Figure 11: A co-researcher's reflections on language

Focusing broadly on the four themes of art, celebrations, cuisine, and religion, we note that these are fragments of culture often neglected in the mainstream portrayal of refugees and asylum seekers. We wanted to shed light not only on the structural constraints they face in their host societies in terms of support and acceptance, but also share the intangible aspects of culture they have brought with them after their displacement from their homelands which bring them joy. A question I remember asking myself back then that keeps coming back to me today is this: Who is allowed to speak and for whom can we speak? In carving out spaces for these communities and their stories to be documented and heard, am I complicit in the same colonial logic and Spivak writes of in her seminal essay *Can the Subaltern Speak?* How do we as researchers bear this in mind throughout our praxis?

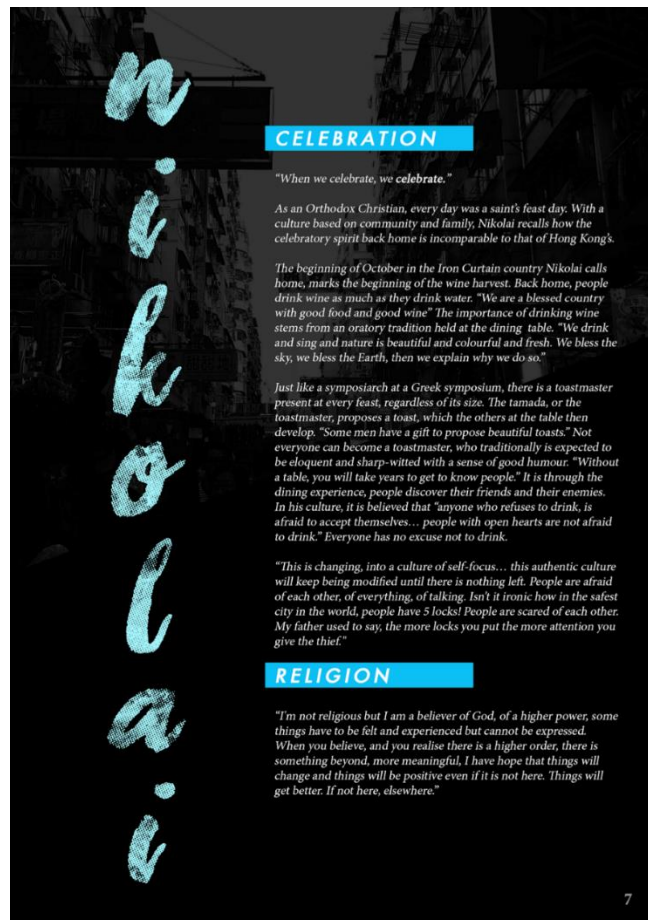


Figure 12: An excerpt of co-research Nikolai's musings on celebrations and religion

In the first workshop, one of our co-researchers, Rosie, asks *What will this workshop do for us? How will people help us?* At this point, I recall our discussion at the team training where we mentioned to make it explicit that these workshops are not intended to provide immediate solutions to the problems different communities are facing. In response, I said that the intention behind these workshops is to share the stories which are often left to the footnotes of history with the broader Hong Kong. They took this positively, but I couldn't help but feel a sense of hopelessness when questions like these are asked. Perhaps this was a result of the residual feelings of burnout from past experiences relating to community organizing and advocacy resurfacing. Due to the short duration of the project (6 months) and limited manpower (we were a small team of 3 undergraduate students in our third and final years), the *20/20: A World in Movement* was eventually left unpublished. We were only able to distribute copies to those who shared their stories with us. The path towards structural change is long and sometimes the things we do lead to a dead end.

These thoughts make me wonder about the relationship between affect (emotions and moods), community-based research, and advocacy. Spivak's essay critiques the intellectual West's desire for objectivity, whereby the Western scholar is presented as an authoritative figure who objectively produces knowledge about other cultures. Understanding the 'West' in the same way Édouard Glissant understands it, as a project, and not a place, leads me to reflect on my positionality as I do research alongside communities, and my privilege given my proximity to higher education institutions and therefore intellectual capital. This is a discussion the research team has been having

since the pre-planning stages of *Navigating Belonging*. How do we navigate (no pun intended) concerns pertaining to voice and audibility, for instance? In giving a voice to these communities, there is a tendency to fall into the trap of paternalism. There is a fine line between speaking for these communities and allowing these communities to speak for themselves. How can we invite them into a space of co-creation where they are centred in the process of worlding their experiences of belonging? How do we ensure that the knowledge that is produced from this project mutually addresses the interests and concerns of our co-researchers and ourselves? How do we ensure that nuances in their stories are captured without fetishising narratives of trauma or resilience? Finally, how do we as researchers, respond to the desire for objectivity that has historically been prioritised in academia and research? While there is no one-size-fits-all solution, these are some questions I invite you to think through as I share some reflections on the first phase of our project.

Before we began, it was important for us as a research team and as workshop co-facilitators to understand our own expectations as well as that of our participant co-researchers, in particular what they would want to get out of this experience. As a community-centred project prioritising community ownership over the research was a key priority, which could be achieved by promoting equitable partnerships. In an interview with A, she mentions that she'd want to share her experiences coming to Hong Kong and how she has survived here as a story: *So it is very good opportunity now I can make it a story. I can represent it. I can show people how refugees survive, who is refugee. Because many people I meet they don't know who is refugee.* This was a shared sentiment among all our participant co-researchers. Other concerns were revealed to us throughout our interactions together particularly during the digital storytelling workshops where they were given the opportunity to author the stories relating to belonging they'd like to share with the wider community. The first five photovoice workshops enabled them to think broadly about their experiences pertaining to belonging and capture these photographically. These photographs would be transformed into digital stories or what Gubrium and Turner (2011) would refer to as artifacts of "internalized soliloquies," in which "the storyteller is having 'conversations' with imagined others, as well as sociocultural understandings and identity performances constructed" throughout the workshops (Gubrium and Turner, 2011, p.470).

All our participant co-researchers were English language learners, and we constantly encouraged a translanguaging space by reminding them that they could engage in the discussion or create their storyboards in whatever language they feel most comfortable with. In the construction of their storyboards, Rosie expressed that she chose to write in English as she wanted to show the audience that she learned English. A's use of language in her storyboard shifts from English at the beginning and Urdu towards the end, while K:K demonstrated a consistent use of Punjabi, in both her final storyboard and the discussions (which were live translated by A and U!)

