The Politics of Imagining Formosa: Contesting Multiculturalism, Tradition, and Historical Memory in *Ten Years Taiwan*

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ABSTRACT: This article draws on the film *Ten Years Taiwan* (2018) to identify three side-lined yet pressing issues that contemporary Taiwanese society has to address: the dilemma of multiculturalism, the preservation of traditions, and the status of historical memory. Unlike Hong Kong's *Ten Years* (2015), which focuses on political and cultural tensions between China and Hong Kong, *Ten Years Taiwan* emphasises the everyday experiences of different groups of people in Taiwan, such as aborigines, migrant workers, and those living in the countryside. Through the lived experiences of these populations, while indirectly addressing related political problems, *Ten Years Taiwan* challenges its audiences to reconceptualise the meaning of a "Taiwanese" society, prompting questions on how Taiwan as a society should proceed.

KEYWORDS: Taiwan, multiculturalism, ethnicity, tradition, memory, *Ten Years*.

> "What happens in Hong Kong today could happen to Taiwan tomorrow"
> (*Jinri Xianggang, mingri Taiwan* 今日香港, 明日台灣)
> A protest slogan during the Sunflower Movement (2014)

Ten Years (*Shinian* 十年, or *Sap Nin* in Cantonese), an independent Hong Kong film released in 2015, is described as a prophecy of the city's future. Composed of five short stories by five different directors, it depicts an imagined Hong Kong where, by the year 2025, the People's Republic of China (PRC) dominates the city's social, cultural, and political scenes. Touching on topics such as (self-)censorship, historical memory, and the politics of language, *Ten Years* captures the unease and frustration of Hongkongers over the gradual erosion of the city's autonomy and its uncertain future.[1] The film became a cultural phenomenon in Hong Kong and enjoyed much popularity in international film festivals. Its success prompted the idea of making similar films in other countries, where directors would identify some of the most pressing issues that their respective countries would face in ten years' time.[2] The "Ten Years International Project" began approaching directors and producers from different countries, and three products, *Ten Years Thailand, Ten Years Japan,* and *Ten Years Taiwan* (*Shinian Taiwan* 十年台灣), were released in 2018.

Given their similarities in contemporary geopolitics, Taiwan is always a favourite comparative example to Hong Kong. The "one country, two systems" model of post-1997 Hong Kong, after Britain transferred sovereignty of the city to the PRC, has long been considered an example for Taiwan to follow should the PRC incorporate Taiwan to "unify" as one country (Carroll 2007: 178-9). Both locales witnessed social movements critical of the PRC in 2014 – the Sunflower Movement in Taiwan and the Umbrella Revolution in Hong Kong (Kwan 2016).[3] As the protest slogan at the beginning shows, many citizens on both sides of the strait increasingly see themselves as communities of shared destiny (*mingyun gongtongti* 命運共同體): as peripheries of China, geographically and politically speaking, both sides have grave concerns over increasing PRC influence in their everyday lives (Kwan 2016; Huang 2017).

1. Elson Tong, "*Ten Years*: A film that speaks to Hong Kong's worst fears," *Hong Kong Free Press*, 7 February 2016, https://www.hongkongfp.com/2016/02/07/ten-years-film-speaks-hong-kongs-worst-fears/ (accessed on 12 November 2018); Alan Wong, "China News Blackout as 'Ten Years' Takes Hong Kong Best Film Award," *The New York Times*, 4 April 2016, https://www.nytimes.com/2016/04/05/world/asia/hong-kong-china-film-award-ten-years.html (accessed on 12 November 2018).
2. Comment by Andrew Choi, one of the executive producers of *Ten Years*, at "*Ten Years* International Forum," Hong Kong Asian Film Festival, 11 November 2018.
3. As this article was being finalised, Hong Kong was facing another crisis over a proposed extradition bill. After massive protests that drew international attention, on 15 June the Hong Kong government was forced to postpone the bill, but critics decry its refusal to meet protesters' demands, such as retracting the characterization of 12 June's clash as a "riot" and seeking accountability over police violence against journalists and protesters. Mike Ives and Alexandra Stevenson, "Hong Kong Police Face Criticism over Force Used at Protests," *The New York Times*, 13 June 2019, https://www.nytimes.com/2019/06/13/world/asia/hong-kong-extradition.html (accessed on 14 June 2019); Kris Cheng, "Anti-extradition protest organiser 'disappointed' by Hong Kong leader's refusal to retract bill and resign," *Hong Kong Free Press*, 18 June 2019, https://www.hongkongfp.com/2019/06/18/anti-extradition-protest-organiser-disappointed-hong-kong-leaders-refusal-retract-bill-resign/ (accessed on 19 June 2019).

Comparatively, *Ten Years Taiwan* is not as overtly political as the original *Ten Years*. Instead of directly targeting the government (regardless of party affiliation) or addressing worries over the PRC's influence, *Ten Years Taiwan* focuses on the quotidian life of various groups in the Taiwanese population while also raising important questions about the meaning of "Taiwanese" society. Unlike the usual discussion on Taiwan that constantly emphasises its relations with China, the film calls attention to problems *within* Taiwanese society that may prove detrimental in ten years' time, independent of the China factor. This article analyses the content of *Ten Years Taiwan* by focusing on its three major themes: multiculturalism, tradition, and historical memory. It further argues that *Ten Years Taiwan* challenges the public discourse to reconsider the meaning and direction of "Taiwanese" society. Zeroing in on problems that are neglected or heavily contested in contemporary conversation, *Ten Years Taiwan* warns against casually dismissing these repressed issues and advocates reimagining a Taiwan worth pursuing.

