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Answer [Feel free to use this space to reflect and write down your answer!]:

Let me give you my answer as Polyphony's editor-in-chief. In order to get this issue - our whopping 4th print version - out, it is safe to say that we have definitely gone through some rough waves. Everyone, including me, has been rather occupied by the busyness of life; from extended seasons of silence to the recent chaos of getting the creative brain cells to work, it's surely been a whole rollercoaster ride to gather these pieces, artworks, and visual elements together, lay them out, and make this issue into a reality. At one point, it was even uncertain as to whether or not a 2023 print version would be released; we had to ask for extensions, reschedule deadlines at later dates, and all that jazz.

As you can see, it has been quite chaotic. But, that's what life is like sometimes. And that is what this issue is centered on. It wasn't intentional for this to be our leading theme, but the articles in this volume seem to be pretty aligned with the complexity of experiences and of the everyday. We've got wonderful pieces about one's journey with remembering the past, the blur surrounding the meanings of home and identity, honest and vulnerable reflections on one's own experiences... Let me stop here before I spoil.

Above all, our 4th print issue would not have become a reality without the help, patience, and creativity of our beautiful team: Chok Jia Xuan, Shan Min Kha, Sonava Tadao, Alyana Morales, Joan Silole, Chigaemazu Ibegwam, Kha Nguyen, and the rest of the editors-writers-photographers-artists who have contributed their time and skill to help us out. You've not only helped breathe life into this issue, but into Polyphony!

As you start flipping through pages, reading the words written, and absorbing the emotions present within, I hope that you are able to look back on your own experiences and find comfort in the weirdness of life.

Letter from the Editor

Hi [reader]!

It's been a while. You might be wondering who I am, so let me introduce myself for a bit. My name is Kayla, a 4th-year student who's been going through waves of immense appreciation for my life right now as well as fumbling doubt over the what-could-be's in a few years' time. Everyday, my mind seems to be occupied by all sorts of thoughts, starting from what I am in the mood to eat to what my future is going to look like. Having gone back to "normal life" with me being able to travel and move around without much restrictions, I feel like there is so much for me to discover — the freedom and privilege that I hold in my hands is both liberating, yet overwhelming at times. All in all, life has been a little weird - and that is to say the least.

What about you? How have you been? What has life been like for you? Are you on the same boat as me - one that voyages between rough waves before finding its way to cruise through calm seas?

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*Special thanks as well to all the food, things and
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Lending Thoughts from a Mango Tree

– Diary Entries of A Tree and A Person

Words and Visuals by Jia Xuan Chok

In my reality, trees and people both have their own ways of documenting life. I decided to take a third-person perspective and peek into their diary entries (don't ever do that in real life), weaving their stories into a reflective interspecies dialogue that explores how they entangle with one another beyond the grounds of proximity. Identity is formed and changed throughout the process as they mix up.

“Precarity is the condition of being vulnerable to others. Unpredictable encounters transform us; we are not in control, even of ourselves.” – Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing

Tree, 18th of July 2021

Have you ever taken a moment to observe your surroundings, or perhaps lend us an ear or feel us around? What everyday dramas are unfolding within your neighborhood ecosystem? The duration of which I've stood here has eluded my memory, but today is just another day standing here, in the backyard of a fellow human's house, amidst a bustling community of squirrels, bees, Malay civets, Black-naped Orioles, a family of sparrows, fungi, ferns and an assortment of greens. Today is another day continuing our polyphonic assemblage that makes diverse lifeways. Each of us have our own way of living, nurturing nature under our unique way of caring. Apart from self-subsistence, a healthy micro ecosystem takes from the individual function of each organism. For example, I'm in charge of regulating the temperature, the bees work on pollination, the squirrels in fertilization and planting seeds, and the ferns in providing microhabitats as well as air filtering. All of this happens under the frequent surveillance of this person, who we have come to believe to be the daughter of the house owners.

This person spends most of her time sitting by the window-side desk on the second floor, and she is staring at me again. For how long, I couldn't remember, but I just let her stare because it's not like I can leave, and I think everytime she does that, something is going on inside her head.

Person, (date undocumented)

Drenched in the evening glow of this day, the green mangoes reflected a golden hue that captivated my mind, and it felt like an invitation to write about it.

The green mango tree outside of my bedroom window has gone virtually unnoticed for the past years; not to my dad though – he has been patiently waiting for the many forces of nature to co-produce the being of this tree. So, when it started dropping mango bombs on the roof of my verandah, it landed a sonorous crash inside my mind as well. All of a sudden, its presence turned into a prominent statement, as if yelling, “HEY!” – a thread that ties a tree and a girl to a journey of collaborative identity construction.

I find myself observing the tree more and more, woven into their history at the same time theirs woven into mine – a human-nonhuman conversation unspoken yet palpably alive, birthing a quiet metamorphosis from an ignorant consumer to a careful conservationist.

Very often, I stare at the tree with tangled thoughts, spouting rhetorical questions. Little did I realize, the season my dad and I started planning ways to harvest the unreachable mangoes in the tree before they make holes on our verandah roof, was the day I unconsciously self-enrolled in the school of multispecies entangling art. Now and then, I think about the mango tree that sprouted from the seed discarded through a nonchalant swing of an arm, buried by elusive squirrels, nurtured by the efforts of all forces; the mango

tree now missing from my vicinity as I reminisce the rustling of its leaves far away from home in Japan, where I study abroad.

I still remember how back home in Malaysia, retired individuals often sit under a tree in the late afternoon to catch up on the latest village gossip while children pillow their forehead with an arm against the trunk of a tree as they close their eyes and count to ten during a game of hide-and-seek. Village gatherings almost always happen near the presence of towering trees. People bond through fun, laughter, and food, oftentimes forgetting these nonhumans - the taken-for-granted creators of social landscapes - that brought them together. It is under the shade of a decades-year-old tree that stories are passed on.

You see, trees might not go places, but they are secretly threading history and transforming hearts – they bring conversations to places and exist as an indispensable part of conservation dialogues. It doesn't matter if they're clad to the ground because even so, they travel with time and imaginaries. They become the root of inspiration for many globally circulating stories of climate action and initiatives. "We must fight against deforestation or else we'll be doomed!" rallied environmental activists around the globe. A symphony of tangible life – trees, clean air, animals – joins with the intangible essence of our identities, yearnings, fears, and hope for the morrows. Amidst this unruly interplay, conservation finds its defiant dance.

Tree, 2nd of January 2023

The self-awareness as a lone tree beckons the question of whether my presence speaks of substance. How the eco-emergency puts me constantly in anxiety and elicits frequently the urge to do something, even as I'm already straining against the tethers of my own limitations. There's only so much I can contribute as one tree in a grand cosmic drama, and so I think about the trees who are weaving stories in the world's biggest forests and whose existence collectively affects the global climate, landscapes, and oceans. It's hard to imagine removing a pebble from the shore of a still body of water without making the water around it move; the same way it's hard and terrifying to imagine what kind of effect the disappearance of one thing on the surface of earth can have on all dwellers because we're all somehow more interconnected as you think. Hence, I often imagine what would happen if I, a small mango tree in somebody's backyard, were cut down or died... Would it even matter?



What significance do I, a single tree, have on the biosphere? And then I spiral into a burrow of frustration.

Person, 24th of July 2023

So often, we trivialize the power we have in morphing the system that instigate changes on our natural landscapes and fail to recognize the interconnectedness of our own world-making projects and those of the others. We live in a continuum where nature shapes us and vice versa. A lot of people don't see that there is this world alongside theirs, only visible if they slacken their pace and feel around with their senses and sensibilities. It's vast, slow, colorful, interconnected, creative, vulnerable, and contaminated.

“Progress means: humanity emerges from its spellbound state no longer under the spell of progress as well, itself nature, by becoming aware of its own indigenoussness to nature and by halting the mastery over nature through which nature continues its mastery.” – Theodor Adorno

I must say it's challenging to stay afloat with tragic allegories weighing you down, but the thing about being young is having the passion to romanticize a hopeful future amidst an emergency-yet-to-turn-absolute-catastrophe. The famous Japanese matsutake's survival skills serve as a testimony for signs of hope at the end of the world. I saw how nature is both vulnerable and resilient – a vessel of possibility and hope that allows me the courage to dream a green fantasy.

Tree, 22nd of August 2023

When the fruits in my hair began to ripen once more, the person stuck a thingamajig – two broomsticks connected with a green net tied at the end of the second stick – out of her window until it reached a good bunch of mangoes. She pulled and pulled and pulled and the mangoes submitted to the embrace of the green net.