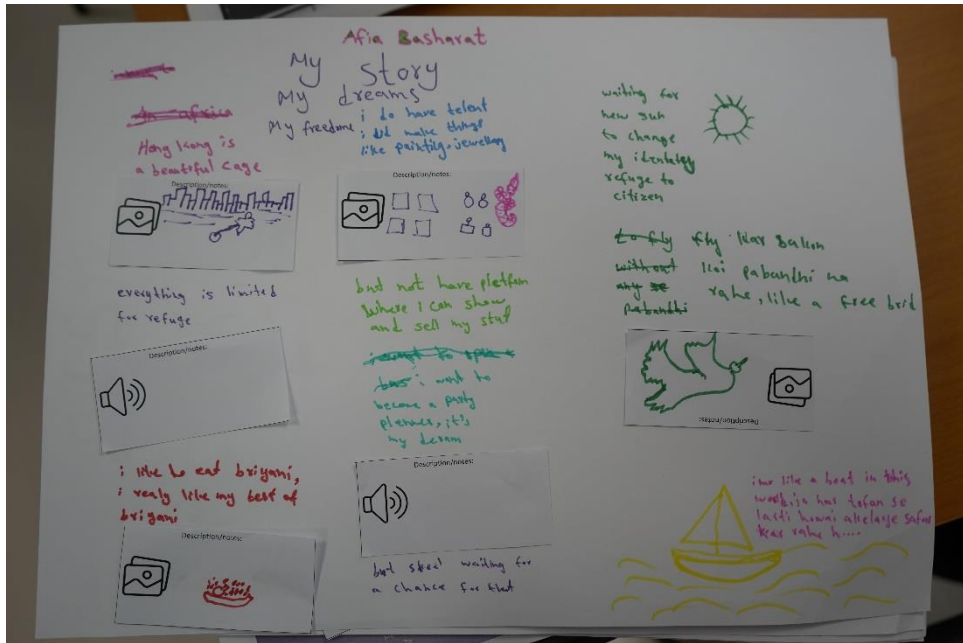


Figure 13: A's Moodboard



Figure 14: Rosie's Moodboard

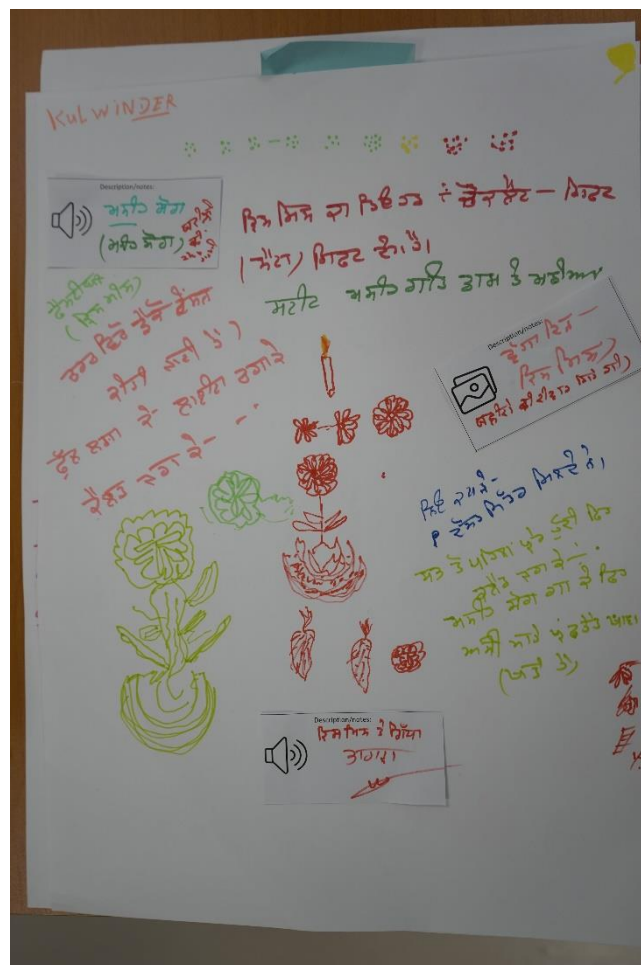


Figure 15: K:K's Moodboard

The act of co-creation requires some sort of surrender. Since I was heavily involved in the workshop design and co-facilitation, I had subconsciously formed expectations of how the final pieces would look. I had to learn to let go of these as the workshops progressed and leave the storytelling to those who were telling the stories. When I asked Laxmi what form her final piece would take, she expressed wanting her digital story to be taken up in the format of a PowerPoint slide with bullet points. I was initially taken aback but as she continued to describe her piece, it became apparent that her purpose was to inform or even educate others about the Sikh festivities she holds dear. Uzee on the other hand, began her story with some illustrations depicting the persecution of her community on the news which highlighted the factual nature of her experiences. In being entrusted with stories as valuable as the ones they shared, I had to let go of the perfectionist in me. It meant reminding myself taking what Brené Brown writes of in her essay *The Practice of Story Stewardship*, one step further: to lean into the ways in which they choose to tell their stories to honour their artistic process.

In time, putting co-creation in praxis came almost naturally because of the foundation of trust we had built for one another. More than this, it was coming to an understanding that other people are not different from the ego; that the self includes others outside the self (Enriquez, 2013). This is the Filipino concept of *kapwa*, which means to embrace a shared inner self with others. In the final workshop as A worked on her piece, she told me she wasn't sure how to caption her photos. I asked if I could sit down next to her to ask some questions about the stories she has chosen. Co-creation requires us to be rooted in

the present and listen with our hearts. After she agreed, I asked her questions to help recall the stories she told back when we did the photowalk activity in session 3 and 4 about the food Muslims would eat during Iftar, when Muslims would break their fast, like rose syrup and dates. I asked her to tell me more about the stories behind the peanut gachak which reminded her of her childhood growing up in her hometown and how her dad would bring this snack for her and her siblings after he came home from work in the winter. The photo of fennel seeds coated with sugar reminded her of how her mother told her it was good for your eyes, and so bought this instead of candies. One of the most profound photos which A took was entitled 'Lonely Heart' which she took in Tai Mei Tuk while she was at a barbecue organised by Christian Action. In the photo, mountains in the distance were framed by empty branches of a tree in the final moments of a sunset. I asked her to recall what she shared in the story circle several sessions ago, to which she responded: *This photo shows loneliness because the trees have no flowers. Kind of nothing inside. What she said after highlighted for me the fluid, ever-changing nature of stories, and the power of storying our experiences: Looks like in the future it will be reborn. There is hope in the future that there will be flowers again.*

