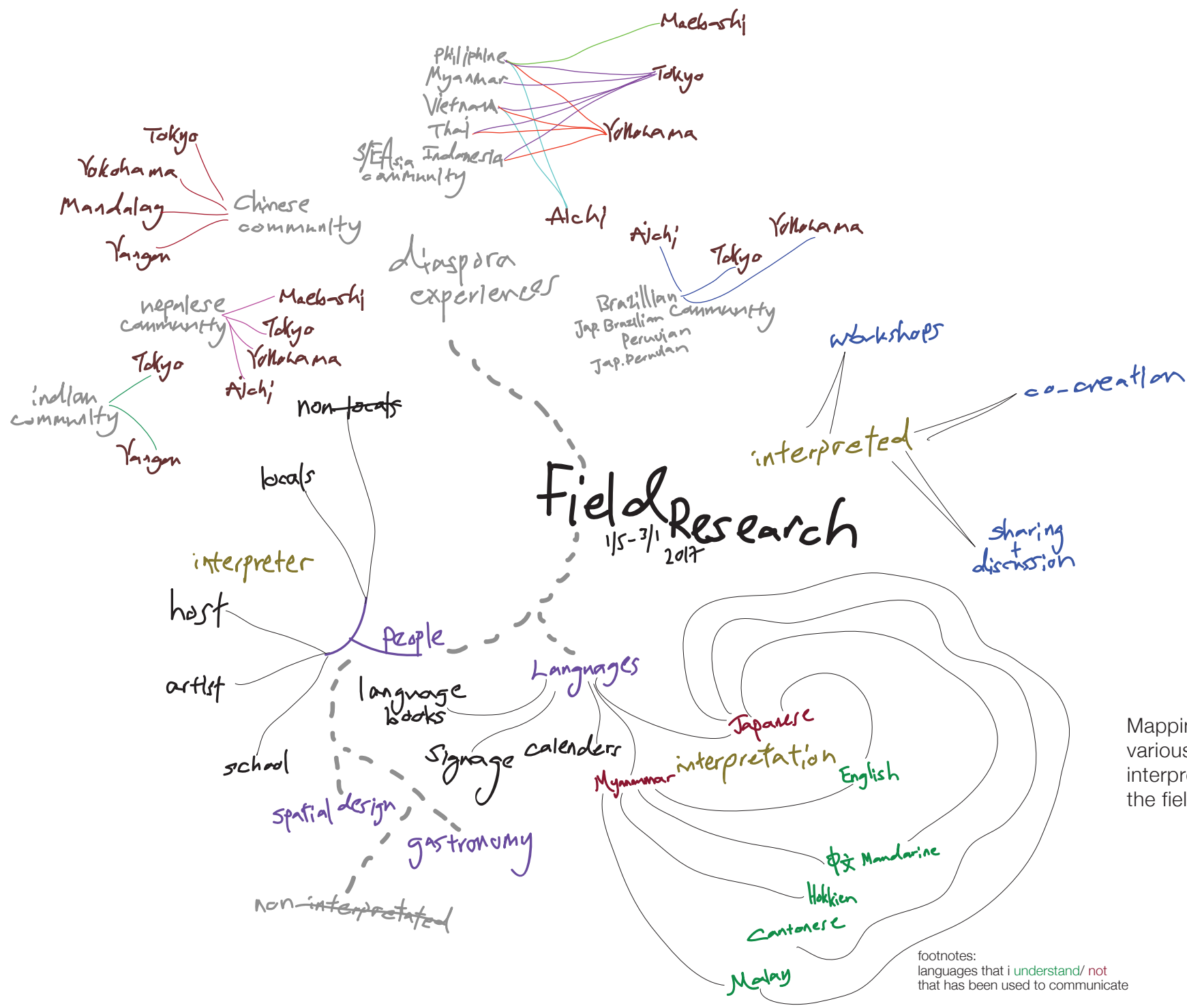


“Where do you come from?”
an artistic research on migration, mobilities, identities
by Okui Lala, Asia Center Fellowship 2017



Mapping based on my various entry points and interpretations throughout the field research.

footnotes:
languages that i understand/ not that has been used to communicate

"Where do you come from?"

an artistic reseach on migration, mobilities, identities

The project aims to explore the participatory processes and dialogues of migratory culture within a society and through it's diasporic communities.