Person, 22nd of August 2023

“Thank you for the fruits, Mango Tree,” I expressed my gratitude quietly in my heart. A silly thought surfaced in my head, and I half-shouted, “Thank you for the fruits, Mango Tree!”

From then on, that is, when I developed the habit of speaking to inanimate objects, I started to notice that it was more than simply the fruits that I care about now. I hear them speaking and caring for each other in a polyphonic ensemble, and I think, maybe they can hear me.

Tree, 2nd of September 2023

A few months after I questioned my identity, two saplings crept up from the ground on both sides of me! I became aware of my ability to, in part, nurture the growth of other beings, as well as my growth owing to the nurture belonging to theirs, hence becoming is always becoming with something else. Existing with the becomings and becoming-withs of all beings, I venture into a hopeful future of multispecies co-existence and collaborative survival.

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When Home Doesn't Feel Like Home: A Self-Reflection of Reverse Culture Shock

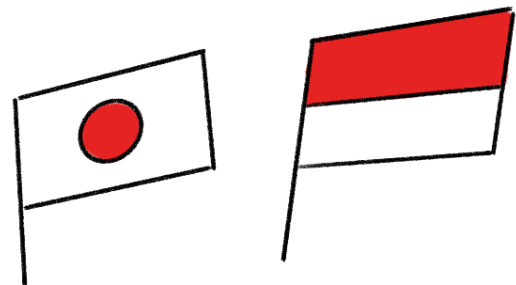
Words and Photos by Nazyra Tachiara Azla



It all started exactly 4 years ago when I set foot in the land of the setting sun, Japan. Before embarking on a one-year exchange program, I and 25 other participants were equipped with a lot of knowledge, such as how to manage expectations, deal with stress and language barriers, and face culture shock. One of the lessons we learned on how to handle culture shock was to suspend our judgment and observe as outsiders. Everything went smoothly, and little by little, I began to understand and become familiar with Japanese culture.

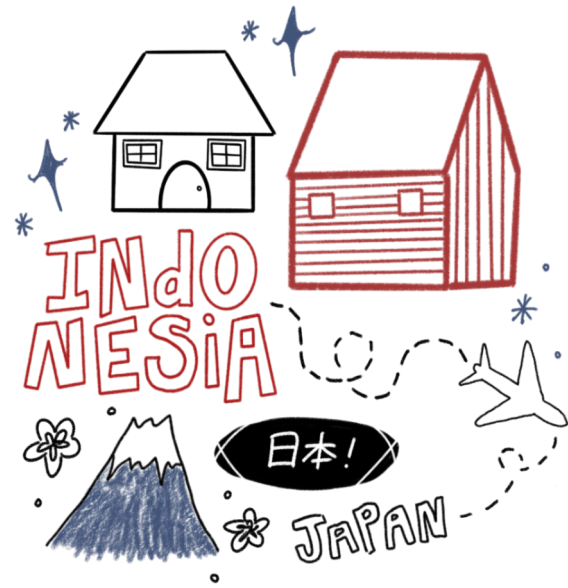
A year passed, and I returned to Indonesia. Among all the things I learned, there was nothing that reminded me of re-culture shock — that readjusting to my own culture was way harder than learning a new one. It was a battle of emotional and psychological stages to fit in again with my original culture.

HOME. A word that often evokes feelings of comfort when used in phrases like "it feels like home." For me, home is Indonesia. But what if Indonesia doesn't feel like home anymore, where it does not provide that sense of comfort that it normally does?



The lost sense of belonging. I felt like I didn't belong to any community. In Japan, people saw me as a foreigner from Southeast Asia; my behavior and thoughts were associated with Southeast Asia. But when I returned to Indonesia, people saw me behaving like a "foreigner" with my way of socializing, expressing feelings, communicating, and thinking. They said I couldn't use what I had learned in Japan. This made me feel very lonely and lost, as I thought I didn't belong to any particular community.

The last challenge I had was how I became judgmental. After returning, I questioned a lot about my own home country – why people behaved and acted in such manners, or why they thought in a certain way. For example, in Indonesia, people don't like to stand in line for something, but in Japan, we could wait in line for a restaurant for 45 minutes or even longer. This disparity in behavior perplexed me.



Looking back on my journey, I found priceless wisdom. I learned that confusion is okay and that it's a normal part of life. The discovery of how to rely on myself and believe in my abilities was like going on a quest to uncover who I truly am. Exploring different viewpoints expanded my understanding of the world, and I cherished the skill of not being quick to judge others. And through it all, I conquered the challenge of fitting back into my own culture, like solving a puzzle that made me feel at home again.

At the end of this chapter, it took me roughly two months to adjust to the culture of my homeland. I realized that being somewhat confused helped me grow. I honed the ability to lean on myself and developed profound self-trust. The kaleidoscope of perspectives I encountered enlightened me, and the invaluable skill of suspending judgment was etched into my being. At the end of the day, I finally embraced the challenge of reintegrating myself into the tapestry of Indonesian culture.

Repetition

Poems and Visuals by Mattie Balagat

I want to want little.
 To dream like a seed,
 tucked into earth, perchance
 a seasonal sunshine. Greet
 the Serendipitous
 earthworm and the curiosity
 of rainwater. I wish to reside
 in the permanence of touch.
 I have two hands to love
 what I have known.
 Oh wind which sends the
 spore home, which caresses
 the tops of trees! Teach
 me this gentle song!

No language sings full

No language sings full
 Without the heave of presence
 Being now-with. Translate
 This lightness where we've
 Settled, to each a name.



The Obscureness of the Meaning of Home and Identity

Jnifar G. Yumi

I. homING — In this class, it has been used as a verb rather than just a noun, as the process of internalizing several external factors into our lives.

When we travel or live abroad, we are closely observed by the people in those places, just as we learn from and adapt to their cultures. Over this course of time when we are abroad, we often come across the question: what is home? For 1.5 or second-generation migrants, they are often asked, “where are you from?” or “where are you from, really?” For them, it is a question that disguises as curiosity about the ethnic background of the person being asked. How is the process of homING done for them? How has the identity of child migrants been formed by their parents, who were also migrants in a foreign country? For this paper, I have interviewed a GDP student and took his case to probe into the literature review of the course readings.

My interviewee, Junayeed Matin, is a 22-year-old second-generation migrant from Bangladesh to Japan, where his parents moved for work purposes thirty years ago. In our conversation about his experience living in a foreign country, he shared about how his parents shaped his identity, how he formed his own definition of home, and how the constant changes in his environment affected his sense of belonging.

Jnifar G. Yumi (JGY): To start with, what was the initial reason behind your parents' migrating to Japan specifically instead of having other options?

Junayeed Matin (JM): My father wanted to pursue his higher studies, PhD, with a scholarship. Since he found that opportunity in Japan, he completed his degree in Dentistry here and he went back to Bangladesh to open a clinic to practice his dentistry. Not being successful in that attempt, he thought he would find better opportunities in Japan, so he moved here with my mother, after which my brother and I were born.

JGY: Did you visit Bangladesh with your family often, or have you stayed there for a long time?

JM: When I was in the third grade, my parents moved back to Bangladesh for about two years, and we settled again in Japan after that. Since then, I have been visiting Bangladesh every year with my parents, but the last time I went back home was in... 2018... Woah, I just realised it's already been so long!

JGY: Time flies, doesn't it? Talking of time, your mother must have faced difficulty following your father to a foreign country, right?

JM: For sure. She's very close to her family and made many sacrifices to migrate overseas, accompanying my father. She sometimes used to complain that if she had gotten her college degree, she would have had a

professional life too and wouldn't find it so hard to make friends in the local society, and she doesn't really have close Japanese friends here. Not knowing the language was a real struggle for her initially. I realised my mother gradually learnt to hide her feelings, which was how I think she was changed by migration. My father is more expressive compared to her.

JGY: I agree, it must have been so hard. Moving on, do you feel like how your parents made you learn your mother tongue has shaped your identity?

JM: Of course. Though I was born in Japan, you know there are issues with citizenship procedures here, and I always feel like Japan is not my home and Bangladesh neither, but at the same time, I feel both are my homes. It's a weird feeling, you know? Like a tug of war. Also, if my parents hadn't supported me in learning Bengali, I wouldn't feel connected to my roots, culture or my family there.

JGY: Hmm, I wouldn't have understood this before but since I came to Japan, I also have been feeling this tug of war. Where do you find yourself in a scenario where you are told that home should grow from inside out, not outside in?