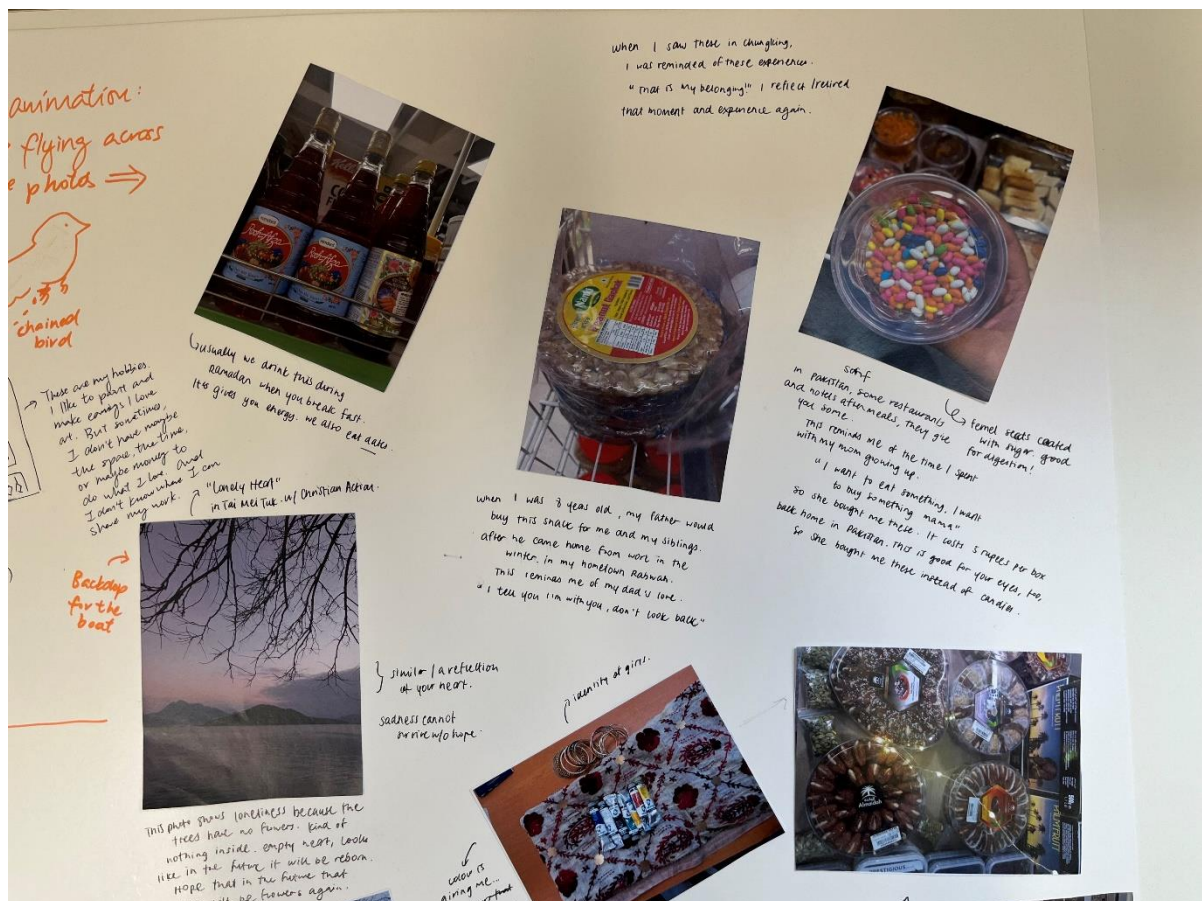


Figure 16: A's Storyboard, top right

At the end of the workshops, one of our participant co-researchers, Rosie, asked, *next week is the last one?* to which I responded yes. She responded sadly, saying *Oh, I really liked these workshops.* I said *it's okay, we'll still see each other around Chungking Mansions.* I realised then that our participants themselves are acutely aware that these communities that form around activities put together by the centre are ephemeral and eventually come to an end. In positioning myself as a Filipino researcher, I am claiming a genealogical, cultural and political set of experiences. I feel the tug between my role as a

researcher, and my identity as a Filipino, the part of me which values relationality and community as a feeling of guilt settles in me. Perhaps what I'm feeling is a sense of utang na loob, or indebtedness to them for being vulnerable and sharing their stories with us. Have we, as workshop co-facilitators reciprocated this vulnerability by entrusting them with stories of our own? Linda Tuhiwai Smith (2021) reminds us in *Decolonizing Methodologies*, research is a process and not a product. As the project nears its completion, I am reminded that this does not and should not signal the end of our engagement with the communities we work alongside. I call to mind a passage from Antoine de Saint-Exupéry's 1943 novel *The Little Prince* which I will quote at length:

“You become responsible, forever, for what you have tamed.” And if you can't handle forever, then please don't start. (...) the idea is that if you offer help or a shelter to another being, you have to be prepared to do it again and again. And if you're likely to get exhausted or feel “used” or want a medal for your displays of goodness and selfishness, you will do untold damage.

In encountering others through the process of dialogue and participatory storytelling, I've come to encounter the complicated layering and interweaving of power relations between myself, the research team, and the participant co-researchers. England (1994) reminds us that research is an intersubjective, or a dialogic experience, to borrow Bakhtin's term. What I've coming to know more deeply through this first phase is the dynamic and interactive nature of language, communication, and understanding. As the eldest daughter in a Filipino immigrant family, a strong sense of responsibility has been instilled in me at a very young age. This sense of responsibility bleeds into different aspects of my life, including the work I do. Perhaps what I'm feeling is a sense of responsibility *to* our participants. My role in the research team as a co-facilitator for these workshops, is very much shaped by my identity as a creative practitioner beyond the space of the workshop. Something that is always at the back of my mind before I begin writing a poem or drafting storyboards for a film is the question of empathy. While I do believe that stories have the power to change the way we think, and hence shape the things we say and the conversations we have with each other, they don't necessarily translate to praxis. In an interview, Namwali Serpell and Maria Tumarkin (2020) discuss the limits of empathy and how literature, and I argue other modes of storytelling, can be used to deliberate about ethics. Nonetheless, to deliberate is not as the same as to act. I wonder how we can co-create a space for our participants' stories to be told. Spaces that evade a fascination or fetishization of their trauma without obscuring structural inequities that have led to their precarious conditions. I have no answer to this, and I don't expect you to have one either. But while we continue to deliberate on these important ethical concerns, I remind myself to lean into moments of resonance we share with our participant co-researchers; moments that interweave to form a tapestry of our connectedness with one another.

6.2 James

Space comes to mind, when I think of the first phase of the NavBe project. More specifically I consider the space where we carried out our research, the Centre for Refugees, and its location, high up in Block E of Chungking Mansions. This remarkable building – an agglomeration of 18-storey towers connected to each other on the first three floors – has been the focus of attention for tourists, sojourners, traders, journalists, filmmakers, travel writers and academics for years. It's a fluid, liminal space, the home of people at the margins, and a little piece of South Asia in the sticky heat of downtown Kowloon.

Chungking Mansions, a place where boundaries are blurred, is subject to its own boundary work, however. Christine and I were quizzed by a senior and renowned academic at the Department of Anthropology at the Chinese University of Hong Kong, when we led a seminar about our research there. He rather pointedly noted that 'many of us are studying South Asians in Chungking Mansions', and asked, 'what can your research tell people that we don't already know?' Coming up with an answer was actually quite easy. As a group of academics spanning ages, experience and disciplines, but all with an interest in language and arts practice, we will have plenty to say about the discursive construction of a spaces of belonging with our research participants. The physical space of the Centre for Refugees – the offices, the meeting rooms and classrooms, the kitchen – are imbued with a sense of welcome, by and for the people there and through their interactions. At a closer focus, the space of our actual workshops, as constructed by our activities and by the nature of our time-bound interaction, enables a fresh perspective on belonging. We can see belonging for what it is: as multiple, contingent, emergent in interaction, and standing in contrast to the dominant understandings of belonging that our participants typically encounter, as they navigate Hong Kong's hostile asylum system.