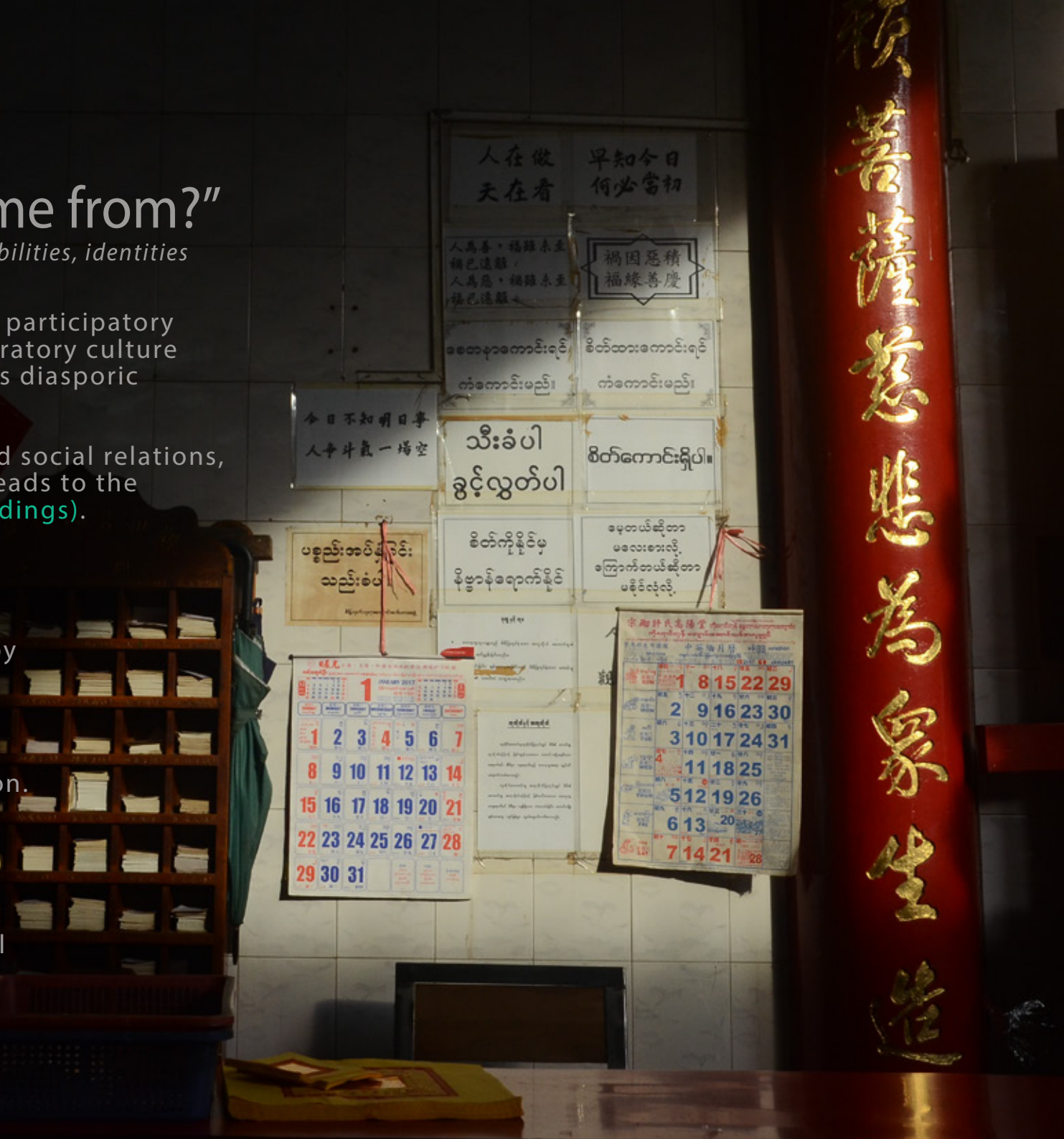
Through my artistic practise and social relations, the **Interpreters (Approaches)** leads to the **Interpretations (Activities X Findings)**.