JM: Well, I'm a mixture of both; that's what makes me unique, hahaha... I was introduced to my culture by my parents, and a strong emphasis was put particularly on religion by my mother, who read the Quran regularly to both of us. In contrast, my father never said anything that we MUST follow Islam strictly. He believes in his religion but prefers not to make it a big issue. He is more into other social activities like cricket and he introduced me to it, which is why I'm a devoted fan of cricket. You know it's a big part of our culture in Bangladesh. So, religion and culture make up my social identity. As for living norms and abiding by society's values, I go with the flow here, adopting the societal values from my surroundings.

JGY: Nicely worded. So has migration made you a stronger person?

JM: I would say yes. It taught me to be emotionally very strong. I never grow a strong attachment to one particular place.

JGY: Is that a positive thing?

JM: Hahaha... if you see it that way, then yes. It's easier for me to move around without growing much attachment to one place. But not having any solid attachment for any place makes me feel weird. The hardest part is leaving behind the people in your life, but I overcome that after a few days. Right now, the place I'm most attached to is Okayama. (laughs!)

Adams (2014) classifies identity as personal, social, and relational. One's identity is simultaneously shared and singular, which is what I uncovered through the interview. Migrants carry values and beliefs to the places they go, especially second-generation immigrants, who become walking social remittances and living connections between different cultures and nations. Hence, the challenge of travel is learning how to import and export culture and identity with tenderness at the delicate point of adolescence. With this, I got a glance at the perspective of transnational mothers (a rhetoric by Kačkutė, 2016) as Junayeed's narrative represented a mother who followed her husband to a foreign country and faced a crisis between her traditional mothering practices back home and in the host country.

One notable characteristic was how Junayeed made attachments, particularly with people, but only temporarily; his experience justifies Kelley's theory that a full commitment to a specific home is not possible, too painful or undesirable (2013). My interviewee has recognized that this experience made him emotionally stronger. Just like Boccagni mentioned in his interview with Les Back (2017), my interview revealed that people truly are archives of their past, which plays a significant role in their version of HomING and how their identity is formed. For my interviewee, he was not losing himself more to others and identified a stronger character within himself. When asked whether home should grow from the inside out or outside in, he stated he is a mixture of both, forming cultural hybridity - a mixture of two cultures -

of identity (Asadu, 2018), which made him mentally and emotionally stronger in that process. This hybridity does not force him to choose one singular identity, but rather settle in a rational and compatible sense of himself. He had unconsciously talked about the concepts of identity and belongingness, and although these two terms are often used with the same meaning, they are different in theory.

According to Anthias (2006), one may identify with the society or culture that surrounds them, but not feel that they belong in the sense of being truly accepted or being a full member of such. Alternatively, one may feel they are accepted and 'belong' but may not fully 'identify', as in the case of Junayeed in Bangladesh. The term belonging is a vast and nuanced concept. Whether through tangible or intangible means, people can establish a sense of 'belonging' in various ways; it is normally related to emotional connections and the feeling of being 'at home', which often indicates a sense of comfort and security (Yuval-Davis, 2006).

Additionally, how Junayeed talked about his father and his passion for cricket helped me relate back to the idea of social connection and social remittance in gardening mentioned by Hondagneu-Sotelo (2014). Junayeed indicated how he and his family transferred new ideas and knowledge in the form of cricket, food, and mother tongue from their communities of origin in Bangladesh. He even opened a circle at Okayama University, where he closely engages with social remittance, adding up to construct his social identity. Lastly, he shared he is not in conflict with his identity, but with his attachments and where he belongs. He seems to be quite experienced in the act of embracing something new and the art of letting go. I hope and wish that once he grows into an adult, he would find a deeper meaning of home and belongingness in the years to come.

To conclude, this interview has been enlightening for me, hearing about experiences from someone close to me. Never having travelled before coming to Japan, he broadened my view on the ambivalence of home from the perspective of an immigrant. The insight from this interview proves that it is possible to have a transnational identity in a satisfying sense. My conversation with Junayeed highlights that it is indeed possible to cultivate a fulfilling transnational identity, which involves the capacity to adapt to diverse environments and navigate the experience of being an outsider. It also entails constructing a strong sense of home and identity through social connections, feelings of belonging, and a high level of adaptation to various cultures and societies.

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When People Die Dyeing

Words and Visuals by Alyana Q. Morales

I find it very ironic how these two words with completely two different meanings can be put together to tackle an environmental as well as a social issue. Die, one's passing, and dye, the substance that changes the colors of things, are

deeply connected in the depths of the fashion industry. The question is: who is *dying* and what does *dyeing* have to do with it?

Fast fashion has been a subject of attention within the fashion industry as early as the 1990s when the term was coined by the New York Times to describe Zara's model of designing clothes and selling them in stores in a span of only 15 days. Fast fashion took the world by storm as it produced clothes at a fast rate and cheap price. It borrowed designs from runways and celebrities, turning them into

cheaper and more affordable clothing in hopes that people buy it to become part of the current trends (Rauturier, 2023). Then again, how cheap are we really buying these clothes for?

Quoting from Lucy Siegle, an author and journalist on ethics of the fashion industry, "Fast fashion isn't free. Someone somewhere is paying." While we do pay for these clothes often at an incredibly low price, the true cost of each garment is being paid for by laborers working under the roofs of unregulated factories in developing countries.

River Blue, a documentary about the global pollution of rivers through tanning (process of turning animal skins into leather), textile production, and textile dyeing, unmasks the harsh

reality of people's lives working (and struggling) in these factories. It brought to light the rivers that run alongside some of the most heavily polluted cities in the world, such as the Yamuna River in India, Li River in China and Citarum River in Indonesia, all contaminated by life-threatening chemicals.

In another documentary *The True Cost*, the underlying price of the fashion industry is shown to be continuously growing as so many hidden truths are left unaccounted for by leading brands. The film is an exposé on how these brands are continuously exploiting cheap materials and labour in developing countries, while also evading responsibility for the escalating toll on human health and the environment. Clothing and textile waste, chemical pollution, health hazards and labour issues have become "the dirty shadow of the fashion industry". How did that happen?

Since the goal of fast fashion is to produce clothes fast, it is the supply chain, or the people in the factories, that are rushed to produce textiles and apparel for export at a low labor wage, leaving them with no choice but to work longer hours to achieve production quotas at the designated time. This exacerbates their exposure to harsh chemicals in the absence of health safety regulations and decent working conditions.

The fall of the Rana Plaza is one of the most prominent disasters that perfectly captures these workers' predicaments. Rana Plaza is an eight-story building located in Dhaka, Bangladesh that collapsed and took the lives of over 1,100 garment workers. Despite the workers pointing out the cracks on the walls and possible accidents that might occur, they were still forced to go to work. People continued working in these factories because this is the only way for them to earn a living.

On the environmental facet, these factories produce both textile and chemical wastes which end up in landfills and rivers. The production of non-biodegradable textile wastes creates

greenhouse gas emissions as well as toxic chemicals and dyes that pollute the soil. When chemical wastes enter rivers and other bodies of water, they contaminate the food chain of aquatic lives and the irrigation of agricultural land. A noteworthy scene in *River Blue* is when Orsola de Castro, founder of Fashion Revolution (a fast fashion nonprofit organization), says, "There is a joke in China that you can tell the 'it' color of the season by looking at the color of the rivers." A view of the Li River is shown next with a deep color of red. These chemical wastes, whether encountered directly or through the fish and produce people consume, deteriorate human health. *The True Cost* portrays a particular case in Kanpur, India where a prevailing number of people is diagnosed with jaundice due to a chemical named chromium 6 that attacks the liver. Chromium 6 is used for treating leather and is irresponsibly discharged by tanneries, thus contaminating local farming and drinking water. Every other person in every other household is diagnosed with the illness.

In *The True Cost*, a female worker said in Bangla, "I believe these clothes are produced by our blood. A lot of garment workers die in different incidents. I don't want anyone wearing anything which is produced by our blood." Amber Valetta, a model and entrepreneur, responds to this unethical situation, saying, "No one wants to wear clothes that were made from someone's blood."

The answer to my question at the beginning is: workers in the supply chain of the fast fashion industry, be it garment workers or textile factory workers, are dying in the process of producing and dyeing clothes and textiles in order to meet the growing demand for fast fashion.