In search of a lost future

Filmmakers often envision different futures of humanity in some form of dystopia. These "lost futures" provide viewers food for thought regarding an alternative, better future. In her classic commentary, Susan Sontag notes how the "aesthetics of destruction" is crucial to the strongly moralistic science fiction films that portray the humane versus the mad (Sontag 1966). The more severely a society is being destroyed, the more arousing the viewing experience becomes, and the more one reflects and, ideally, makes changes in real life for the better. *Godzilla* (1954), for example, serves as a metaphor of the terror of nuclear weapons and mankind's responsibility in creating these potentially self-destructive weapons (Miyamoto 2016). Yet disaster is not simply about physical destruction. It can come in forms such as moral bankruptcy, generational (in)differences, and everyday negligence. Cultural products such as the anime series *Neon Genesis Evangelion* (1995) and the controversial film *Battle Royale* (2000) reflect the existential anxieties of adults and adolescents alike as Japan entered its prolonged "Lost Decade" (Napier 2002; Uno 2011). Such works, "fictive" by nature, offer a creative reading of the impact of past and contemporary issues on the possible future.[4] Reflecting on the present while imagining a lost future, the "Ten Years" of each place represents some of the most challenging and pressing concerns the directors have regarding their respective country. The provocative segments of each film suggest how, figuratively speaking, in ten years' time the problems would become so irresolvable that "disasters" will prevail.

Taiwan, as the late Arif Dirlik reminded us, is a land made by colonialisms (Dirlik 2018). For hundreds of years, Taiwan was under the control of the Dutch, the Spanish, the Zheng regime, the Qing, the Japanese, and then the Republic of China (ROC) under US protection. It has long been what Wu Rwei-ren calls "fragment of/f empires," serving as a peripheral political subject lying at the edges of different empires (Wu 2016: 12, 213).[5] Unlike most colonies that eventually gained independence after the end of World War II, Taiwan's path to decolonisation took a twist. Externally, following the outbreak of the Korean War, the US effectively turned Taiwan into a client state to help contain the spread of communism in Asia (Lin 2016). Internally, the local population grew increasingly frustrated with the Kuomintang (KMT) government's strict policies. The 228 Incident (1947) and the imposition of martial law in 1949 led to four decades of "White Terror." Those suspected of communist activities or sympathy, or those who spoke out against the KMT regime, were arrested, tortured, or even killed (Stolojan 2017). Since Taiwan's transition to democracy in the 1990s, there have been efforts on both governmental and local levels to acknowledge past misdeeds, such as setting up museums and providing compensation to the tens of thousands of victims of the White Terror. While the pursuit of transitional justice has gained considerable momentum in recent decades, especially after the rise of the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) as a competing political force, the KMT remains an influential political party. Much of the discourse in contemporary Taiwan has been aimed at figuring out a way to properly address these historical and political issues (Rowen and Rowen 2017; Stolojan 2017).

In this historical context, the emphasis on the mundane in *Ten Years Taiwan* is a welcome departure from overtly political commentary. By this, I do not mean to suggest that everyday life and "politics" are, or can be, separable. Rather, the film refrains from referencing politically charged topics involving China, such as Taiwanese independence, unlike *Ten Years*, which explicitly discusses the PRC's impact on Hong Kong society. It also does not comment on political battles between the KMT and the DPP, which are more prevalent in contemporary public discourse. Instead, it tackles political problems indirectly, emphasising the lived experiences of the people and how such everyday life is restructured and reconfigured. Focusing on those who are marginalised from the mainstream discussion or imagination of "Taiwan," this collection of shorts provokes its viewers into reconsidering how these different groups all constitute part of Taiwanese society. In other words, it showcases a Taiwan that is shifting away from the dominant Han-centric, Taipei-centric narrative of writing the Formosan story.[6] As James Liu, one of the executive producers of *Ten Years Taiwan*, suggests, the film serves as a reminder of what people tend not to notice in their daily lives.[7] One could even suggest that it is less about not noticing than about active dissociation. Referring to the French colonial legacy, Ann Stoler points to a "colonial aphasia" that emphasises both the loss of access and active dissociation (Stoler 2016). It refers to the lack of available vocabulary to properly articulate one's association with the past, in addition to a cognitive dissociation of the past as having "ended" and thus not affecting the present. This sense of aphasia is prevalent throughout *Ten Years Taiwan*, complementing its discussion of the neglected. The issues mentioned in the film are not problems that will suddenly appear in the future, but ones that already exist. The directors are urging for action to be taken so that "disasters" will not prevail in ten years' time, metaphorically speaking.