Interpreters (Approaches)

In both Myanmar and Japan, English is not commonly used by the locals. My language proficiency (English, Mandarin, Malay, Hokkien, Cantonese) became my tools and boundaries in the data collection.

Interpreter I (People + Verbal conversations)

Myself, people around me that speaks my languages, people around me that speaks the local languages and my languages (interpreter).





**Interpreters II
(Tangible/Visible products)**

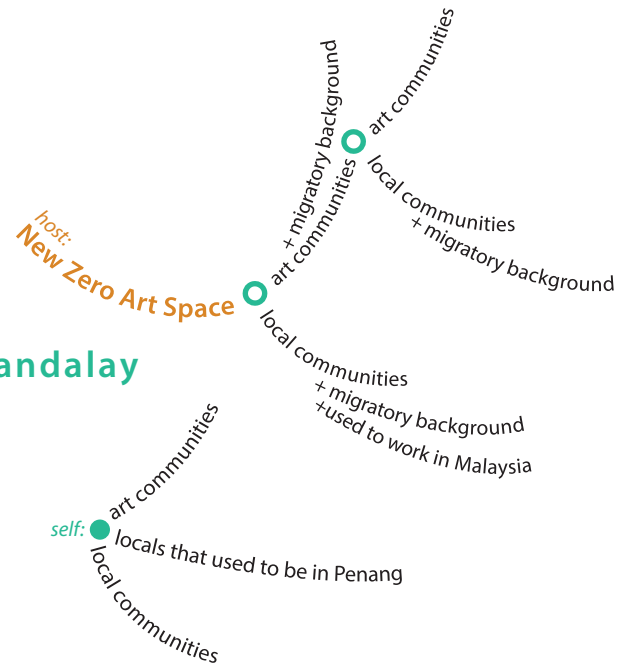
Written products (language books, vernacular calendars, signages, media products etc), spatial design, gastronomy enhance the cultural identities of a place.

Interpreters I+II

(Schools and Support groups)

Through the connections from Interpreter I and II, I'm able to access to the various schools, language classes and social support groups.