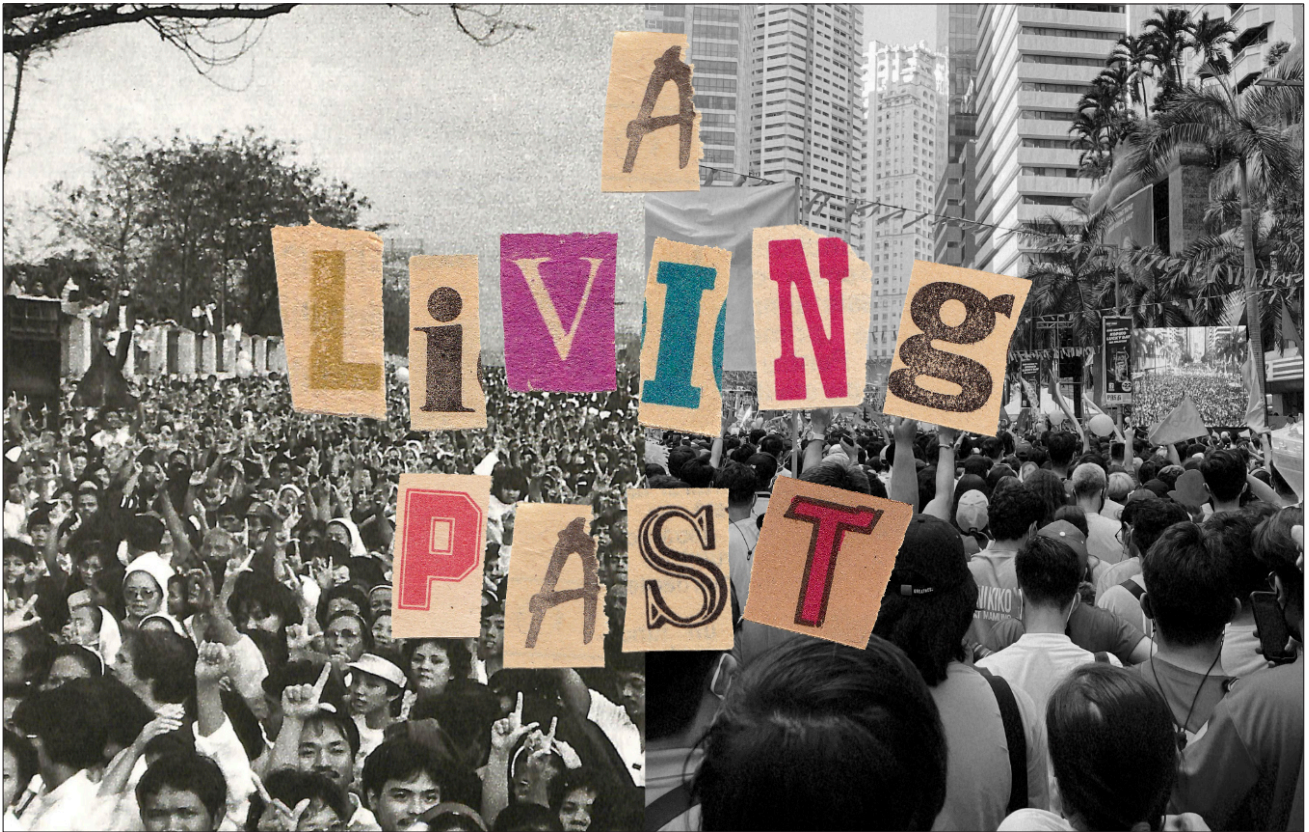
As Sass Brown, author of *ECO Fashion*, says: "Cheap fashion is really far from that, it may be cheap in terms of the financial cost, but very expensive when it comes to the environment and the cost of human life." Fast fashion is still a prevailing issue that is not only detrimental to the environment, but also to ourselves.

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River Blue directed by David McIlvride & Roger Williams

The True Cost directed by Andrew Morgan



Words and Visuals by Kayla Guevara

It is September 23, 1972.

My family members rustle around the house, the neighborhood dogs are making their presence known, and the rhythmic static of the radio plays its tune. I greet the breeze knocking against my window, the sun peeking through the dancing linen curtains, and the thin layer of sweat on my forehead. I say hello to the aroma of my parents' freshly brewed barako coffee and the all-too-familiar scent of our favorite snack, turon. It is just another day in September, but it was a day like no other.

An air of heaviness lingers around my family, my home, my neighborhood, and my country. A voice booms through the radio and the television—one that is tainted with power and wrapped with authority. A voice that obtains adoration and applause, but garners synchronous revolutionary yells. A new era has just begun.

I step out of the house, greeted by men in uniform. I move, wary of the secret eyes watching.

The newspaper I read every day suddenly disappears into thin air. The channel of the news program my family would tune into every night is suddenly a bunch of colored, vertical lines instead. Looking straight into my eyes, my parents give me frequent reminders to be careful with an obvious shake in their voices.

I look to the right, and I see uncles, aunts, and even those who look to be students being taken away. I hear the powerful voices of their children wailing. I hear their relatives vocally trying to figure out what is going on. Confusion, fear, and uncertainty—that is what I hear.

I turn the other direction, and I get a glimpse of people writhing their way into hiding. I see patches of red, black, and blue. Yet, at the same time, I spot well-dressed, lavish individuals smiling from ear to ear on the television – one of them had the same booming voice of power and authority. The stark contrast seems unbelievable. How could it be real? How is this happening at the same time? But it is. It is real. It is happening.

I stare out the distance. The ground starts to shake. They are the furious steps of Filipino individuals, fighting for their freedom, for their lives, for their home. Children on the shoulders of their fathers and mothers, nuns on the frontline, grandparents strongly standing alongside a multitude, students of different schools—all loudly and proudly asking for change.

Like the afternoon wind, news about disappearances and casualties reach my ears. Numbers I cannot even visualize. Numbers that I didn't even expect. Numbers that make my heart ache. Faces and names I do not know and have never heard of before, but feel responsible for.

Like the setting sun, the blanket that is covering my petite body seems to be getting heavier. A blanket of terror. A blanket of uncertainty. My eyes that are shut see a country that is so difficult to fight for, but so easy to love. These weighty emotions and this overwhelming feeling of responsibility jolt me awake.

I wake up from this dream.

But I was never even asleep.

It is the year 2022. It is a day like any other.

Untitled Comic

Ekaterina Ivanko

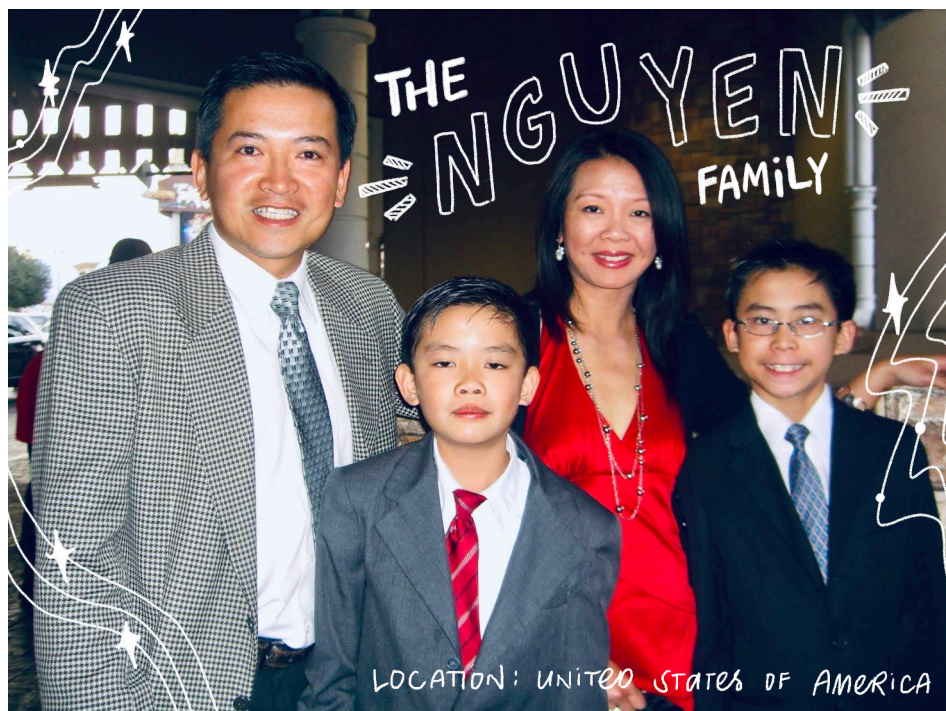


Narratives of a South Vietnamese Father and a Laotian Mother: On Memories of War and Transnational Perspectives of Life

Words by Kieu An Nguyen

Visuals by Jeffery Ly Nguyen and Kayla Guevara

Vietnam embodied the battleground for one of the most brutal and destructive wars between Western imperial powers and the people of Asia, Africa, and Latin America (Espiritu, 2014). Yet, “so much is told about Vietnam, and so little is understood” (Nguyen, 2016) through an organized and strategic forgetting of war by America’s self-appointed role as liberators. In the picture of silent war memories, thousands of hidden figures from South Vietnam, who fled their homeland in hopes of survival due to the effects of war and the drastic regime change of communism, have never been placed into full view. On a cozy morning in November, I had the opportunity to engage in a brief conversation with Mr. Minh Nguyen and Mrs. Thien-Ngoc Ly, the 1.5 generations Vietnamese and Laotian husband and wife who migrated to the United States and Switzerland, respectively, after the fall of Saigon in 1975. They are currently settling in Las Vegas after moving from California. Tracing back to lingering memories of the war, they unwrapped the past that has been buried deep while also sharing their novel insights that emerged from their life experiences as ‘refugees.’



