

Research

Hong Kong Identity: Who are the post-80s?

-- Future, past and present

「香港身份」：八十後是甚麼？－願景和前進，憶昔和當下

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1. Introduction

This project is an extension of the theme “Hong Kong Identity” which we have explored in a module Visual Culture from the Higher Diploma programme (Fine Art, Applied Art and Media Art) taught in 2010. The aim of the project is to help young people to share their views of Hong Kong identity and express their concerns of the city from their own perspectives. Most of our full-time students were born between late 80s and early 90s. They are the generations that we often labeled as the post-80s or post-90s. As a teaching faculty, we always assume our students to look at society and culture from our angle, more or less from an academically corrected perspective. In this project I would rather step back and try to understand how students look at themselves and members of their generation. The intending outcome of this project would be a website archive; a resource for other educational institute to share as a liberal art subject reference.

The project includes two parts. Part one is a website design which would archive seven projects selected from the course Visual Culture. A team of five current students were formed to revisit these assignments from a new perspective, showing students’ views and opinions of the past, future and present of Hong Kong. Part two was a research which targeted to other members of post 80s or 90s generation who were not students of our school. Views, needs and wishes of these young people were collected through interviews. Scale of this research would not be large, should be between 5 to 10 individual cases.

The research was brainstormed in January 2011 and fully commenced in March 2011 when our application was approved. The project title was confirmed as “80scene” (Chinese: 80 後 80 先) on April 19, 2011. We had estimated three months to complete the project. However, the research was suspended several times because students were engaged with study and assignments. Having considered the project was deferred more than a year, I decided to invite an alumnus to help with editing and coordination in April 2012. With a view that current students who had initialed this project gradually losing their passion and showed no interest to continue, I doubted whether this project was still making sense. Finally, the project was terminated on July 31, 2012 after having a meeting with the working team. At the end of this report I will evaluate the problems of this research and my observation of the post 80s generation, their difficulty to acquire an identity of their own.

2. Research development : Part I - Archiving Visual Culture projects

i. Description:

7 out of 13 projects from the module Visual Culture were collected and reviewed. Each of them touched on a different aspect of the city which included old fashioned restaurant and barber shop, traditional handcraft, education, transportation, alternative music and future development of our urban city. They made up a puzzle of the past, present and future of Hong Kong which became the subject matter of this section.

Name of project	Names of student group
1) 金記冰室	Fung hoi lam Cheng sin man Wong hui yan Ting cheuk ling tiffany
2) 上海理髮店	Ho jeanie Wu chau kwan Cheng wing yee Cheng tsz wan Lee man ting vivian Ching ngai wah Cheung cheuk kit
3) 補習文化	Hon siu ki Yuen chin ting Chow hin kwan Chan wai wah Lai wing tim wayne Fung pui ying alice Chung ho yuen
4) 600 空中花園	Lai wing ki, Chow sin hung Tsang wing ki vicky Man mei to Law hoi lok Leung man lai
5) 工廠 band show	Wang chap yiu Fu hay kin Chow jasmine mai yee Lau hung faat Mo fung ki

6) 解讀香港電車文化

Wong yuen lung
Lau chun kit
Lau wing sze
Wong nai yuen joe
Liu siu him
Tse ming shing clement
Fong tsz leong

7) 紙紮業

Yiu chun wa
Tung ho ming
Lee chi ming
Ling lai lei
Tung ho man
Ng shuk yus
Chiu wan ling
Yeung sze ching

Collection and revisiting of student works were carried out from March 2011 to December 2011. Two teams of students were helping in this stage, one with content editing and another with website design and graphic. Web navigation was done by an outside website designer.

ii. Team members and duty:

- | | |
|-------------------------|--|
| 1. Isaac Leung | project coordination and editing |
| 2. Hon Siu Ki | web design and graphic
coordination |
| 3. Chan Wai Wah | illustration design |
| 4. Wu Chiu Kwan | graphic design |
| 5. Chow Hin Kwan , Mike | video shooting |
| 6. Chan Siu Man | website construction |
| 7. Sandy Tao | Project coordination and editor |

iii. Content revision and editing:

Isaac Leung was responsible for revisiting all assignments and content coordination. He wrote an introduction for this project and proposed the

name “80scene”¹ as the research title. Isaac was a hard working student, most of the project insight and direction came from his contribution. In December 2011, all projects content were reviewed and pending for web editing. In addition of this, Isaac wrote a long essay responding to a project on Hong Kong’s tutor education, in which he criticized the substitution of examination outcome to the essence of education. He wrote about the anxiety of average students who had no choice but victims of this system.