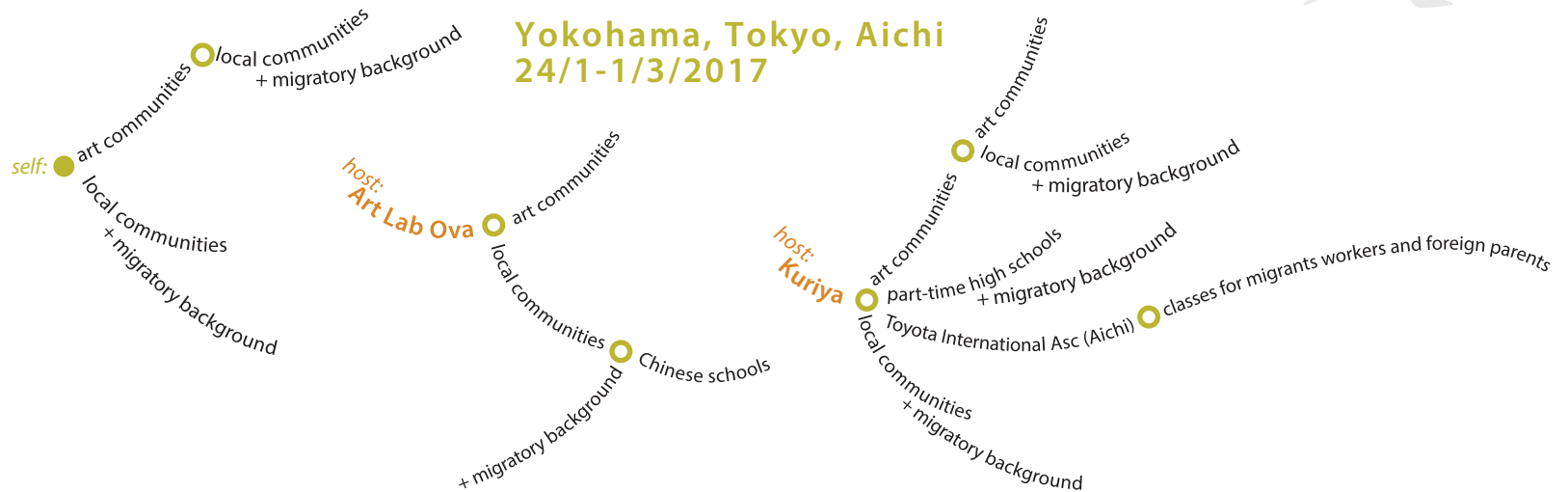
Yangon and Mandalay 5/1-21/1/2017



Interpreter I

People + Verbal Conversations via the connections and relations throughout my field research. The interpreters varies from myself, my hosts, the locals, the non-locals and artists (local/foreign).

Yokohama, Tokyo, Aichi 24/1-1/3/2017



Interpreter II

Language, either spoken or written requires a form or carrier to contain it. Through these *Tangible/Visible Products*, the migratory connections and trends were depicted, predicted and imagined.

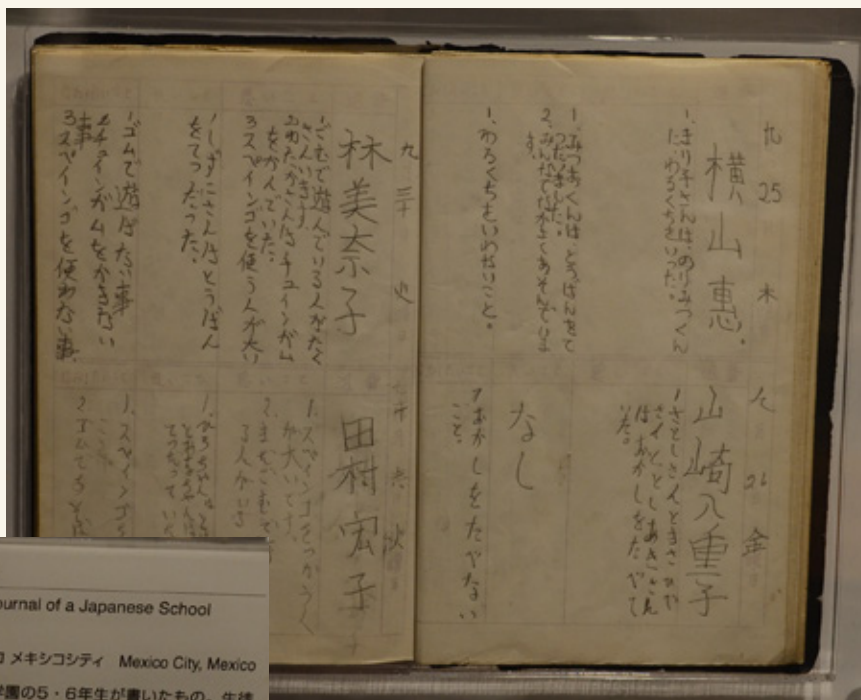


Japan (recent Past) > Yangon (Present) :
Fire trucks in Yangon with "Tokyo Fire Department" on it. In Yangon, it is common to find fire engines, trucks and public transports with Japanese names on it, showing traces of business trade between the two country.



Yangon (Present) > Japan (Present), (near Future) :
According to the bookshops, the 2nd most popular language after English is Japanese, followed by Mandarin, Arabic, Thai and Malay. The Japanese language learning books sold is not too pricey for locals (around RM10- RM 30) and there are also few Japanese language learning schools in town.

Several young people I met is learning Japanese or have basic knowledge of it. They said they would like to work in Japan as the exchange rate is higher and the country is safer compare to other Asia countries. I've also found a Japanese-English-Mandarin-Burmese glossary book specially for apparel.



週番日誌
Weekly Duty Journal of a Japanese School
1958年 メキシコ メキシコシティ Mexico City, Mexico
メキシコの中央学園の5・6年生が書いたもの。生徒はスペイン語を話す二世が多く、辞書を使って日本語で日誌をつけた。

Japan(Past)> Japan (Present): Found at 海外移住資料館 Japanese Overseas Migration Museum in Yokohama. The weekly duty journal of a student in a Japanese school in Mexico in 1958.

Japanese immigration to Mexico began in the late 19th century. It is the fourth largest Japanese community in Latin America.