Mr. Minh Nguyen, originally from a relatively well-off family in Southern Vietnam, fled the country when he was nine years old with his family. Dressing down like “country people” so as not to stand out, they got on a little boat of 25 people at the river before boarding a bigger boat on the ocean. Their seven days of hardship on the over-crowded boat countered hunger, storms and savage waves that almost drowned them on top of an unexpected change of direction that brought them to the Philippines instead of Thailand. Among thousands of “boat people” who failed to survive the passage and perished in the sea, Mr. Nguyen was one of the more fortunate ones to reach the destination.

Born into a Laotian-Vietnamese family, Mrs. Thien-Ngoc Ly, at the age of four, and her family fled Laos with a fear of communist influence reaching the borders and relocated to a Thai refugee camp for two years before being sponsored to emigrate to Switzerland. In her vivid memory of war escape as a child, the journey was days of seemingly endless walking from Laos to Thailand under the heavy rains and muddy rice fields with her mother, two uncles, and her aunt. Swallowed by emotions in speaking of her mother, she stumbled over her words and started sobbing:

“I couldn't walk much and my relatives were rotating to carry me on their back. Two or three days, we had nothing, I got sick, I was on the verge of not breathing and I almost died. My mom ... she eventually tried to get me some water, mud water, the only thing she can give to me, but I was being picky and refused to drink that dirty water. Can you imagine?”

“War was a world with no home, no roof, no comforts, a miserable journey, of endless drifting. War was a world without real men, without real women, without feeling” (Ha, 2016). War is indeed not over and the memories continue to linger and haunt the lives of those who once inhabited that space and time (Espiritu, 2010, p.204). Especially “...”, the silent pause in between Mrs. Ly's narrative, echoes the ‘noisy silence’ well articulated in Raymond Williams's concept of “structure of feelings” (Espiritu, 2010, p.209) in which emotional suffocation from the traumatic hardships weighing on her and her family even as time passed by that can always be felt but no words can ever convey. It is the loudness of things unsaid, the lived social experiences, consciousness, and the suffering that is unable, and perhaps will never be able to be captured or dictated by any existing official and defined terms. Furthermore, the war is not only about how the United States remembers Vietnam through its national memorials while forgetting the Vietnamese, but also how Vietnam remembers its

dead while forgetting the South Vietnamese; and both nations fail to mourn so many of the victims displaced and dead from the surrounding countries, such as Laos and Cambodia (Stanley, 2020). The suffering, pain, and hardship Mr. Nguyen and Mrs. Ly – a South Vietnamese and a Laotian – experienced, was among the various voices that were dismissed and forgotten in the nations' ways of remembrance that demonize or forget others. It exceeds the national boundaries and defies the war's official dates into the living effects, seething and lingering, of what seems over and done with, but “the endings that are not over” (Espiritu, 2010, p.212).

When life becomes untenable and people make the decision to move to new places, they often experience a sense of being in-between, where they do not fully belong to either their old or new home. Considering that migrants' experiences of mobility and settlement are often accompanied with feelings of ambiguity about being simultaneously here and there, it is inarguably causing complex emotional entanglements in relation to places, people, objects and relationships. Touching upon the concepts of “home” and “home-making”, Mr. Nguyen advocated:

“It's been 40 years since I fled Vietnam and I never went back even once. Throughout the time, the feelings for Vietnam in me faded. With that dwindling attachments, I created my own idea of home - the home is the people, my wife and my sons. You can adapt to more homes, I don't have to stay at the place I was born with the people that look like me, speaking the same language as me, in order to feel like home. Why do humans have to separate into borders and race? Why do we set up a system where certain kids have certain privileges and rights while others suffer so much? This might be a bit of utopia but the world is my home and I believe you can adapt the whole world to your home.”

As Les Back describes, the notion of ‘home’ connects us to place and people as well as the sense of being in the social world (Boccagni, 2022, p.2). The question of ‘home’ is also at the heart of migrants similar to Mr. Nguyen - migrants who are under conditions of displacement and extended mobility but still stretching to create a sense of belonging and a space to refuge within the vulnerabilities of their lives. “Home,” despite its apparent familiarity, is also a slippery and elusive notion in which its paradox is located in the fact that ‘home is a place to celebrate and escape from at the same time’ (Boccagni, 2022, p.4) – it is a comfort refuge for some, but within the context of the migrants' life, home is



construction of home is thus not necessarily tied to a fixed locale but emerges out of the regular, localising reiteration of social processes and sets of relationships with both humans and non-humans (Ralph & Staeheli, 2011); it is sedentary and mobile. Just as home should not be presumed to be singular, migrant identity also should not be deemed singular or fixed to a singular home (Blunt & Varley, 2004). It is therefore important to consider the ways in which a loosening of identity moorings and markers allows for a fluid model of identification with various places, various homes, whereby many migrants articulate a multilayered, 'hybrid' identity that reflects, and perhaps shapes their experience of home, self, and belonging (Brubaker & Cooper, 2000). Mr. Nguyen's story reveals how displacement may produce alienation, but it also facilitates new ways of thinking and new ways of envisioning one's life (Kelley, 2013, p.117) – the open-mindedness and a transnational identity that is not necessarily tied to a unique home. Rather than movement from one place to another uprooting or deterritorialising migrants' identities, contemporary migrants is a strengthening and deepening of ties to multiple places.

The novel ways of thinking emerging from the experience of being a migrant is also well-reflected in Ms. Ly's sharings of her mothering practices as a mother raising two sons in the U.S.

constantly negotiated, unacted, and fought for. For Mr. Nguyen, it was initially the escape from 'home' in the horror of war to the challenged time of resettlement until the stage when he was able to create his own idea of 'home' that is associated with the dearest feelings towards his family. The richness in the idea of home is therefore, reflected in its representational, narrative and material all at the same time since 'building home' involves work and materials – both symbolic and physical – and also the forging of social relationships (Boccagni, 2022, p.2).

Additionally, home can also be a place that is remade, reclaimed, reopened, reassembled, and represented differently (Boccagni, 2022, p.2). As Mr. Nguyen questioned about reasons why people have to separate into borders and races, it shows how homemaking is a profoundly multi-sensory experience wherein our sense of being in the world is not just a story that lives in language or in a visual representation, but also involves the entanglement of senses and how ideas of home are registered in those senses (Boccagni, 2022, p.4). Following Mr. Nguyen's ideas of multiple "homes" and "the home is the people," the

Talking of her sons, Mrs. Ly was enlightened with pride:

"I raised them the way I wanted to be raised. I want them to have choices and freedom, I give them the respect they deserve because they are wonderful and unique in their own ways. My main language is Swiss so I don't speak Vietnamese that well, but I'd love them to learn Vietnamese and learn about the culture, that's also part of the reasons why I love to cook Vietnamese dishes. But at the end of day, it's their choice and I am proud of them."

Mrs. Ly's perspective on mothering portrays the emergence of a new subjectivity, which in this case, is maternal subjectivity in a dynamic and novel form rather than the one-way reinforcement of identity that the mother imposes on her children without any creativity and difference. As she places importance on freedom and respect towards the differences between her and her sons, it opens an insight into an alternative model of motherhood – the development of their respective identities that would be familiarly common and respectful of each other's cultural and value differences. Transnational mobility shapes practices of nurturing that zoom into the production of identity rather than the dominant emphasis on reproduction, it is the development of the maternal self, the maternal agency, and power (Rye, 2009).