My thoughts turn soon to our participants, to Uzee, A, Rosie, Laxmi and K:K. Their stories – their narratives-in-interaction as stimulated by their photography – suffuse the experience of the workshops. Certain events that they narrate, certain stories they tell, particular things they do, in particular ways – these stay in the memory, not to be dislodged. What, though, does the notion of belonging mean to them? What do they think of, when they consider belonging? What perspectives on belonging will emerge as salient, as we progress in our analyses? The project has captured their words, their pictures, their stories of travel through space and time. They have told us about how the project has changed – and perhaps even transformed – the way they think about belonging. But I do wonder how, outside of the workshops, they think about their various belongings. How do they answer its questions when they are on their own: With whom and to what do I belong? And (with their status in the limbo of asylum in mind) with whom and to what do I want to belong? Will I ever do so?

For me, at least initially, Uzee has the strongest presence: very fluent, articulate, happy to share her experiences, rightfully and righteously angry at the train of events and circumstances that brought her and her family to Hong Kong and to their asylum seeker status. I had met her before the project began. As an active and engaged client of the CFR, she has been involved in awareness-raising events for some time, including an invited session at the University of Science & Technology, where she, and Jeff and Lorna of the CFR, spoke to my undergraduate students about the experience of asylum in Hong Kong. Uzee has been here for eight years, and has school-aged children. During the

project, I worried a good deal about what would happen when her claim for asylum was eventually thrown out, which it almost certainly would be, given the recent tightening of the rules on asylum. She has been here for so long, at the extremes of marginalisation, enduring an uncertain wait in a decade-long queue. Good news though: Soon after the end of the workshop period we hear that she has been successful in her appeal: she and her family are now granted leave to remain in Hong Kong legitimately.

A, Uzee's good friend, identifies as being from the same religious minority community as Uzee in their home country, and left Hong Kong for the same reasons as Uzee. They had both spent time in Madagascar, and I must go back to the recordings to work out why. Was this a destination for their missionary parents? Or was it the first stop on the journey of forced migration that had eventually brought them to Hong Kong? A lives on her own (again my memory lets me down: Was she married and divorced?). She speaks of loneliness, and of the sadness of being separated from her mother, who lives in Germany. While we were doing our research, her mother actually came to visit, here in Hong Kong. It was a visit tinged with sadness. A hadn't seen her since she was a teenager, and she recounts her feelings on meeting her. Who is this old woman? And where is my mother? She's so old now, unrecognisable, a different person from a different life.

Rosie confounded me, full of contradictions and inconsistencies. At once bathing the Hong Kong asylum system in words of praise, and then a moment later raging against the conditions that had forced her out of her home, away from her successful business, and to Hong Kong. Rosie is the outlier. The only participant who resists the photowalk in Chungking Mansions, the only one for whom the shops, stalls and cafés of Chungking – redolent as they are of 'back home' – hold no desired sentiment of belongingness within her heart. Her orientation is to the future, not her own but that of her sons. Time and again they are present in our conversations, see how successful they are, how handsome, how delightful are their Cantonese girlfriends, what a loving and close-knit family this must be. But there are other stories of Rosie, of anger and confusion, of difficult relationships with the other women on the project, and ultimately of a separation, a withdrawal ... I say 'ultimately' but (as I write) it appears she's keen to be involved at our mini-exhibition at PMQ, part of the Centre for Refugees' World Refugee Day event. Her attachment to our project continues.

My initial impression of Laxmi is of someone not entirely engaged in the workshops. Is she only here for want of anything else to do? We need to recall that asylum seekers in Hong Kong are not allowed to work or even to volunteer. There is a paradox at the heart of Hong Kong's asylum system. It's relatively easy to claim asylum in Hong Kong: one has to get here, which is not so difficult compared to most other places. Tourist visas are issued upon arrival, and one doesn't need to show a visa to board the plane. But you cannot claim asylum when you arrive. Only when the visa expires, the point at which you find yourself on the wrong side of the law, can you claim asylum. Thus all asylum seekers are in Hong Kong illegally. They can hardly not be: they have no choice. So the situation for asylum seekers is invidious. They are systematically positioned outside the law, with extreme constraints on their agency, prohibited from working, earning money, and doing something useful with their time. As I come to know her a little, Laxmi increasingly appears to be an engaged and intelligent person, whose religious and cultural identity are foregrounded in her stories.

K:K is also a little difficult to fathom, to get to know, at least initially, because of her limited communicative resources in English. She joins the project at the second workshop, and the others tell us straight away that she understands more than she speaks. Language is no barrier to communication given the fluent and easy way they interpret for her, and for us. Her involvement entails a strengthening of the space of the workshop as a translanguaging space, to paraphrase Li Wei, a space created by translanguaging, and for translanguaging. K:K's involvement pushes us to making explicit our commitment to translanguaging, as we stress that all our participants should express themselves with whatever shared communicative resources they might have at their disposal. So we listen to K:K's stories mediated chiefly by Uzee and A. The storyboard she creates as preparatory to her digital story on the website emphasises her religious identity – she is a passionate convert to an evangelical form of Christianity – and also her linguistic (or translanguaging) identity. She mainly writes in Panjabi, with the occasional English word and phrase (a concession to people who don't read Panjabi?). The themes she highlights on her storyboard are in some sense a distillation of the workshop talk. Her drawings are of religious symbols and her photos are of friends, food and festivals.

In our audio and visual records of the workshops, the notes we made, the storyboards and other texts our participants developed, the pictures that they brought along and that they took, we capture the raw material of belonging. We will think about, interrogate, examine, analyse, bring to them our own interpretations, our own thinking informed by our own perspectives, and our own life experience. In our memories we hold the experience of working together in the space of belonging that our interactions created, with a group of inspiring women with shared experiences, whose own belongings are bundled up with their identities as women, as religious observers, as friends, and as members of families forced into the diaspora.

6.3 Ping

Grzymala-Kazłowska (2015) defines, “Social anchoring has been described as a process whereby individuals search for reference points in order to function effectively in a given situation.” I worked as a part-time research assistant in the *Navigating Belonging* project for three months. In terms of the concept of social anchoring, I need to search for my ‘reference points’ in this work, and the starting point for this search is the duty requirements written on the handbook of RA recruitment.

Q7. Description of the RA role and duties:

To support the lead researcher Prof James Simpson and Navigating Belonging RA Christine Vicera in the Navigating Belonging project activities from February to June 2023, including transcription of audio data. To support Prof James Simpson and BRN RA Michelle Pang in the activities of the Belonging Research Network from February to June 2023. This work could include the development of a bibliography/resources page for the NEXUS:BRN website, and the editing of the NEXUS blog.

Figure 17: The handbook of RA recruitment

These do create an external framework for role delineation, but the inner aspects of this role need to be actively filled and embedded by the individual themselves. This search focuses on creating a sense of meaning for the individual themselves, thus creating an atmosphere of initiative, positivity, and vitality. I am reminded of when I was a child doing chores of wiping the table: wiping off a layer of dust from the table to turn it from grey to a clean colour was like playing a colouring game in my view. I filled the role of a child doing chores with the role of a painter. In the external role of research assistant, my work is primarily transcription. I have given myself three internal roles that anchor me in the work.