Guía de prevención de desastres para extranjeros.
Colóquelo en un lugar visible (refrigeradora, baños, etc) .

De ocurrir un terremoto estamos preparados?

ポルトガル語

Guia de prevenção para os estrangeiros
(Vamos pregar em um local visível como a porta da geladeira ou na parede do banheiro!)

Você está preparado para quando ocorrer um grande terremoto?

1 Os Preparativos estão em ordem? 2 "3 Passos" quando ocorrer um terremoto!

● Água 1 Cuidado com ferimentos!
* Quando estiver passando um terremoto, evite a porta e as janelas.

ベトナム語

Hướng dẫn cho người nước ngoài khi có trường hợp khẩn cấp
(Hãy dán tờ hướng dẫn này lên tủ lạnh hoặc trong phòng vệ sinh nhà bạn để bạn có thể nhìn thấy nó mỗi ngày.)

KHI CÓ ĐỘNG ĐẤT LỚN XÂY RA... BẠN ĐÃ CHUẨN BỊ CHƯA?

1 Bạn đã chuẩn bị những thứ này chưa? 2 "3 bước" khi có động đất lớn xảy ra!!

● Nước 1 Có dừng để bị đau hoặc bị thương!
* Khi có động đất, ngay lập tức trốn dưới gầm bàn hoặc dùng gối bảo vệ đầu. Bạn sẽ không thể thoát khỏi nơi nguy hiểm nếu bị thương. Cũng rất nguy hiểm nếu bạn chạy vội ra ngoài.

インドネシア語

Petunjuk untuk menghadapi bencana alam
(Harap ditempel di tempat yang dilihat setiap hari, seperti pintu lemari es dan toilet.)

Sudah Siapkah Anda Menghadapi Bencana Gempa Bumi?

1 Sudah bereskah persiapan Anda? 2 3 Hal yang Harus Kita Lakukan ketika Gempa Melanda.

● Air Minum
* Persiapkan air minum sebanyak 3 liter/hari x 3 hari untuk satu orang. "Air minum untuk kondisi darurat" (Hijou-you hozon inryousui/ 非常用保存飲料水) yang bisa disimpan selama 5 tahun bisa anda peroleh di Home Center (Supermarket yang menjual kebutuhan rumah tangga).
* Air ledeng masih akan keluar untuk beberapa saat, meskipun "kondisi darurat gempa" (keikai sengen/ 警戒宣言) sudah diumumkan. Pergunakanlah kesempatan ini untuk mengisi bak air mandi dan mesin cuci. Air ini bisa digunakan untuk mengalirkan toilet dll, sehingga akan berguna dalam menghadapi bencana.

1 Berhati-hatilah agar tidak cedera!
* Ketika gempa terjadi, segeralah berlindung di bawah meja, atau lindungi kepala anda dengan bantal, agar tidak cedera karena tertimpa barang yang jatuh akibat gempa bumi. Cedera akan menyusahkan kita untuk melarikan diri. Terburu-buru untuk berlari keluar rumah/gedung juga merupakan hal yang sangat berbahaya, karena kita bisa tertimpa reruntuhan bangunan atau tertabrak kendaraan yang sedang melintas.
2 Matikan api!
* Ketika terjadi kebakaran, berhati-hatilah terhadap kebakaran. Setelah gempa bumi mereda, matikan api yang menyala.
* Sebelum anda mengungsi keluar rumah, pastikan bahwa anda sudah menutup pipa gas, mencabut colokan listrik dan memutuskan breaker listrik anda. Lupa melakukan hal di atas dapat

Japan (Present)> Japan (near Future): Public information explaining the safety precautions during Earthquake. Available in Spanish, Portuguese, Vietnamese and Bahasa Indonesia at Yokohama municipal office. The multiple language public information's depicts the current multicultural community in Yokohama.

Interpreter I+II

(Schools and Support groups)

Through the connections from *Interpreter I*, I'm able to access to the various schools, language classes and social gatherings, which is valuable to the research as most of the schools and migratory communities are closed-knitted and does not open to outsiders easily.