In conclusion, as Espiritu (2010) described the Vietnamese as “people larger than their situation” (p.212), refugees and migrants on their extended mobility are also individuals with their own personal histories of movement and displacement. The stories of Mr. Nguyen and Mrs. Ly, among thousands of narratives yet to be known in the line of suffering as the result of war, shed light on how “refugee” should be critically examined as an analytic rather than a subject made legible through state policy and dominant media configurations, given how experiences such as the loss of one’s homeland, historical erasure, and dismembered lives are lived and reckoned with on the ground (Dang, 2008). Furthermore, drawing from Mr. Nguyen and Mrs. Ly’s “new ways of thinking and new ways of envisioning one’s life” embedded in their perspective of home and way of mothering, the concept of refugees and migrants are no longer passive, static “endurers” and “victims” of their situations, but an active and empowered agency contributing to diverse ways of life in the context of ever-changing globalized world (Peisker & Tilbury, 2003).

Acknowledgement

I would like to express my deepest appreciation to Mr. Tuan Nguyen and Mrs. Ngoc-La Ly for their valuable time as well as emotional and insightful sharing of their experiences and perspective. Due to my limited writing ability, I might not be able to fully convey their messages clearly and coherently. However, I hope that I can, in a way, bring their valuable narratives closer to my readers of this essay.

I would also like to say thank you to my dear friend, Jeffrey Ly Nguyen, for giving me the opportunity to connect with Mr. Tuan Nguyen and Mrs. Ngoc-La Ly and helping me to arrange a meeting with them.

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*Poems and photos by Shan Min Kha
Collage by Jia Xuan Chok*



Insomniac

Space, spacious, solemn/ longing, longed, listlessly
Ruminating restlessly, room/ immersed, moments immeasurable
Lonely, little man/ silent, simmering, slumber
Fear, frightened, flabbergasted/ disoriented, distant, departed

Not yet Titled

The body's been freed, the soul soften
The kitchen, the dance floor, lights on

Mixtapes serenade, songs, surprises
Freestyles paid for in the future
Now move in raw real repertoire
Clothes rumpled, hairs flying, *ankle*
Adjure, letting go like birds, *sparkle*

Unchanged hearts. Unknowingly
drawing on a canvas, she can't see.

Unfiltered untamed, a plethora of
Emotions, laughing wide and mean
So full of life, pulling you in
Illimitable no boundaries a
Flame, your essence unclaimed

"Be the muse a star, the light"

For the night dances unbound. To
be caught in a trance, the stitch,
the allure, the rhythm, the bewitched.
Just so in this moment, she be

Free.

Now, words stream from her fingers—wait
As she writes verses with her body, living
Blending art, embodiment of pure delight
No walls, no disguises

The stars align, yet just right.

Tamta* tanka

Let me continue
Living only if I can
Breathe your breath, lover
Seeps into your body, Souls
Shall wait for when we are gone

*Burmese for Longing

じいちゃんの庭

Words and photos by Shusei Fujikawa

去年の年末にじいちゃんの庭が「清水氏庭園」として国の登録記念物のうち「名勝地関係」に登録されることが決まったらしい。俺はそんな難しい名前と呼んだことはないし、これからも呼ぶことはないと思う。じいちゃんの庭は俺が生まれた時からあって、小さなころはそれのすごさなんて微塵も理解していなかった。ある小学校の歴史の授業で、千年前の平安貴族の邸宅と、じいちゃんの家が瓜二つだったのにびっくりしたのは今も覚えている。庭に池はあるし、橋もある。貴族の家とよく似ていた。そのすごさに気づいてからも、大学生になるまでは友達に紹介することはなかった。日本庭園に興味なんて持たないと思っていたから、、、だから大学生になって友達が興味持ってくれるのは個人的にはめちゃくちゃうれしい。

俺はいとこの中で一番上だから、じいちゃんの庭での思い出もいとこの中で一番多い。一番古い思い出は、じいちゃんの家の中にある溝をすごい勢いで黒く、細長い何かが見たのを見て、両親に、

「父さん、母さん、溝にウナギがおった。」

と報告したことだ。今思えばあれはでっかい蛇だったと思う。ほかには、十人以上いるいところで、鬼ごっこやかくれんぼをたくさんしたり、山の深いところに秘密基地つくったり、庭仕事手伝わされたり、たくさん思い出がある。そのたくさんある思い出の中で、一番印象に残っているのは、かくれんぼをしているときに絶対誰にも見つからない場所に隠れて、見つけれられるのを待っていたら、知らない間にかくれんぼが終わっていたことだ。両親のもうすぐ帰るという声を聞いた当時の俺はどういうことかよくわかっていなかった。

そんなたくさん思い出がある、庭が国の登録記念物になったらしいので自分なりに色々調べてみた。まず今の家はもともと別邸で、江戸時代の後期までは笠岡の中心部に屋敷を構え、廻船問屋を営んでいたらしい。いつこの庭ができた正確な時期は定かではないが、1779年に俳人でお坊様の蝶夢という人が庭を訪れた時に記録を残しているの、1779年には存在していたことは確かだ。今でこそじいちゃんの家は住宅街のようになっているが、水野氏という領主が干拓事業を行うまでは遠浅の海が広がっていた。庭の池の西側の北半部には海岸線だった干拓前の岩をそのまま取り込んでいるらしい。正直、今までこんなでかい岩をどうやって運んだのかは疑問でしかなかったが、やっと謎が解けた気がする。小さい頃は、どういわけか、お相撲さんが海の底まで泳いで、岩をとってきて置いたと思っていた。調べていくうちに、今までは全く持って意識してなかったことにも意味があるということを知った。たとえば、庭の中心にある心字池には、鯉を模した鯉魚石がある。そのすぐ上には、水こそ流れていないものの龍門瀑という滝がある。これは鯉が滝を上り、龍になるということを表している。こんな感じで知らないことがたくさんあった。ここ最近、庭には新しいものがふえていくなあと俺は感じていた。でもそれも調べていくうちに昔に存在したものを戻していったのだということも分かった。

年始や年末の餅つきとかの行事の時には、親戚一同が集まるじいちゃんの家と庭。そんな、歴史と思い出がたくさん詰まっている庭を廃れさせないために、じいちゃんは日々庭仕事に励んでいる。でもそんなおじいちゃんも77歳。5年前にはひざの手術もした。最近は俺自身もおじいちゃんどころか、家族にも土日以外はあんまり会えず、週末になって、久しぶりという言葉を交わすほどだ。このエッセイを通して庭が自分にとってどれほど大切かということを確認することができた。これからは、最近あまり手伝わなかった庭仕事も手伝おうと思う。じいちゃんと一緒に最高の庭にしたら、みんなにも来てほしい。庭を廃れさせないために、ご先祖様のためにも頑張りたいと思う。



Ekaterina Ivanko

Swamp Fairy



Social Media's Impact on Urbanization and Gentrification

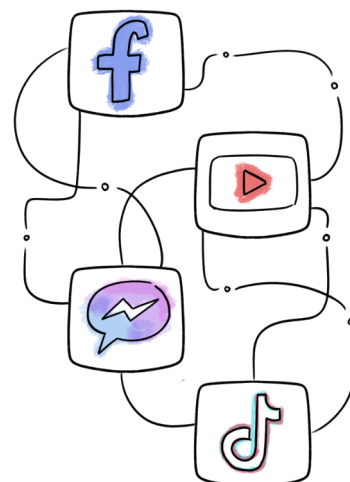
Words by Tran My Vien

Today's digital world sees social media as a prevalent force that affects the way people communicate, exchange information, and see the world. Concurrently, urbanization and gentrification have emerged as essential urban processes that significantly sway the landscape of our cities. The interaction between social media and the urban phenomena has begun to pique the interest of academics, legislators, and urban planners alike. As social media continues to expand, so does its influence on urbanization and gentrification, posing fascinating concerns about how these platforms affect the fundamental fabric of our urban settings. This paper will delve into the increasing link between social media, urbanization and gentrification, offering insights into the potential effects of this confluence on urban residents and communities.

The interactions between urbanization and gentrification are complex and multifaceted. Urbanization, the process by which cities develop and attract a greater population, lays the groundwork for gentrification (National Geographic, 2022). Cities experience massive modifications in various aspects of life as they grow, including population expansion, infrastructural development, and economic activity. Urbanization enables social and cultural life to diversify, resulting in dynamic and lively cityscapes. Furthermore, the influence of urbanization extends to environmental concerns, governance, and urban planning, impacting the overall structure and functioning of the city. Relatedly, gentrification is a type of urban development that happens inside certain neighborhoods or districts. It is characterized by the transformation of low-value neighborhoods into high-value ones, often spurred by rapid development and urban renewal initiatives (Picardo, 2022). When a neighborhood becomes

more desirable, it attracts an influx of wealthy residents looking for new living experiences, frequently leading to the upgrading and renovation of existing infrastructure. As a result, the neighborhood's character may alter significantly, accompanied by a rise in the cost of living. This approach can have controversial effects, particularly when it results in the displacement and marginalization of long-term and lower-income residents, generating social and economic turmoil within the community.