Synopsis

Ten Years Taiwan brings together five directors of different backgrounds, each directing an independent story on a pressing problem in Taiwanese society. Lekal Sumi Cilangasan 勒嘎舒米, an Ami/Pangcah from Hualien

4. As Dominick LaCapra suggests, fiction can offer an imaginative reading of the past that could even provide hypotheses for historical research (LaCapra 2018: 129-51). I assert such idea can be applied to films or other forms of creative works as well.
5. Wu Rwei-ren considers five political entities as fitting the description of "fragments of/f empires": Taiwan, Okinawa, North and South Korea, and Hong Kong.
6. This is not just Taiwan's problem *per se*. Existing perceptions and stereotypes make us tend to associate a certain country with specific criteria and disassociate other parts that also constitute the same country. Martin Dusinberre notes in his study of Kaminoseki, a town in western Japan, that for decades there have been "two Japans": Tokyo and the regions. With resources concentrated in the capital and a few major cities, other parts of the country face severe economic and social problems (Dusinberre 2012). Harry Harootunian also notes that (mainstream) history-writing, driven by the nation-state, could potentially conceal or even suppress the everyday, thus inhibiting our ability to understand the everyday life of the population (Harootunian 2004).
7. Comment made by James Liu at "Ten Years International Forum," Hong Kong Asian Film Festival, 11 November 2018.

County in eastern Taiwan, directs *The Can of Anido* (*Eling guantou* 惡靈罐頭). It takes place at Lanyu (Orchid Island), an island off the southeast coast of Taiwan and home to the indigenous Tao/Yami people. Maran is a farmer whose home is decorated with past protest signs against the construction of nuclear waste storage facilities at the island. He has a dream in which, after a huge typhoon, hundreds of nuclear waste cans float onto the beach. Waking up in a state of alarm, he visits the beach he saw in his dream, and everything looks calm. A fellow villager tells Maran that he should prepare for an incoming typhoon. The segment ends with a song about toxic items invading the island.

942 is directed by Rina B. Tsou 鄒隆娜, a Filipina-Taiwanese who grew up in Manila. The first half introduces a female Taiwanese nurse, referred to as "942," at a hospital in Indonesia. She shares a romantic relationship with another female nurse, "899." They live in a cramped environment within the hospital where they must wear masks, as the air is unfiltered. 942 is raped and impregnated by her boss. She manages to get a video of the rape on her phone, but is questioned on whether the rape was staged instead. The second half of the segment is a flashback to ten years before, when 942 was still a high school student in Taiwan. Her father raped and impregnated an Indonesian caretaker, and 942 witnessed how her parents, the translator, and the broker downplayed the seriousness of the case. 942 made up her mind that Taiwan was not a good place to stay, looking forward to the day she could work at somewhere better.

Lu Po-shun's 呂柏勳 *Way Home* (*Luban* 路半) looks at the rural-urban divide through the story of Dong-yang, a young man from Yunlin County in western Taiwan. Dong-yang is upset that his parents keep urging him to move with them to Taipei, preferring to stay behind. Meanwhile, he has a hard time finding a job in the area as factories have relocated to Southeast Asia. During the day, he spends time with his friends and his younger brother, visiting abandoned factories and being the only visitors to the local temple in the evening.

Hsieh Pei-ju's 謝沛如 *A Making of*, with its Chinese title 蝦餃 (*Xiajiao*, shrimp dumpling), shows the making of a shrimp dumpling commercial. The commercial aims to portray the tradition of celebrating Lunar New Year with the whole family. Due to the extremely low birth rate, the production team has trouble finding a real baby to star in the commercial. It tries filming with a fake baby doll instead, much to the dissatisfaction of the shrimp dumpling company's CEO. The producer, who takes to the streets and asks passers-by if they have a baby, finally comes across a young couple and manages to get their baby to star in the commercial.

The final segment, *The Sleep* (*Kunmian* 睏眠), by Lau Kek-huat 廖克發, who was born in Malaysia, follows the story of a woman who uses a special kind of dream service to help her sleep. Dreams and reality become hard to differentiate as she begins having "nightmares" about her past, while her living environment resembles that of a psychiatric centre. All the while, she desperately tries to find her cat, named Wan-wan (灣灣). The last scene shows the woman and the cat in a boat, floating in the middle of the sea, with the woman finally able to enjoy a peaceful rest.

Contested multiculturalism

Taiwan prides itself in being a multicultural society. The ROC Constitution has an additional article that specifically states, "The State affirms cultural pluralism and shall actively preserve and foster the development of aboriginal languages and cultures."[8] Yet this rhetoric of multiculturalism has its geopolitical roots. Allen Chun has criticised multiculturalism in Taiwan as a "closed, *inward*-looking concept" that only attempts to "recognize or incorporate internal others" (Chun 2017: 59). Amidst Taiwan's expulsion from the United Nations and the growing democracy movement in the 1970s and 1980s, the KMT government adopted the principle of multiculturalism as a strategic move to ensure the legitimacy of "mainlanders" (*waishengren* 外省人, those who followed the KMT to Taiwan after 1945) ruling over the rest of the population (Chun 2017; Friedman 2018). In recent years, facing the threat of an increasingly authoritarian PRC, Taiwan has been able to promote itself as a "free country" that endorses "universal" and multicultural values such as ethnic diversity and freedom of speech, the press, and religion.