The picture above depicts the different Chinese transliteration system adopted by the schools: Zhu Yin which is used in Taiwan and Han Yu Pin Yin in China. *Yokohama Overseas Chinese School* (pic on the left) was aligned with Taiwan, while the *Yokohama Yamate Chinese School* (pic on the right) was aligned with the People's Republic of China.



It was 2 days before Chinese New Year during my visit at *Yokohama Yamate Chinese School*. Students, teachers and alumni of the school were seen preparing for the celebration together. In the picture above, one of the alumni who is the chef in one of the Chinese restaurant in *Yokohama Chinatown*, came to teach the students how to make dumplings. School, here plays a vital role in passing down, shaping and or reshaping the cultural identities of a place.

Interpreter I+II

(Schools and Support groups)



In Aichi, through Mr Takao Suzuki (far left), coordinator at *Japanese Language Learning Support System for Toyota City*, I visited different types of languages class in Toyota City that aims to support foreign people through language.

Mr Takao shared that the language learning support system was new and the challenges they faced were lack of participation from the foreign people. We discuss that perhaps with better time adjustments and through the possibilities of some art project, could help to understand the system better thus attracting more participation.



Conversation class at Toyota International Association(TIA) for new foreign adults. Each foreign student is paired with another local partner, known as "Language Partner" whom assist the foreign student partner in understanding the Japanese language class by using simple Japanese terms in explaining and communicating.



Language class for foreign students at Nishihomi elementary school for new foreign teenagers. The students have diverse background: from Pakistan, China and Peru.



Language class for foreign parents of Nishihomi elementary school for foreign parents to understand the syllabus and content of what their kids are learning in school.

“Where do you come from?”

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Interpretations (Activities X Findings)

My aforementioned Interpreters I, II and I+II leads to the content design of the **sharings, workshops** and **co-created works** which helps in further data collections and Interpretations.

The participatory, dialogues and discussions from these activities contributes largely to the interpretations of this research.



Interpretation through Sharing/ Mapping

Host: New Zero Art Space/ Yangon



Event flyer for the sharing at New Zero Art Space.

2 sharings were conducted with an interval of a week.

The 1st sharing act as an introduction while the 2nd one as mapping and discussions.



15/1/2017

1st sharing at New Zero Art space as an introduction to my background, the research project and intentions.

The participants of the sharing were very welcoming when I showed my previous work in Penang that is related to Burmese migratory culture. There were 2 among them that pointed out that they have worked in Malaysia before. The participants then shared some information and suggestion on where and who I could talk to for my following research.



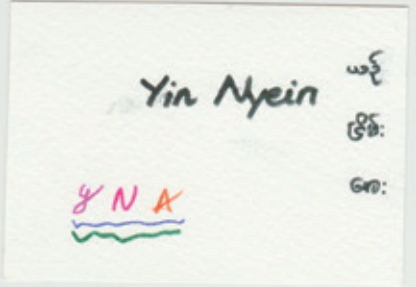
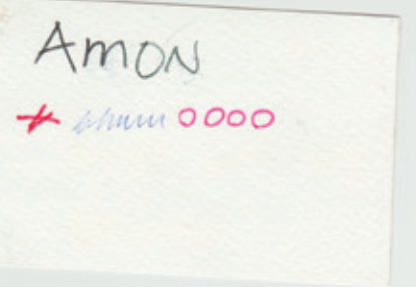
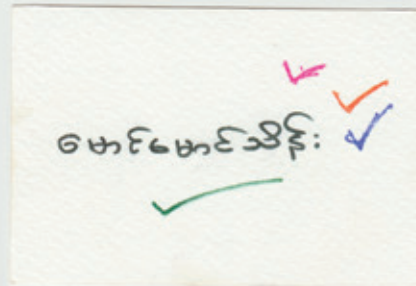
22/1/2017

2nd sharing at New Zero Art space. Most of the participants from the 1st sharing came back and new people joined as well.

I began my sharing with a simple mapping exercise to get to know them better: creating a name card base on the color code of the type of teas, tea salads and other food they ate before the workshop. Tea were selected as the medium as its the essential food and drink in Burmese culture.

The sharing is then continue with my interpretations in Yangon and Mandalay followed by discussions with the participants on my approaches and possibilities of followed-up project with them in near future.

Mapping via name card making based on the food consumed.