A L2 English learner

Transcription of talk in English involves first and foremost English language skills: listening is the most important, followed by reading and writing. On the one hand, the work as a research assistant requires a sufficient level of English language proficiency, on the other hand, I am also a L2 English learner who needs to maintain English proficiency as much as possible.

The text transcribed by the software Otter was not accurate enough, so it is necessary to listen to the original recording at least once more to proofread it. Sometimes, when I encountered people talking at the same time, or when I couldn't hear a certain word clearly, I had to listen to a sentence many times again and again. This feeling is very familiar, just like the extensive listening and intensive listening exercises when I prepared for the IELTS exam. In addition, the vocabulary, colloquialisms, intonation, and rhythm that speakers use to express their opinions and convey their content is a kind of English corpus input for me. In my role as an L2 English learner, transcription does give me the opportunity to gain authentic English corpus input and maintain a L2 language environment.

A person who hopes to know others and the world

Approximately the time I started university, the urge to learn about others and the world grew stronger, out of an innate curiosity as a human being as well as to avoid descent into ignorance, stupidity and indifference. Transcribing and listening to people who are

otherwise far away from my life share their stories fits in with my two usual habits of listening to podcasts and reading e-books.



Figure 18: The podcast app 小宇宙 (Microcosm)

Listening to a recording is similar to listening to a podcast: I am fully immersed in the situation created by the sound, as if I were a participant travelling through time and space. My mood would resonate with the speakers in the workshop, Christine's gentle words would make me feel safe and relaxed, Michelle and Uzee's humorous accents would make me laugh, and when I heard DS3, the positive feedback from the participants about the research, I felt that my heart was filled with the same sense of pleasure. I laughed, nodded my head and talked to myself along with the conversations on the recordings. Sometimes, the serious topics people discussed together, recounting their experiences and expressing their opinions, would inspire me to think and ponder carefully.



Figure 19: The e-book app 微信阅读 (WeChat Reading)

Reading was done before and after listening to the recording. Before I start listening to the recordings, I will read the fieldnotes of the research team, where the delicate and complex emotions as well as the meticulous observations and reflections of the researchers will attract me to listen to the recordings and understand the stories in the field. Reading field notes is like reading the preface of a book. After the transcription, I would also read through the transcribed English text and make notes. This process is exactly the same as when I am reading an e-book, except that this e-book is very special, more closely related to me and more vivid. I usually have the habit of annotating e-books when I read them. When a point in the book triggers me, I write it down, sometimes just a few words, sometimes a long paragraph, even though these thoughts may be intuitive and unsystematic. Writing comment is a way of dialoguing with the people in the book or participants, and also with myself. In the process, I've always had a drive to find the sameness in difference. Even though the participants had different life experiences, there are certain moments when I do feel a resonance, when I feel the same thing between human beings across cultures. Whenever I encounter such moments, I feel the sense of both excitement and peace. For me, writing comments is an attempt to reach out from the self to touch the other.

A prospective researcher

In *The Art of Loving*, Fromm (2000) says that love is a craft, and if one wants to know how to love, one has to follow the same methods we use to learn any other art, such as those used to learn the crafts of music, painting, carpentry or medicine. Similarly, research requires not only passion, curiosity but also practical details, and necessary skills, which are exactly what I need to learn.

For example, the methodology is kind of participants' autoethnography, which requires participants equipped with the tools to express themselves and the researcher more of a

facilitator's role. As a graduate student in language education, I feel this relationship is much like the teacher-student relationship advocated in pedagogy. These are not alien concepts to me. However, I am still at a loss as to how to implement these concepts into concrete practice. I imagine that if I were the researcher, the workshop host, how would I make the theory truly inform practice in every tiny component, truly practicing participant autoethnography? What is the practical connotation of 'facilitator'? What does co-research really look like? How can we do it in a way that makes the participant feel safe, relaxed and willing to express themselves? How can I clearly remember the themes and tasks of each workshop so that they don't deviate from the main thread?

The research team demonstrated their ways in the workshops, which is a valuable lesson learned from their continuous and sincere reflection in practice. For example, Michelle writes in DS3, 'no prying', making sure that the story each participant tells is one they are willing to tell; 'to listen and not to preach': disciplining the researcher from spending too much time oversharing their own story, and respecting the subjectivity of the participant as this is, in fact, the space that the participants own. Through these tips, I have gained a further understanding of the connotations of the researcher's role as a facilitator.

As the external and internal roles I mentioned at the beginning, I feel I was largely only aware of the conceptual shell of facilitator, and that real understanding and fleshing out its connotations required a great deal of investment in authentic experience, and sincere reflection. Therefore, I really appreciate Christine and Michelle for hosting the workshops so well! I am grateful to be able to draw on those valuable lessons from their work. In addition, Professor Simpson, who as the principal researcher, the leader of the big project, was also the researcher I had direct contact with during this project. I was able to have a direct view of how he coordinated and organized the team, methodically progressing each step of the process and activities. I learned how to work as a team through his respect for the work of team members, his detailed and comprehensive instructions, patience and encouragement. As a prospective researcher, I am grateful to have met such a warm and excellent research team, and look forward to possessing the same abilities and qualities as them in the future as a researcher.

In conclusion, I've had a rewarding journey with all three of my roles. Once again, I am appreciative to be involved in the *Navigating Belonging* project as a research assistant! All the best for this lovely research!

6.4 Ahnaaf

I met Uzee and A, both of whom are Ahmedi Muslims, during our workshops at Chungking Mansions. The Ahmedi community, also known as Ahmadis or Ahmadiyya, is a sect within Islam founded by Mirza Ghulam Ahmad in the late 19th century. What sets them apart from mainstream Muslims is their belief in the prophethood of Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, which is considered heretical by many traditional Islamic scholars. This theological difference has led to widespread discrimination and violence against Ahmedi Muslims in Pakistan, including the enactment of the Blasphemy law, which further marginalizes and persecutes this community. As a result, many Ahmedi Muslims have become a diasporic community, seeking refuge in other countries to escape religious persecution.

While I may not fully align with Ahmedi theology, Uzee's words struck a chord: *It mentions that you shouldn't kill your brothers because of their religion or move them from their places of worship. It just struck me that these people (religious authorities in Pakistan) who don't allow us to pray and practice are not reading the Quran. They are not preaching the true teachings of the Quran. They can kill us, but what hurts me the most is that Islam isn't like that. You can't kill someone because of their religion* (Muslims of HK Interview).