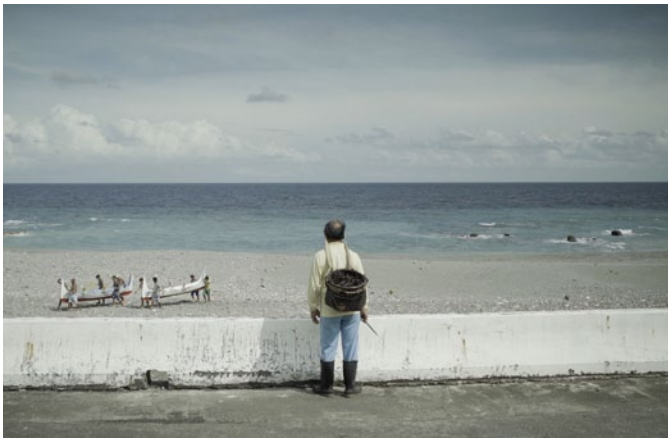

Figure 1. From *The Can of Anido*. Maran is seen staring at the beach, worrying if a huge typhoon may hit the island soon. Courtesy of Golden Scene Co. Ltd.

Accompanying Taiwan's turn to democracy in the 1990s, movements launched by indigenous people have been gathering momentum, emphasising the struggles they have faced for decades (Chuang 2013; Friedman 2018). In August 2016, Tsai Ing-wen became the first Taiwanese President to officially apologise to the indigenous population for centuries of abuses, such as confiscation of ancestral land and forced assimilation. She also set up the Indigenous Historical Justice and Transitional Justice Committee, which aims at acknowledging Taiwan's history of oppression and proposing corresponding changes to existing laws and policies.[9] Despite such efforts, indigenous people, comprising about 2.4% of the total population with 16 officially recognised ethnic groups, continue to feel distant from"mainstream" Taiwan, where over 95% of the population are Han Chinese (Yen 2018). Controversies over the treatment of the indigenous population remain. One such controversy concerns the nuclear waste storage site at Orchid Island, home to the Tao/Yami people. The Chinese title of *The Can of Anido* means "cans of evil spirits," referring to the story of how, when the site was built in the late 1970s, the locals were allegedly told that it was going to be a fish can factory. This site initially served as a way station before the waste was disposed of in oceanic trenches. Yet, in 1991 this way of disposing of nuclear waste was internationally banned. While the three nuclear plants in Taiwan no longer sent nuclear waste to Orchid Island after 1996, approximately 100,000 "cans of evil spirits" have remained at the site ever since. The locals believe that the existence of these cans explains why sweet potatoes and taro in the fields become deformed, and they decry the loss of lives of those who worked at these sites with insufficient safety equipment.[10]

8. Office of the President, Republic of China (Taiwan), "Additional Articles to the Constitution of the Republic of China," article 10, https://english.president.gov.tw/Page/95 (accessed on 1 December 2018).
9. Presidential Office Indigenous Historical Justice and Transnational Justice Committee, "The committee," https://indigenous-justice.president.gov.tw/EN/Page/46 (accessed on 1 May 2019).
10. "壕溝裡的惡靈! 與核廢料共生 30 年 你不知道的蘭嶼下場" (Haogouli de eling! Yu hefeiliao gongsheng sanshinian ni bu zhidao de Lanyu xiachang, The evil spirits in the trench: The Lanyu that lives with nuclear waste for 30 years), *SET News*, 24 April 2014, https://www.setn.com/News.aspx?NewsID=20706 (accessed on 25 November 2018).

The debate over nuclear energy in Taiwan has been ongoing for decades (Ho 2014). Takahashi Tetsuya, a philosophy professor and a native of Fukushima Prefecture, calls the use of nuclear energy a "sacrificial system." He refers specifically to "a destruction of human rights whose systemic nature depends on ignoring the dangers posed to the 'sacrificed,'" and in which "the benefits accruing to some parties are made possible at the expense of others' lives – whether biological existence, health (…) dignity, or hope" (Takahashi 2014).[11] The logic of this system also entails sacrificing for "the good of the country." The dual identity of the people on the island – aborigines and people living near nuclear waste storage sites – cast them to an even more marginalised role. Maran's past participation in anti-nuclear movement further demonstrates this inconvenient truth: if such movements fail, it is aborigines such as Maran who will have to worry about living right next to these "cans of evil spirits" for decades. *The Can of Anido* reveals the aphasia one holds despite the rhetoric of multiculturalism. The aborigines are cast under the "sacrificial system" while the rest of the population enjoys the benefit of nuclear energy. There is no room for people like Maran in the supposed national narrative of progress.

Figure 2. 942 and other nurses live in a cramped environment, drawing parallels to the living conditions of some migrant workers in Taiwan. Courtesy of Golden Scene Co. Ltd.

Similarly, *942* covers another aspect of neglected lives in Taiwan – the migrant workers. Coincidentally, this short is also based on real life events. In 2016, an Indonesian caregiver recorded, with her phone, her own rape at the hands of her Taiwanese employer. The video was released online and sparked outrage in Indonesia before making headlines in the Taiwanese media.[12] In *942*, a similar story is told. The nurse 942 recalls having witnessed her family, the translator, and the broker dismissing the case of an Indonesian caretaker who was raped and impregnated by her father.