လက်ဖက်ရည်
Indian tea/
English tea/
tea

ရေငွေ:ဖြစ်
Chinese tea/
green tea/
tea

လက်ဖက်စာဆီခွက်
tea leaver salad
(sweet flavour)

အဆိုးကြီးသုပ်
tea leaver salad
(old man style!)
made in mandalay

လက်ဖက်ချိုစပ်သုပ်
tea leaver salad
(hot & sour flavour)

အခြား
Others
(plain water/crackers/
fruits and others)



Chinese New Year products in Mandalay.

Interpretation through Sharing of differences

While I was in Yangon and Mandalay, I managed to get a taste of pre-Chinese New Year. However, some food and traditions are slightly different with the one I know. The same goes to celebrating Chinese new year at Yokohama, where the streets are quieter compared to my hometown.

*Based on these experiences, my host and I invited the locals and locals with migrants roots (Chinese, Vietnamese, Indonesian) to join in the **Prosperity Toss** on the 7th of Chinese New Year. Prosperity toss is a Malaysian Chinese tradition where we toss the food using chopsticks as high as possible for good luck and prosperity. This tradition seems to be in contrary with Japanese traditions that forbids passing of food from one chopsticks to another. Nonetheless, the locals join in the toss and stayed on for a screening and discussion after that.*

Host: Art Lab Ova/ Jpn



Preparing and decorating the Prosperity Toss together with the locals.

Interpretation through Sharing of differences

Host: Art Lab Ova/ Jpn



*After the Prosperity Toss, I did a sharing on Malaysia's Chinese New Year commercials from 1997-2017.
The locals shared that the Chinese culture and commercials in Malaysia is very different from what they had in mind.
According to them, the festive commercials in Malaysia seems to be more sentimental and touches on cross-culture elements.*

Interpretation through Workshop

Host: Kuriya/Jp



My host, Kuriya conducts workshops with the students at Hitotsubashi Teijisei Part Time High School once a week. The students here consists of locals and of foreign background: from the Philippine, Russia, China, Thailand etc. Instead of sharing, I've conducted a workshop instead to involve more active participations from them. The pictures above depicted the "sound intestine" workshop, where they were asked to map out sounds and terms of the city using their mother tongue.


Hazukashi
gali
liang
liang
isogashi
mapagbigay-
loob
Kaming ha-
mang ha ✨

ernst
Hindi umaasa
sa iba ✨
matalas
ang
isip ✨
luwas na
nasud
Pormal! ✨
gila
-gila ✨

sonhig
kondeiru
Daghan ug
Kuti.
magalang
Hilo m nga
nasud ✨

shy
shy
busy
kind
surprise

serious
independent
intelligent
safe
country
formal
crazy


sunny
too many
people
Kuti
polite
Hilo m nga
nasud
Silent country

Write your impression of Tokyo. How does it sound like in your mother tongue?
(write the meaning of it on the other side of the paper)



Interpretation through co-creation

with Art Lab Ova & Kuriya/Jpn

Yokohama has huge population of multicultural communities such as Chinese, Koreans, Philippines, Vietnamese and Thai. I found many signage in various languages while walking around the town, thus it inspire me to do a work based on the design of Rubik cube. The idea was simple, to categorise the 6 selected culture.

However, during the creation, I found it is challenging in categorizing. Even though knowing Mandarin is an advantage as I'm able to read the Japanese Kanji, but without understanding the context, I'm not able to differentiate between Chinese culture and Japanese culture.



Is this Japanese culture or Chinese culture? The character is written in traditional Chinese. Is it from Japan (Kanji), Hong Kong, Taiwan, or perhaps China?



The character in Mandarin 北欧 means northern Europe. Therefore I make an assumption that it is a "Western culture". My host quickly tell me that it is a "very Japanese" local culture- sex shop! Japanese elderly assume that European are all very open and liberal, thus the shop name resonates it.



Yokohama :“How to solve a rubik cube?”



A rubik cube is always challenging to solve. Just like culture, it is hard to categorise and put it into a box. Designing the cube is not possible without the participation of the locals as well as non-locals and people that knows the context. This experience has inspire my next workshop design with Kuriya, where I invited the youth members from various culture background to create the Rubik cube with me base on Shin-Okubo's demographic.