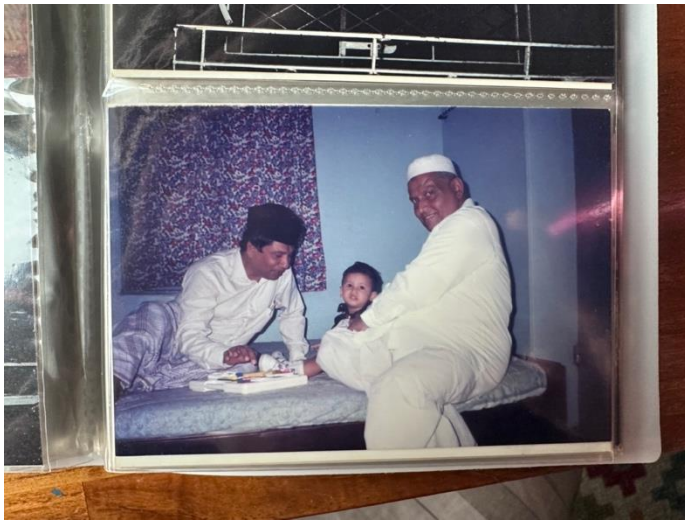
The narrative of our family's connection to Chungking Mansions goes back to 1962 when my grandfather (Appa) moved there as a gem merchant dealing in rubies and sapphires. He remained in the very same 2-bedroom flat, Block A 14/F, until his passing in 2010. Ironically, my life was characterized by constant movement and change. I was born in Hong Kong in 2001 and spent my early years in Tsuen Wan until our family relocated to Singapore in 2009. I attended 10 different schools in 13 years across 3 countries, making Tsuen Wan and Chungking Mansions the only places that offered relative permanence during my childhood. We lived there for 7 years, which turned out to be 6 years longer than any other place I would call home afterward.

Chungking Mansions served as our anchor. Every Friday evening, after work and school, we gathered there. The residents included Appa, his business partner (unrelated but treated as family), my dad's brothers, and extended relatives who often couch-surfed. In our family, even third cousins were considered as close as brothers and so we would joke that half of Kayalpatnam has slept on that couch. My parents had also lived there right after their wedding in 1992. The already tiny room assigned to them became even smaller when my brother was born in 1993.

My mom fought tirelessly for us to leave Chungking Mansions. My parents pursued postgraduate studies at the then-newly opened HKUST, viewing education as a means for a better life. Nevertheless, it's safe to say that we were bound by familial ties and religion. Despite moving out, every weekend from 1992 to 2010 was split between Chungking Mansions and Kowloon Mosque (a 2-minute walk), where we had been part of the community since 1962. Appa played a significant role in the MTR rebuild of Kowloon Mosque during the 1980s and was the President of the Indian Committee there. One of my uncles served as an Imam and now teaches religious studies to the youth. He continues to lead Eid prayers and has led nightly prayers during Ramadan.

My early understanding of Islam was heavily influenced by the practices of the Kayalpatnam community, closely resembling what kids there would experience. The community excelled in preserving religious and cultural practices to the extent that it was often challenging to distinguish between the two. There was a 'right' way of doing

things, and anything else was unorthodox. One such cultural practice was wearing the 'thoppi,' a head covering for men that came in various shapes, colors, and designs. Appa always wore a simple, small, and snug-fitting white thoppi. It seemed comical on such a large man, but comforting, nonetheless. My enduring memory of Appa consists of him in a white dress shirt, grey work pants, and that small white thoppi. When we found old photos of him from the late 1960s, he still wore the same style. When he returned to Kayalpatnam, he exchanged his grey work pants for a pristine white veshti.



This photo was taken in 1994, Kayalpatnam. Pictured on the left is my Maternal Appa (black thoppi), and on the right is my Paternal Appa (white thoppi). In our culture, 'Appa' (pronounced 'Ah-pah') is the term for grandfather, and 'thoppi' (pronounced 'toe-pee') is the head covering.

Yet, the thoppi, which was a symbol of Kayalpatnam, led to significant divisions within families and communities. Known formally as the taqiyah, it isn't an obligatory religious garment, but many in Kayalpatnam believe that prayer is invalid without it. People have faced exclusion from mosques for not wearing one, much like my mom's uncle experienced when he visited from Seattle. To provide context, in Seattle, he delivers sermons during Jumma (Friday prayers) and is highly respected as a religious leader.

The blurred line between religion and culture became a fundamental reason why I grew distant from the community. While preserving traditions and culture is vital, imposing them in the name of religion is a difficult concept for me to accept. I always asked 'why,' a question that, as you can imagine, wasn't always well-received. The prevailing sentiment was to follow without question, regardless of whether there was a rationale. A narrow mindset can be the initial step towards an elitist mentality, a slippery slope that could lead to persecution. While I'm uncertain if my uncle's removal from the mosque is an example, it's certainly noteworthy and indicative of the impact of such rigid thinking. When I contemplate the implications of this mindset within my own community, particularly when it comes to the seemingly trivial matter of thoppi, I wonder how it shapes our perspectives. How does it influence our ability to address larger issues faced by Muslims like the Rohingya crisis, the tragedy of the Srebrenica massacre or the ongoing problems in Xinjiang?

The imposition of strict norms within a community, such as the expectation to conform to a particular religious or cultural identity, is not a unique phenomenon. Instead, it reflects broader challenges faced by religious communities around the world. Two striking examples are the situation in Palestine and the rise of extremist sentiments like Hindu nationalism. In both cases, we witness the forceful assertion of a dominant religious and cultural identity, often at the expense of diversity.

In Palestine, settler-colonialism has played a significant role in shaping the religious landscape. It has led to the establishment and reinforcement of a particular religious and cultural identity, being that of the settlers. This identity is imposed upon the Islamic population of Palestine, leading to systemic oppression, and forced displacement. The aim here is clear: to establish and maintain dominance by erasing or subduing the cultural and religious identities of Muslims.

Similarly, in the case of Hindu nationalism, extremist sentiments are driving a quest for religious homogeneity and control. This ideology perceives religious diversity as a threat to the dominant religious identity and, consequently, to political power. As a result, there are concerted efforts to suppress the religious practices and cultural expressions of minority communities, particularly Muslims. The goal is to establish a religious and cultural hegemony that aligns with the extremist ideology.

But why is religious diversity seen as such a threat in these contexts? At its core, the fear of diversity often stems from a perceived challenge to the existing power structures. The dominant group may view diversity as a source of potential dissent or resistance. In some cases, it may be driven by a desire for control over resources or political influence, using religious and cultural identity to justify such control.

The interplay of belonging and non-belonging resonates deeply with the stories of individuals like Uzee and A, whose religious identity is both the source of their belonging and the cause of their non-belonging due to persecution from the wider Pakistani Islamic community. Their narratives shed light on the complexities of identity and the fluidity of belonging. It becomes evident that sometimes, it's easier to find a sense of belonging outside of the communities we are born into, especially when these communities impose rigid norms that restrict our freedom to worship as we see fit. Through the lens of personal experiences, we glimpse the global struggle of Muslims for religious and cultural diversity, where attempts to erase distinct identities often result in the denial of rights, forced displacement, and systemic oppression, emphasizing the importance of fostering an environment where we can preserve the freedom of religious practice without discrimination on both local and global scales.