Due to shortages in access to cheap labour, in the early 1990s Taiwan turned to Southeast Asia to fill the void. As of May 2019, there are 705,595 Southeast Asian migrant workers in Taiwan, coming mainly from Indonesia, the Philippines, Thailand, and Vietnam, who work primarily in the productive industries and social welfare.[13] As the 2016 episode shows, violence against migrant workers tends to, at least initially, go unnoticed. Factors such as language barriers, inaccessibility to proper legal channels, and the majority population's indifference subject Southeast Asian migrant workers to undesirable situations in which they suffer from verbal, physical, or even sexual abuse (Jiang 2018). Yet these workers tend not to seek help, fearing that the local police would not believe them or citing past experiences where their recruitment agencies dismissed their concerns. Hoping to avoid trouble for themselves, the recruitment agencies tend to recruit workers from poor and less educated backgrounds, as they are less likely to complain or bargain for their rights (Lan 2016; Jiang 2018).[14]

The treatment of Southeast Asian migrant workers in East Asia has been under scrutiny for some time. The Japanese government's long-established training program, which allows other Asian workers to work in Japan for a number of years, has been criticised for relegating foreigners to cheap labour, amidst stories of other abuses.[15] In Hong Kong, the case of an Indonesian domestic worker who was physically abused by her Hong Kong employer drew international attention to the treatment of more than 300,000 Indonesian, Filipino, and Thai domestic helpers working in the city.[16] The broader issue is the everyday prejudice that ethnic minorities routinely encounter in these contexts. News reports regarding migrant workers describe them in terms that imply a binary divide between the "civilised locals" and the "uncivilised ethnic minorities" (Cheng 2016). In *942*, one news headline reads that the migrant worker filmed the rape so as to blackmail her employers. Another headline for a separate incident reads that there is massive public support for a policeman who, allegedly in self-defence, gunned down a migrant worker. In reality, media reports on migrant workers often contain a derogatory tone, describing them as "violent," "lazy," or simply "unable to manage hard working conditions" (Cheng 2016). In such scenario, news providers and news receivers alike fail to acknowledge their racially charged understanding of Southeast Asian ethnic minorities, relegating them to the category of the "uncivilised others."[17]

942 envisions a future where Taiwanese, or one could say East Asians, suffer from the same way they used to treat their foreign migrant workers. It warns against dismissing foreign migrant workers, depicting an imaginary future where the scenario will play out in the same manner, only with the characters in reverse roles. This also highlights the tension behind the rhetoric of multiculturalism, inciting questions about who belongs and who does not under this popular term.

A day in the life

There is an apparent "tension" between tradition and "modernity." As Simon Gunn summarises, modernity designates "a moment when 'history' itself comes to take on certain definite meanings as the progress of reason

11. Takahashi discusses the "sacrificial system" also with Okinawa and its associated U.S. military bases in mind.
12. Rina B. Tsou acknowledges that she read about this story when writing the initial script of *942* (Yen 2018); Wendy Lee, "Taiwanese man charged with rape of Indonesian caregiver," *Taiwan News*, 2 November 2016, https://www.taiwannews.com.tw/en/news/3016074 (accessed on 11 May 2019).
13. ROC Ministry of Labour, "Foreign Workers in Productive Industries and Social Welfare by Various Type and Nationality," http://statdb.mol.gov.tw/html/mon/c12050.htm (accessed on 20 June 2019).
14. Migrant workers have criticised the brokerage system for not providing enough protection and at times even misleading them into breaking the law. Keoni Everington, "Hundreds of migrant workers protest in Taipei against brokers, demand direct hiring," *Taiwan News*, 29 April 2019, https://www.taiwannews.com.tw/en/news/3690379 (accessed on 10 May 2019).
15. Simon Denyer and Akiko Kashiwagi, "Japan wakes up to exploitation of foreign workers as immigration debate rages," *The Washington Post*, 21 November 2018, https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2018/11/21/japan-wakes-up-exploitation-foreign-workers-immigration-debate-rages (accessed 5 December 2018).
16. "Employer in Hong Kong maid abuse case is sentenced to six years' jail," *The Guardian*, 27 February 2015, https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/feb/27/hong-kong-court-sentences-woman-to-6-years-in-prison-for-abusing-indonesian-maid-0 (accessed 5 December 2018).
17. The original *Ten Years* features an India-born Hongkonger, Peter, who arrived at Hong Kong at the age of five, has never "returned" to India, and does not speak Hindi. He notes that throughout his acting career, he has always played the role of the terrorist or the scheming bad guy. The director suggests that Peter symbolises "the marginalised who are simply trying to survive amidst tough conditions" (*zai jiafeng zhong shengcun de bianyuanren* 在夾縫中生存的邊緣人), a fitting description for the marginalised groups as portrayed in *942* and other segments as well (Ten Years Studio 2017: 14-33).

or, still more, fundamentally, as a purposeful process of human development" (Gunn 2006: 120). "Tradition" becomes opposed to "reason" and is deemed outdated, superstitious, and in some cases unnecessary in the age of"progress." The question, then, is how to keep tradition "alive" in the modern age when it continues to have a role in everyday life.