Urbanization and gentrification are influenced by a variety of contextual factors. Among them, industrialization, commercialization, and the provision of social benefits and services. The appeal of greater job possibilities and modernity can draw people from rural areas to cities, contributing to the urbanization process (Conserve Energy Future, 2016). Meanwhile, gentrification is influenced by variables such as the potential and desirability of the neighborhood, housing market dynamics, demographic and lifestyle changes, and the impact of policies and development projects. Furthermore, cultural and social aspects can enhance the attraction of certain neighborhoods to specific groups of people (Veronica et al., 2013). The link between urbanization and gentrification stem from the underlying forces that drive both processes. Cities develop a concentration of facilities and infrastructure as urbanization progresses, increasing the appeal of specific neighborhoods. As communities with advanced infrastructure attract affluent residents and stimulate economic activity, these factors become the main drivers of gentrification. The relationship between urbanization and gentrification is dynamic, with each development influencing and reinforcing the other. Infrastructure development, the concentration of amenities, and transportation improvements from the urbanization process can all add to the

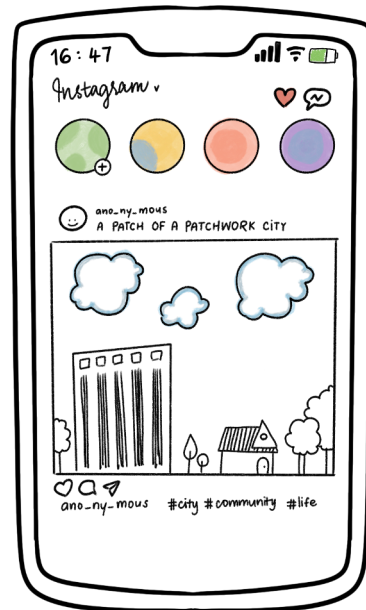


desirability of some neighborhoods, and in turn, promote gentrification in those areas (Lin & Xie, 2020).

In the digital era, social media revolutionizes the way people connect, communicate, and engage with one another on a worldwide scale. Social media platforms, defined as internet-based forms of communication, allow users to hold discussions, exchange information, and generate online content in a variety of formats, including blogs, social networking sites, instant messaging, and more (University of South Florida, 2023). The use of social media has increased dramatically, with more than 60% of the world's population currently participating in these virtual spaces (DataReportal – Global Digital Insights, 2023). This force has a deep and multifaceted influence on social dynamics that breaks down traditional communication boundaries. It transforms into a virtual space for community creation and interaction, allowing for the establishment of online groups that mobilize around social, political, and cultural problems. Voices may be amplified, and collective action can be organized through these platforms, allowing citizens to question established sources of authority (Sembiring et al., 2022). Social media platforms can additionally be used to shape public opinion where people share their opinions and participate in debates on a variety of topics. In a way, it has democratized the public space by making several points of view be heard and encouraging challenging conventional sources of authority. Social media's influences extend beyond communication and action, entering societal dynamics and trends as well. Social media, which serves as a distribution platform for cultural products and creative content, allows influencers and content creators to create a popular culture and set trends, changing consumer behavior such as fashion choices, entertainment preferences, and lifestyle decisions.

Social Capital Theory and Network Society Theory, both prominent theoretical frameworks, provide valuable insights into the analysis of social media's influence on urbanization and gentrification. According to the Social Capital Theory, interpersonal relationships have an intrinsic value because they provide resources that help achieve the desired outcomes (Machalek & Martin, 2015). This theory becomes crucial in the context of understanding the value of community interaction on social media. It emphasizes the importance of social networks, trust, and information exchange in promoting social cooperation and achieving common goals. By utilizing social media platforms, individuals and communities can improve community involvement, boost collective action, and accumulate social capital. The Network Society

Theory, on the other hand, studies the transformational influence of information and communication technology on social, economic, and cultural systems in the digital era (Castells, 2000). Furthermore, the hybrid character of social media, which combines online and offline contacts, has become essential in how communities navigate urbanization and



gentrification issues. Thus, the theory sheds light on the evolving nature of community dynamics and social interactions in the context of the digital urban landscape.

Due to social media's easy accessibility and reach, young individuals have been able to make use of its potential for community organizing and involvement in social movements, amplifying their voices and building empowerment through online activism, mobilization, and digital storytelling (Cortés et al., 2021). Likewise, local governments can also see the beneficial effects of social media in assisting community interaction. A study done in New Zealand, for example, discovered that platforms such as Facebook can be useful channels for local governments to engage with its citizens and increase e-participation (Alam et al., 2022). The emergence of online communities has altered the dynamics of urban relationships by enabling suburban neighborhoods to transcend virtual barriers, impacting offline encounters and developing a sense of community. Online interactions frequently lead to face-to-face interactions, which increase social capital and promote community cohesiveness (Hampton & Wellman, 2003). Furthermore, individuals who actively engage in

online communities can have an impact on their offline interactions such as support systems, socializing opportunities, as well as relationship maintenance (Hargittai & Hsieh, 2010). An example of the impact of social media on community cohesion and collective action is in San Francisco's Mission District, where residents and community organizations used social media channels to express their worries about gentrification and displacement. On Twitter, hashtags like #SaveTheMission gathered traction, offering a platform for locals to share personal stories, document changes in the neighborhood, and mobilize support for affordable housing initiatives (Save the Mission, n.d.). Social media in this case served as a tool to connect residents, build networks, and raise awareness about the challenges of gentrification. Similarly, in the Los Angeles's Boyle Heights neighborhood, platforms such as Facebook and Twitter were crucial in organizing and mobilizing against gentrification. In reaction to the eviction of long-term residents, community organizations and activists used these platforms to raise awareness, communicate information, and organize demonstrations and activities (Chiland, 2016), serving as a unifying factor that allows locals to protect the cultural and socioeconomic diversity of their neighborhood.

Gentrification typically leads to a rise in housing costs, displacing lower-income residents from their long-established neighborhoods. As a response, individuals and organizations can utilize online platforms to raise awareness about housing affordability concerns and distribute information about available affordable housing alternatives, subsidies, and assistance programs. As hashtags and online campaigns like #HousingForAll or #AffordableHousing gained popularity on Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram, it has also become a powerful instrument for housing advocacy and activism. Individuals and communities may use social media to mobilize, raise awareness, and campaign for policy changes that will improve housing affordability and accessibility. The link between social media and housing dynamics is demonstrated by various examples. Real estate brokers use social media channels to showcase property listings with engaging material like images, videos, and virtual tours, allowing for targeted advertising and reaching a larger audience. The #MyNameIs campaign gained traction on Twitter in Ireland, exposing the serious concerns of rising rents, homelessness, and a lack of housing availability. The campaign mobilized public support, generated discussions, and called for action from policymakers, contributing to increased awareness and public discourse on housing challenges (Lima, 2023). Platforms such as Airbnb have had a big impact on the housing dynamics in several cities. In places such as New York, the rapid expansion of short-term rentals aided by social media platforms has prompted

concerns about housing affordability, as properties are removed from the long-term rental market to be used as holiday rentals (Sheppard & Udell, 2016). Social media is a crucial tool for shaping the branding and identity of gentrifying neighborhoods, allowing individuals to share information and stories about the area. This increases the area's online presence, and can help local businesses gain more attention and customers. However, social media can also contribute to gentrification and displacement, so it's important to strike a balance between growth and preserving the neighborhood's inclusivity.

With its potential to disseminate information and amplify voices, community organizations, and advocacy groups can utilize social media platforms to spread crucial information about displacement risks, future development projects, rent increases, and eviction notices, raising awareness among residents about potential threats to their housing security. Residents in gentrifying neighborhoods share their personal stories and displacement experiences online, warning others about specific difficulties or possible eviction worries they may encounter. However, the impact of social media on displacement patterns and results is not one-sided. While it can be useful in assisting displaced individuals in finding new housing or connecting with support networks, it can also contribute to gentrification-driven displacement. As the enticement of gentrifying neighborhoods is highlighted on social media, it piques the interest and attention of outside investors, worsening housing market pressures and driving up rents or property prices. This process may result in more displacement of long-term residents. The dual role of social media in displacement highlights the significance of cautious urban planning and housing policy in balancing economic expansion with the protection of vulnerable groups.