6.5 Anish

I first visited Hong Kong as a tourist in 2018, a little after my father took up a research position in HKUST. This weeklong holiday left me with some distinct impressions of Hong Kong. The very first was how I entered the city itself, landing on reclaimed land, passing through tunnels and crossing bridges, to get all the way to HKUST on my very first day – quite an adventure for me! In time all this would point to the many layers Hong Kong itself consists of. Not everyone is lucky enough to be away from the concrete maze that this place can be, but my internship in HKUST in 2019, and finally my graduate studies here (2021-2023) allowed me a space to experience nature as is in Hong Kong, something I find quite unique to how accessible it can at times be. Importantly though, I was also only 45 minutes away (if I got lucky with the GMBs) from Tsim Sha Tsui, and armed with the student MTR discount, it made for a lucrative getaway whenever I wanted to eat my favourite Dosa.

My very first impression of CKM was pretty stereotypical. In a city which glistened, CKM and parts of TST seemed to have been picked up from India, and dropped bang in the middle of Hong Kong. It was fascinating and attractive. On my first trip to Hong Kong which lasted barely seven days, I was able to already take friends from Hong Kong and elsewhere into the building and show off some South Asian delicacies. However, I never thought beyond that, and would only return to Chungking properly after meeting Jeffrey Andrews in one of my first outings into HK as a graduate student. Jeff is the first 'Ethnic Minority' to become a trained social worker in Hong Kong, and I met him at a community led volunteer driven cemetery restoration project, a cemetery in the Hindu Temple of Happy Valley where South Asian soldiers who had died for Hong Kong in the 2nd World War lay buried. Jeff invited me with open arms (literally) when I turned up to help, and was the first person I met there, as the friend who invited me ran late. This was important to me – he barely cared how/why I turned up, but was so warm to me. I on the other hand then knew nothing about him and only later came to know about him being a social worker, who worked in the Centre for Refugees in Chungking Mansions, and soon found myself being invited there for a visit-cum-tour.

I turned up for the tour with Christine, who I had only just met at the restoration, and Jeff walked us through the ground and first floors of Chungking. While I knew the grocery shop nearest to the entrance, I had barely ever explored much further. The standout for me was Karaikuddi Akka, a South Indian restaurant serving my favourite Dosas at affordable prices, and the Phone Station mobile store on the first floor that belonged to Jeff's childhood friend. This was where I got my dad a smartwatch and myself an iPad later, at bargain prices. He then took us up, the Centre for Refugees, then (in early 2021) still under restoration [*note: following a devastating fire*]. Having visited a fair number of NGO offices in India, I was quite taken by how prim everything looked, white walls, cubicles, and what not. He explained how they had been able to raise 800,00 HKD to pull this off. People donating, for an NGO in Chungking Mansions, which helps Asylum Seekers and Refugees, is something he had never thought would happen, with them overshooting their goal!

All of this, along with Jeff's own story of becoming a social worker, made me keen to volunteer with CFR in whatever capacity I could, as well as make Chungking the field site for the work I had to do for an Anthropology course I was taking. I effectively found a way for my field work to consist of volunteering with inspiring people and eating dosa with friends after. I slowly stopped being an outsider as I showed up for more and more

events that CFR did. I became a part of some of the classes they offered, amongst them an African drumming class, and the cooking class. What took me in was the same warmth that I had understood can often characterise CFR and all that happens.

This romanticisation though, does not take away from the changing realities of Hong Kong Immigration laws that CFR continues to have to navigate for its clients. These always, as one might imagine, pose a very direct and distinct challenge to ones belonging. How does one fathom wanting to belong to a physical space always challenging your socio political and legal claim to that. While I as a person of colour in Hong Kong have faced certain what I would label milder challenges to belonging here, my socio-political status has always remained secure whether via my student and subsequent working visas or my passport privilege. As one of our participants, Uzee, once told me, it directly handicaps their capability to contribute to Hong Kong with restrictions on work and living. After a Belonging Research Network session about Migrant Domestic Workers in Hong Kong and the precariousness of their lives and contracts, she told me that at least MDW's can work in Hong Kong, we (asylum seekers) cannot even work. And as someone else in CFR once remarked, imagine not having the dignity of work in the world's fastest-moving city. It is in this context that CFR exists, amongst the stereotypes of Chungking and the legal context of Hong Kong. And in that positivity that all of its activities overwhelmingly exude, is the space that I have come to cherish to spend time in and work with.

SECTION 7 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

To end, let us recall the special situation in which our research participants find themselves, as outsiders attempting to find a foothold in Hong Kong's society. Their non-belonging – at best their not-yet-belonging – is implicit in the aggressive stance that characterises political debate, and policy itself, around the status of asylum seekers. Their daily lives are shaped by a struggle, most likely to be ultimately unsuccessful, to be allowed to belong, in a meaningful political sense.

We can juxtapose this with the multiple understandings of belonging gained through our research. These were many, and were fluid, negotiable in interaction, translocal, and not bound by the word. The experiences in the active phase of the research, and our later analyses, give us a warrant to contest homogenizing political discourses of belonging. Our participants explored and foregrounded their belongings in their memories of south Asia and in the here-and-now in east Asia through their participatory photography, through the development of their digital stories, and through the talk and action around these. The visual was introduced into the expression, performance and negotiation of belonging, and thus a window was opened on other ways of seeing belonging.

We – the research team – were aware that the participants' involvement in the project would offer them a chance to exercise a voice that they do not usually have. We felt therefore a responsibility to respond ethically to this opportunity. We regarded the research as collaborative, and our participants as co-researchers, while being mindful of our positionality and the potential of any research project to contain echoes of the colonial relations that we are so keen to critically address and to challenge. The reflections in the researcher vignettes (Section 6) are characteristic of the reflexivity with which we approached our work. A feature of our ethical stance was to respect anonymity, and hence we became mindful of the paradox of the amplified, yet still anonymous voice.

The themes we developed in Section 5 of Working Paper touch on these ethical concerns, as well as issues around space and place, the affordances of arts practice (as activity) and visual linguistic ethnography (as approach). We maintain, with reference to the first theme, that arts practice grounded in relational methods enables co-created space to emerge, and that this – in turn – enables the emergence of stories. The workshops thus provided a space for the re-imagining of belonging. The second theme extended the attention on space, how space was transformed into a place by taking on the socio-cultural meanings that our participants and research team brought along with them. We described the discursive construction – and the active encouragement – of a translanguaging space of belonging, one that was entailed by the very interaction of the workshops. Our third theme focused on the narratives generated in this translanguaging space of belonging, and how (following Baynham, 2000) they can be understood as a resource that participants use to construct a presentation of the self in interaction.

The contrast is with the monologic spaces of non-belonging, the sites of unsuccessful struggle which emerge at the nexus of geographical and socioeconomic mobility, spaces where creativity, audibility and resistance to social inequalities are restricted, spaces where multilingualism, translanguaging and the very presence of Hong Kong's *other* – and othered – people are viewed as a threat to social cohesion. The value of the notion of a translanguaging space of belonging therefore is as a means of showing how debates on integration can be refocused towards a dynamic account of settlement and belonging,

towards decentering the word and towards meaning-making beyond language. Thus we contribute to a more inclusive, holistic approach to understanding and addressing dislocation and relocation.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1 Participants' DS Storyboards

Appendix 1 reproduces the storyboards devised by the participants during the Digital Stories phase of the workshops.