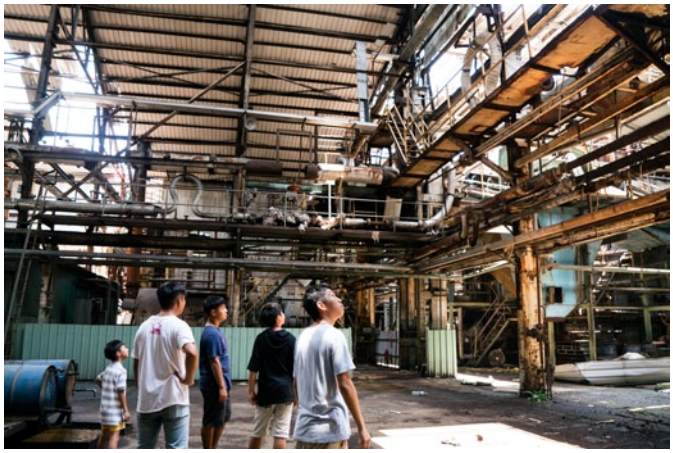

Figure 3. From *Way Home*. Dong-yang and his friends visit an abandoned factory and have an adventure at the site. Courtesy of Golden Scene Co. Ltd.

Way Home focuses on reconsidering the relationship with one's hometown and the role of tradition in modern life. The protagonist, Dong-yang, struggles to find a job in the countryside. When his friends ask Dong-yang why he does not want to move to Taipei, where job opportunities are certainly more numerous, Dong-yang replies that they (his friends) are here and there is nothing in Taipei for him. Implicit in this statement is the ancestral and social contingencies of one's "roots." Dong-yang's snubbing of Taipei should not be seen as simply a teenager's reluctance to "grow up" and explore an unfamiliar yet "better" environment, but rather as the fear of losing one's connection to "home" and hence becoming "rootless."

Historically, temples have served as centres of communal ritual activity, and people pay tribute to deities in exchange for prosperity in life (Pas 2003). After the KMT regime relocated to Taiwan in 1949, temples became a space for Taiwanese to "re-connect" with the past as they left behind their ancestors' graves in mainland China (Nedostup 2017). Unlike other adults in the segment, the young Dong-yang is committed to keeping traditions close to his heart. One scene shows Dong-yang inside the local temple for hours, quietly and respectfully asking for the gods' guidance. His friends, waiting outside, wonder what is taking him so long. For Dong-yang, asking for divine advice is perhaps the most natural thing to do when facing a tough decision in life. When his younger brother casually comments that their mother thinks these gods are imaginary, implying the meaninglessness of his action, Dong-yang instantly becomes agitated and storms off. Not only is the younger brother making a scene at a supposedly solemn place, but he is also disturbing Dong-yang's ritual of communicating with the deities. *Way Home* makes an interesting contrast here with Dong-yang's older family members. Traditionally, before moving to another place, one should perform a ceremony of asking the gods or ancestors for permission to move. However, instead of following the "proper" steps, Dong-yang's family carries out the ceremony half-heartedly, casually moving the spirit tablets (*shenzhu pai* 神主牌) around as if they are trivial items. To the eyes of those practicing the tradition, this would be a disrespectful act, yet the adults do not give it much thought (Yen 2018). The teenager is preserving the tradition while the adults, who have been "abroad" to big cities, have lost that sentimental connection to the past.[18]

The use of language also reflects the dynamics of preserving local custom. Dong-yang's younger brother speaks Mandarin, but Dong-yang and his friends all converse in Taiwanese Hokkien, the local language. After settling in Taiwan, the KMT established Mandarin as the national language (*guoyu* 國語) and discouraged the use of vernaculars. Speaking vernacular in the classroom, for instance, would result in punishment (M.H. Wu 2011). This only changed in the 1990s as the language policy began to relax, allowing the teaching of and public broadcast in different languages. While indigenous languages and Taiwanese Hakka are now officially recognised languages, and Taiwanese Hokkien remains widely spoken, the legacy of education policy under the martial law period means that Mandarin remains the dominant language in Taiwan. The politics of language also contains a class element, as Taiwanese Hokkien speakers are often portrayed as coarse and less educated or, in other words, "improper" (*ibid.*).[19] Dong-yang's daily tongue in Taiwanese Hokkien is challenged by his younger brother's casual use of Mandarin. The departure to Taipei implies the loss of access to his hometown language and reflects a tension between the (often rural) hometown and the modern city lifestyle. Dong-yang's story raises an important question about the changing role or even necessity of "roots" in modern society: Is there a "root" when "tradition" is slowly fading away? Moreover, if our understanding of Taiwan follows a Taipei-centric perspective, how do we understand the everyday life of people in the "countryside" such as Dong-yang and the challenges they face when their life experiences do not necessarily fit into the mainstream historical narrative of the nation (Harootunian 2004)?

Figure 4. From *A Making of*. The production team tries to shoot the commercial with a fake baby doll, and its head falls off. Courtesy of Golden Scene Co. Ltd.