In conclusion, social media's influence on urbanization and gentrification is undeniable, providing opportunities for community involvement, advocacy, and information distribution. However, it is critical to acknowledge and address the concerns about its influence on urban settings. These platforms' hyperreality and idealized depictions might reinforce inequities and obstruct realistic representations of the diverse perspectives within cities. The connection between social media and urban processes influences the character and fabric of our cities, requiring careful thought and appropriate urban planning. It is vital to find a balance between utilizing social media's potential for community engagement and activism and minimizing its negative consequences on affordability and inclusiveness in order to build sustainable and dynamic urban places for all.

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Getting Real with Climate Anxiety

Words & Photos by Kayla Guevara & Jia Xuan Chok

What am I saving for? What am I living for? What does the future look like?

Questions that have been lingering in the back of my mind for a while now. What does the future look like when summers have been reaching too high of temperatures? When winters seem to be getting colder each year? When natural disasters are raging globally? What exactly am I saving for when my future seems to be clouded by this somber news? Convenience, comfort, and climate action — three words that I do not know how to juggle. Three words that radiate urgency, but together make me afraid. Dear Earth, from the bottom of my heart, I am anxious and I fear.



I fear with all my senses; my eyes witnessing actions of ignorance, ears picking up the trace of overdevelopment, lungs inhaling products of contamination, mouth touching and hands feeling the gifts of earth. I fear that this anxiety that is constantly being mapped onto my actions is not shared among my peers with years and years remaining on this ill planet. This anxiety touches the construction of ourselves. Who am I as a person? I am sensitive. I notice the changes because I am constantly present in the moment, with Earth. Walking down the tourist night market in Melaka, Malaysia, my dwindling appetite had little to do with its uncleanness, but more because of its packaging and its disposability. My eyes on the weekend crowd envisioned the amount of trash this creates every day. My appetite dwindled for this. How can my mouth water for food served in containers and skewers that are draining life from our ecosystem? Staring at the amount of plastic and disposable utensils, my eyes welled. I couldn't feel the hunger anymore.



And yet, I hunger for action. Who am I, but an agent of movement despite often being cloaked by despair? Not knowing how to make a difference, but immensely longing for it to emerge. Who am I, but someone entangled with every being on this Earth? Who am I, but a person who struggles to embrace the complexity of the present? As I dance with other lives, I make sense of mine. I move between stages of hope, longing, despair, and loss - just as the ocean tides move and consume the shore. I listen to the harmonious, polyphonic melodies of creatures ranging in size - birds, insects, even humans of various cultures, beliefs, and dispositions. As I listen, I imagine. As I move, I dream. As I stand still, I realize. Clothed by shelter, a full fridge, and air-conditioning, I come to terms with the privilege and power I hold in my hands. Viewing and traversing the city of Manila, Philippines from the tinted windows of our car, I hunger for action, and I realize that I am capable of it.

Fear works well as a propeller for action. Taking action means transporting oneself even deeper into the heart of the situation; it means being even more vulnerable and entangled with a cause as one witnesses firsthand the translation of one's efforts into impactful changes, or sometimes the sobering realization of failure. Both outcomes carve and reinvent the space for discussion. This dance asks for you to employ all your senses because nature doesn't come to you in whole otherwise, and because I grapple with hope and despair with sensitivity, a profound connection is forged in how I hold hands with this changing yet stagnant world. When I touch, see, listen, smell, and converse, the world itself seems to encourage my optimism and perseverance. When I feel I'm falling, the gifts of the world stand by to catch me because when you look closer, capability and anxiety both stem from the desire to preserve the beauty Earth has pulled me closer to. Proceeding down this path of activism, Earth has taught me to bolster my passion and patience like the simultaneous calmness and fever of the winds and seas. With me this spirit I will carry and muster even in the most anxious times along this road.



Reflecting on Four Years of University

Words & Photos by GDP's Graduating Class of 2023



Yuka Nagata

Indonesia

In university, I had this chance to really dig into things and discover parts of myself I never knew about. With all sorts of experiences happening, I picked up some deep insights about how to adapt, make connections, and just become a better version of me.

I learned a lot from Okayama University. Life here has been great. I got to experience many things throughout my university life. Being here in Okayama University, I got to explore and discover what I am really interested in.

Thun Phaolaung thong

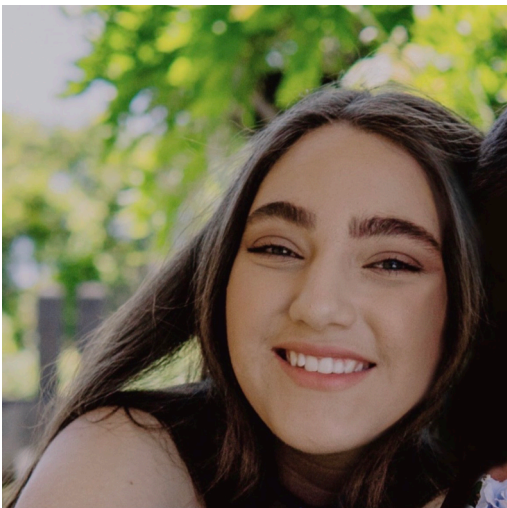
Thailand



Jenna Flores

United States of America

The biggest lesson I've learned from my time at Okayama University is just how valuable understanding different cultures' perspectives can be. Through the courses in the Global Discovery Program, as well as my interactions here with students from all over the world, I was exposed to new ways of thinking and ideas that I never would have been able to learn about if I had stayed in my home country.



Over the four years at this university, I learned various contents and enjoyed them at all times. I also got to have fun interacting with different people and making new friends. I am glad that I got to have a great university life at Okayama University. Thank you to those in GDP, and I hope all of the GDP students have a great time at this university. I look forward to what will come in the future.

Hiina Shiota

United States of America / Japan



Genki Hase

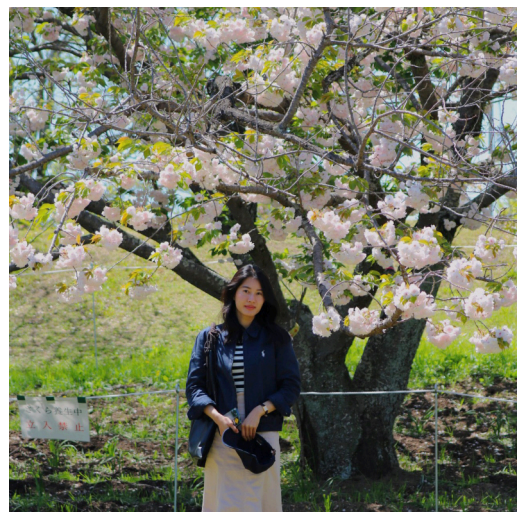
Europe / Japan

Playing, traveling, studying, reading, and reading... There were struggles and joys, but enjoyed all of them at Okayama. Arigatou for 4 years!!

In university, I was fortunate to be able to balance my academic and social life. These two aspects made my undergraduate experience very fulfilling, and I hope that those who are in the process of completing their studies, especially the studious ones, are able to set aside some time to say (hell) yes! to traveling and social gatherings more often. In my experience, when you are intentional with striking that balance, you will find that learning occurs everywhere, not just in books and classrooms.

Sonava Tadao

Cambodia



I kept one target throughout my university life: "to enjoy what I do." I was able to pursue on working on a project dedicated on a video game, combining what I have studied in anthropology. When finding the enjoyment in the tasks, the results will come along. Find the small joys in your life!

Lorentz Gaku Eriksson

United States of America / Japan



Yoshimi Sasaoka

Korea / Japan

I could not survive without my friends. 4 years in university was lonely and hard but I am proud that I could finish without any problems. Now, my accomplishments are bigger than the feelings that I had.

Time goes by so fast, in a blink of an eye we are all going our separate ways. My time in Okadai has taught me a lot of lessons - educationally and lessons in life. I feel like I grew as a better person living here for 4 years. Made alot of life-long friends and also Ive gotten the chance to work with wonderful professors that helped me throughout my university life.

Akiko Oda

Indonesia





Taqi Ahmad Hanif

Indonesia

The university life in GDP was probably the best 4 years of my life. Every single person that I met here were absolutely nice and I wish nothing but success for all of them.

The last four years have been a roller coaster of experiences. I met new people along the way, gained new knowledge, and learned a lot from everything. I'm thankful for everyone who was there and hope everyone a good luck in the next chapter of their lives, wherever you all may be!

Alyana Moraes

The Philippines



Mattie Balagat

The Philippines



Four years in Okayama has been a wildly enriching whirlwind: I am beyond grateful for the chances to explore my niche of academic interests, to patch such interests with personal pursuits in art and service, and to find homes in dear places and friends. One takeaway for making the most out of college: pursue that crazy intersection of what makes you curious and what fulfills you as a human being!