They then worked on these with Michelle Pang to develop the Digital Stories that now appear on the project website: <https://www.navigating-belonging.org/>

Storyboard A

① First frame

← BACKDROP
HK is a Beautiful Cage.

② animation:
birds flying across these photos ⇒

.. chainmail bird

③ animation of a bird morphing into a boat

Breaking free from chain

← BACKDROP

④ Boat on the sea

On the sea, everyone is a boat. A boat has to survive the turbulence and challenges on the open sea, alone. But there's a new sun, a new day, and we are sailing towards our hopes and dreams every day.

Meaning: breaking free from the chains ~~chain~~ but a boat that can sail freely on the sea. Ready for new challenges & journeys.

When I saw them in Changling, I was reminded of these experiences "this is my belonging" I reflect those these moments and experience again.

Ultimately we don't miss during Ramadan when you break fast the give you energy we also get energy

When I was 3 years old, my father would buy this table for me and my siblings after he came home from work in the winter in my hometown Rajasthan. This reminds me of my daddy love. "I see you in - always, don't love back -"

Some still called with my "I agree!"

Some still called with my "I agree!"

When the project broke fast, we are creating something as hard as these at home, so we are salt, or just water.

SORAF = what the people says, or does, we follow during Ramadan, that is how important for us.

When I shifted to living alone my friend gifted me this painting of a butterfly and said "you are like a butterfly you can fly now"

These are my babies. The to put it and make camp. I love it. But sometimes I don't have money to do what I love. I don't know when I can show my work.

"Lonely Heart" in the heart of Dhanraj Nagar

Similar / a reflection of your heart. SORAF cannot provide hope.

Colour is giving me + then appears give me - I know the pain / feel calm and relaxed.

THE PAIN POINT (SOMETIMES) BECAUSE THE TREE HAVE NO FRUIT, LEAF OF NOTHING INSIDE. EMPTY NEST, LOOK LIKE IN THE FUTURE IT WILL BE REBORN. HOPE THAT IN THE FUTURE THAT THERE WILL BE FRUIT AGAIN.

In questions others the ideas are usually at whom mine I can't. I saw many ideas already in the park going to make. I feel that the only way it is not creativity, that is not creativity. People would be at a feeling mine. I don't like that to make the people who are regarding their mine.

Storyboard K:K

I don't believe in luck or magic. I believe in Jesus and blessing. ☺

Praise the Lord
 मेरे काम उल्लेख करें
 मैं सिर्फ घोषित हूँ
 कि मैंने नहीं किया
 मैंने नहीं किया
 मैंने नहीं किया
 मैंने नहीं किया
 मैंने नहीं किया
 मैंने नहीं किया
 मैंने नहीं किया
 मैंने नहीं किया
 मैंने नहीं किया

Jesus is my Salvation

K:K

2 कोरींथी 5:17

My Family (India)

मेरी प्रार्थना है कि मैं और मेरी पत्नी
 जैसा कि मैंने भी कहा है
 I Love - My Family

मेरी प्रार्थना है कि मैं और मेरी पत्नी
 जैसा कि मैंने भी कहा है
 I Love - My Family

Hong Kong

My Family

मेरी प्रार्थना है कि मैं और मेरी पत्नी
 जैसा कि मैंने भी कहा है
 I Love - My Family

I Love My Friends
 मेरी प्रार्थना है कि मैं और मेरी पत्नी
 जैसा कि मैंने भी कहा है
 I Love - My Family

मेरी प्रार्थना है कि मैं और मेरी पत्नी
 जैसा कि मैंने भी कहा है
 I Love - My Family

मेरी प्रार्थना है कि मैं और मेरी पत्नी
 जैसा कि मैंने भी कहा है
 I Love - My Family

Storyboard Laxmi

LAXMI'S BELONGINGS

Belongings for me is about festivals, Culture and food of your country, for me its **INDIA**.

FESTIVAL

Culture =

- * Reunion of family at festivals,
- * Exchange of gifts with relatives and neighbours
- * Make different food and sweets

Rituals =

- * Pray at festivals with family members
- * Respect elders
- * Wear informal clothes with accessories = earrings, bangles, bindi and all.

DIWALI = Festival of Light

- * Candles, Diyas, fireworks
- * Gifts, Sweets, food

HOLI = Festival of Colours

- * Balloons of water, Putting colours on each other
- * Gujiya sweets

Difference in belongings in HK =

- * Crowded home
- * No time for family festivals
- * Hard to find Indian veggies and food

Belonging to me means your home culture, how you celebrate festivals, how you much time you give to family members.

My "Gross me things in my mind" ... Girl miss things to the festival. After the workshops, my understanding of belonging has changed...

we used to prepare for festivals 2-3 days before it begins, but in Hong kong there's no time. No community, but we go to the Sikh temple in Wan Chai to do the ritual is. Although its not the same, and you miss our family, there is still satisfaction how hearty

even though I feel homesick, I know I can attach something to my festival to make it more memorable.

Food like = red carrot, Desighees, egg plant (small), beans etc.

* Tiny rooms

* Congested Kitchens

Storyboard Rosie



MY STORY

RELIGION & EQUALITY

BREAKING NEWS!!
Ahmadiya Mosque is Being attacked and Torn Down!!!

PAKISTAN

Sound of stones falling down

STOP

PK → [Airplane] → HK
(Sound of Airplane)

Migrating To HK From Pakistan

Like these 2 bags of our luggage (Only clothes) to leave our home Country and come to HK (Never heard about HK before).

Beagls, Scarves are our Culture. (Selling our clothing is difficult as the are not judging the same as we do!!)

My Identity

- Grew up as a Muslim woman (Growing up calling a man culture here was a religious perspective)
- My future is to one day, debate what's the best way to fight for the equality & justice for women.
- My childhood, my youth was always happy and stress free. A person's weight of times the way he/she have been treated and target.
- Now I am in HK, I am away from religious persecution, still having to fight for equality and justice.
- I am lucky to find safety and I can worship openly. Thank my son! He'll help them!
- My son is proud of me. He's a Muslim, which is proud of the values my father instilled in him. My son is a young man.

My teaching to my sons about different religions is to respect, understand, and have a better understanding of different faiths.

I need to be a wife and a mother. My husband is the first step to a better understanding of religion.

• A DAUGHTER
• A WIFE
• A MOTHER
• AN AHMADI MUSLIM WOMAN
• A WOMAN (Strongest Identity)

Block C Chungking Mansion

We arrived 3am in the morning after struggling 3 hours around HK to find Chungking Mansion!

3am

Taxi

Belonging Workshop!!
A workshop where I got a platform to describe myself, my home, my religion, and emotions.

My father was taken to jail as our neighbors complained that they saw him whispering like the Muslims!!!

JAIL
Many Ahmadies are innocently in jail every year just praying.

Found another Home in HK
(felt relaxed to see our food, culture and people) but still very anxious what will happen next!!

8 years in HK waiting.....

Love Yourself!
Being a Refugee is not a choice. But the circumstances.

The two lights of my life. As a parent I want to give them a secured future, an identity which they don't have to hide or be scared of... Love you to Moon & Back