A Making of, the most light-hearted segment on the surface, looks at the preservation of tradition with dark humour. While the commercial in this segment aims to portray the tradition of families having dinner together in celebration of the Lunar New Year, the CEO of the shrimp dumpling company emphasises that times have changed, and he is happy to change with the times. One such change is the suggestion of featuring a male homosexual couple with their baby in the commercial. Although Taiwan's Constitutional Court ruled in 2017 that same-sex couples have the right to marry under the Constitution, thus clearing the path for Taiwan to become the first Asian country to legalise same-sex marriage in May 2019, heated debates

18. Lu Po-shun acknowledges that he practiced *poe* divination (*zhijiao* 擲筊) before deciding to accept a role in *Ten Years Taiwan* (Yen 2018).
19. Guan Renjian 管仁健, "我們與 '惡等於台語' 的距離?" (Women yu "e dengyu taiyu" de juli?, The distance between us and "Taiwanese Hokkien as evil"?), *New Talk*, 17 April 2019, https://newtalk.tw/news/view/2019-04-07/230159 (accessed on 8 May 2019).

about homosexuality and same-sex marriage persist.[20] This issue remains controversial as, among other reasons, it goes against the notion of bearing children related by blood that is crucial to the traditional conception of "family" (Jhang 2018). This does not seem to be a problem in *A Making-of*. No one on the scene objects to the idea of having the same-sex couple present their baby to their parents in a commercial about preserving tradition. It is suggested that the low birth rate is a serious concern, to the extent that in the segment, the hospital has even closed down its department of obstetrics and gynaecology.

Taiwan has been facing the problem of low birth rate for years.[21] The segment goes on to suggest several reasons for this. One reason is expensive living costs. In the segment, many characters reveal that raising a child is financially unviable, especially when they hardly earn enough to support themselves. Such concerns, related to problems of low wages and lack of job prospects, have long been in the public discourse.[22] Another reason is migration. When the elderly actors are asked about their grandchildren, they promptly sneer that their children and grandchildren are all living abroad and rarely visit Taiwan. A third reason is pollution. The producer's friend, who is supposed to bring her baby over, refuses to leave the house because of heavy air pollution. When searching for a baby on the streets, the producer and all the pedestrians are wearing face masks. Although the cause of air pollution is not explained, one could infer that this undermines people's faith in giving birth as well, for no one could trust raising a child in such an environment.

It is noteworthy that the title itself contains an element of wordplay. The Chinese title for this segment, "shrimp dumpling" (*xiajiao* 蝦餃), refers to a common dish in dim sum. According to an interview with the director, the pronunciation of shrimp dumpling sounds similar to "messing around" (*xiajiao* 瞎攪) (Yen 2018). The notion of tradition in this segment points to the image of an idealised family dinner where generations of the same family sit at the same table and share their happiness. Yet, every character knows that it is a façade: this is something that happens in a commercial but not in "real life." The CEO insists that a real baby is necessary for the commercial because the baby symbolises the future. But how can we talk about upholding tradition if the next generation does not even exist to begin with? Despite its humorous tone, *A Making-of* actually offers a grim future for Taiwan. The unresolved social problems do not instil enough confidence in the people, reflected in their refusal to give birth.

Figure 5. From *The Sleep*. The woman wakes up from a "nightmare" after using the sleep machine. Courtesy of Golden Scene Co. Ltd.

Formosa besieged

Ending *Ten Years Taiwan* is *The Sleep*. This segment reflects concerns over memory and history that all participants in the Ten Years International Project are likely to share. Explaining the creation behind the segment, Lau Kek-huat points to the Chinese title *Kunmian* 睏眠, which by removing the radical *mu* 目 (coincidentally, the character for "eye") becomes *kunmin* 困民, the people who are trapped or bound (Yen 2018).

Trapped where, and bound by what? Through the story of the woman who uses a sleep service, *The Sleep* illustrates the desire to forget one's past, yet that is not the whole story. The woman keeps searching for her cat, Wan-wan, and in the last scene sleeps peacefully with Wan-wan in a boat in the middle of the ocean. If we infer that Wan-wan is Taiwan, which geographically is bound by the sea, then it would be fair to suggest that despite all of the unpleasant memories that the woman wishes to forget, the affiliation with Taiwan – whether in the form of identity, nationalist or cultural sentiment, or something else – brings her peace of mind. If Dong-yang in *Way Home* wishes to maintain his roots in his hometown, then the woman in *The Sleep* shows that only by having roots will one feel secure.

In his reading of contemporary Taiwan, Wu Rwei-ren suggests that Taiwan is bound by its historical development of being situated at the peripheries of multiple empires. This geopolitical development gave rise to Taiwanese nationalism, yet at the same time forbids the completion of this identity formation (Wu 2016). This existential crisis generates a sense of frustration, for people cannot see a way out of this dilemma. To (re)claim this Taiwanese identity, in Wu's terms, or to resolve this existential crisis, there is a need to thoroughly come to terms with one's past, even if some of the episodes are unsettling. If we remain content with our aphasia, we will not be able to truly reconcile our present with our past, and it will come back to haunt us, as in the "nightmares" in *The Sleep*. In order to overcome our aphasia and properly address history, Wu, drawing on the writings of the Nobel Prize laureate Õe Kenzaburõ, proposes to be truly moral or righteous. Referencing the dilemma that Japanese progressive intellectuals faced after World War II, when they had to confront the misdeeds of their country while maintaining their identification with it, Wu points to the people of Hiroshima under Õe's pen: despite the hardship in the aftermath of the dropping of the world's first atomic bomb, the people worked with determination to revive their city so that their neighbours could live with dignity. If the atomic bomb represents the "sinful" (*e* 惡), the experience in Hiroshima points to "righteousness" (*shan* 善) that could triumph over the wrong, an almost biblical parallel to the Great Flood that presented humanity with a chance of renewal after a disaster (Wu 2016: 162-70). Putting that into context, it would suggest less of a total purge of previous wrongdoers (but not totally disregarding their errors) and more of a recognition of how history continues to affect the present in order to pursue a reconciliatory solution.