Interpretation through **co-creation**

Winter Pilot 2017



“Rubik Tour”

With Kuriya members

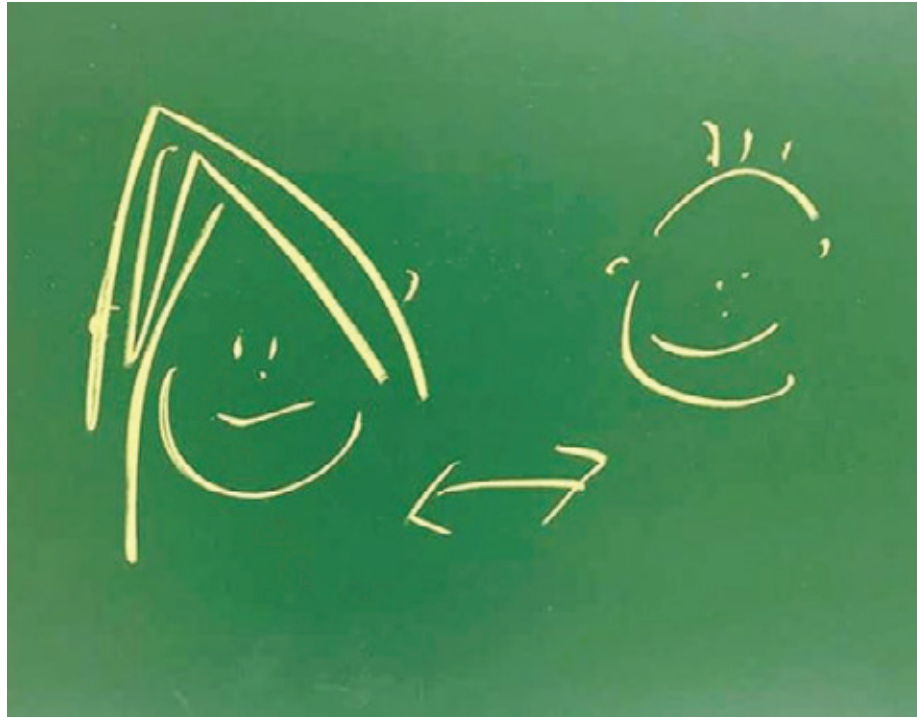
- 1. Go on a 15min guided tour of Shin Okubo*
- 2. Decide the 6 culture and take photos for each (self)*
- 3. In group, decide, discuss, select the 6 cultures and 9 photos for each culture to be featured.*

Interpretation through co-creation

with Kuriya/Jpn



*Rubik cube design and discussion with members of Kuriya Youth.
The design of Rubik Tour is currently being revised with Kuriya for future use.*



Interpretation through

Sharing > Workshop > Co-creation

Activities were design with the aim of attracting people to participate and be involve in discussion which helps in the interpretations. Local aesthetic and needs were taken into consideration in designing the activities.

Sharing was the basics of the activities, the content of sharing is place-based. Workshop were conducted instead at the part-time high school to involve a more active role from the teenages in contributing their thoughts. Co-creation was my most ideal way of data collection and participatory but it requires more time and commitments.

Post-Interpretations

“Where do you come from?”

an artistic reseach on migration, mobilities, identities



“My Language Proficiency”, Video Installation at “Di Mana (You)ng” group exhibition at the National Art Gallery Malaysia, May 2017.

During the fellowship, “multi-ness” was embraced due to the research context of migratory culture. Through dialogues, I was then counter-proposed by a new term: “Double-Limited” which is the opposite of Bilingual. The term stuck me, it prompted me to look critically at my own language proficiency and my country’s (Malaysia) education systems.

One month after my fellowship ends, I co-conducted a sharing section with Arts-Ed on “Working with Cultural Diversity” with cultural practitioners in Penang. New interpretations were then formed which leads to new interpreters while looking at migratory cultures, mobilities and identities~the interpretations continues #



“Working with Cultural Diversity” workshop co-conducted with Arts-Ed Penang, April 2017.

“Where do you come from?”

an artistic reseach on migration, mobilities, identities

okuilala/2017

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