Attempts in recent years have shown that such a path towards reconciliation, drawing on the rhetoric of morality and transitional justice, is difficult yet possible. Chuang Ya-chung's observation of aborigine activism in the 1980s and 1990s leads him to suggest that ethnic consciousness is not just about completing a nationalist project but also represents a "moment of moral articulation, justification, and decision" that supports multicultural

20. The 2018 referendum result suggests that the majority of the Taiwanese population thinks marriage should be defined as between a man and a woman under the Civil Code, but legally the referendum cannot reverse the court's ruling. A special law was hence introduced and passed by the Legislative Yuan in May 2019. "Taiwan gay marriage: Parliament legalizes same-sex unions," *BBC News*, 17 May 2019, https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-48305708 (accessed on 30 May 2019).
21. Keoni Everington, "Taiwan's birthrate plunges to an 8-year low in 2018," *Taiwan News*, 7 January 2019, https://www.taiwannews.com.tw/en/news/3611847 (accessed on 22 February 2019).
22. "Most Taiwanese desire overseas jobs, survey finds," *Taipei Times*, 12 May 2018, http://www.taipeitimes.com/News/taiwan/archives/2018/05/12/2003692951 (accessed on 5 January 2019).

values (Chuang 2013: 135). In addition to covering the indigenous population, Taiwan's multicultural education has also extended to include themes such as new immigrants and Southeast Asian culture, following the Tsai government's "New Southbound Policy" to build better relations with Southeast Asian countries (Wu 2017; Huynh 2018). In Tsai's inaugural address as President of the ROC in May 2016, she promised to establish a Truth and Reconciliation Commission to "pursue true social recognition, so that all Taiwanese can hear the mistakes of that era (…) From here on out, history will no longer divide Taiwan. Instead, it will propel Taiwan forward."[23] Tsai's approach leans more towards social reconciliation than retributive justice, acknowledging past repression of the Chiang regime while still upholding the systemic framework set by the KMT (Rowen and Rowen 2017; Stolojan 2017). Whether it will be the "correct" solution remains to be seen, but it demonstrates Taiwan's effort to move forward without compromising its past.

Conclusion: When Formosa reclaims the world

What makes *Ten Years* a social phenomenon in Hong Kong is that its apocalyptic portrayal of Hong Kong by the year 2025 has a certain element of reality effect. One important element of *Ten Years*, however, is that it is not about a binary divide between China and Hong Kong. As Kevin Carrico's analysis of *Ten Years* suggests, Hong Kong's transformation cannot be explained by some predestined processes but as "the direct result of what might otherwise appear to be pragmatic and reasonable decisions, even acting in one's seemingly rationally perceived best interests" (Carrico 2017: 18). Hong Kong's dilemma, which Taiwan shares, is that it has a hard time figuring out where it stands in the face of a huge Chinese market without losing its own socio-cultural characteristics and autonomy.

For obvious reasons, Taiwan has to be concerned about the China factor as well. Yet, unlike *Ten Years*'s focus on the socio-political future of Hong Kong *vis-à-vis* the China problem, *Ten Years Taiwan* suggests that attention should also be devoted to the treatment of marginalised groups (aborigines, migrant workers, rural inhabitants), problems that have subsided from the mainstream discourse (nuclear waste storage sites, rural underdevelopment, preservation of tradition), and issues that are sensitive but require thoughtful solutions (the environment, abuse of migrant workers, historical memory). This is not to deny the looming significance of the China problem, which plays a role in the shaping of Taiwan's historical memory and politics as well. However, conceptualising Taiwan solely in relation to China would be to marginalise its own subjectivity.

Another reminder of *Ten Years Taiwan* is that Taiwan is a multicultural state, in the sense that our imagination of Taiwan needs to undergo a transformation to avoid essentialising Taiwan into just another Han-Chinese-looking state. As the segments demonstrate, Taiwan consists of many different groups of people who do not speak the same language, literally or figuratively. The historical development of Taiwan provides room for multiculturalism to be a dominant ideology, and it fits well with the booming civic nationalism that has been growing in recent decades (Kwan 2016). To avoid being trapped or bound by the burden of history, and to overcome this dissociation of the past or the aphasia of history, there is a need to reconcile and not revolt, to commemorate and not neglect. In the words of Dominick LaCapra, working through the past "is a process that may never reach closure (…) but may allow for a reinvestment in the present with openings to the future" (LaCapra 2018: 59).[24] Idealistic as it may be, this approach might present the best chance for Taiwan to "reclaim the world," as the subtitle of Wu's book suggests. *Ten Years Taiwan* shows that while much is to be desired, Taiwan's future may not be as gloomy as it sounds.

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23. Office of the President, Republic of China (Taiwan), "Inaugural Ceremony of the 14th Term President and Vice President of the Republic of China (Taiwan)." https://english.president.gov.tw/Page/252 (accessed on 14 December 2018).
24. LaCapra's notion of "working through" contains a psychoanalytical element, suggesting a "modulated form of repetition that (…) resists compulsion and closure, yet comes with critical and self-critical judgment, enabling possible, and possibly more desirable, futures" (LaCapra 2018: 5).

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