“補習社導致了成績許可的學生們內心瀰漫著一種不安感，而這一種不安感凌駕於教育的本義上，將教育化為一道利器，直指向每一個青少年的心靈之上。”

Content editing part stopped after December 2011 as we could not finalize a graphical theme to integrate all projects contextually. Somehow, communication between graphic team and content editor gradually loosened when students proceeded to year 2. Alumnus Sandy Tao joined the team on April 2012, helping to review the objective and overall structure of the project. She gave some valuable opinions to improve the contextual flow and mission of the project.

iv. Graphic and Web design

Graphic works were started in July 2011 by a graphic team led by Hon Siu Ki. We took two months to finish illustration and concept design. The outcome was better than we expected when Chan Wai Wah brought a lot of lives to the theme with his hand drawings (figure 1 below). The team decided to shoot a video interview with the original groups of students. We spent one month to do the video shooting and this caused some delays in the research progress. At the end of the research two interviews were done. Footages of them were saved in a DVD.

Brain storming of website design had been started as early as March 2011.

¹ Isaac Leung’s explanation: SCENE 解釋為活動領域，也取其聲標「仙」也可象徵為電車的車費。

When web coordinator Tammy Lo (proposed in the application) quitted the research, Siu Ki took up her role to help coordination of website design. We have modified the design several times in views of its technical difficulties and limited budget. The website structure was constructed by Chan Siu Man, a web designer, during July 2011 to early January 2012. A test version of the first draft was uploaded to Art School's virtual web address: <http://virtual2.hkas.edu.hk/CMS/>. However this version was not navigable due to some technical deficiencies. Siu Ki was an applied art student. I understood that he might not have enough experience to follow up technical solutions. After some unsuccessful trials of web page templates, I picked up the role of web coordinator to communicate with Chan Siu Man directly in April 2012. Siu Man worked out a new structure with additional paths and subpage in July 2012. The web site was ready for content input and graphic testing. Web materials were temporarily stored at <http://siumanc.info/demo/siuki/> (a set of the document was saved in a DVD for record). The website was not launched afterwards, because web content and graphic design were not integrated. Though the graphical theme of city and tram was confirmed quite early, some graphic elements such as buttons, banner and logo were not available.



figure 1



figure 2



figure 3

3. Research development : Part II - Extended research

i. Description:

The extended research began in Aug 2011, during summer time when students had finished their first year study. We interviewed eight candidates about their views of local culture and how did they look at their generation. Basically all interviews were done before September 2011. At the end of the research, we had only four interviews transcribed, others were badly documented.

ii. Team members and duty:

Interview was carried out mainly by Mike and Isaac. Other team members were participating in the development process, such as jotting down questions and joining review. Mike was responsible to write an article based on the interview results to reflect his observation of the “post-80s generation”. This part has not been carried out yet.

1. Isaac Leung project coordination and editing
2. Chow Hin Kwan , Mike researcher

iii. Interview

We decided to use seven archived project topics to start our conversation in an interview. Isaac helped to generate seven questions for interviewees to respond. The objective of the interview was to understand average people who born in the 80s, how do they look at the past, present and future of Hong Kong. We compared their comments on some cultural or social phenomenon which had investigated by Art School students. Background information of eight interviewees is as follows:

<u>interviewee</u>	<u>background</u>	<u>Year of birth</u>	<u>interview data</u>
Mark	Actuary	Post-80s	lost
符美微	e-trading	Post-80s	lost
Sam Man	RTHK researcher	Post-80s	lost
Queenie	journalist	Post-80s	lost
Ming	Hair dresser	1987	transcribed
Chan Wai	Fashion design	1988	transcribed

Wilson	Graphic Design	1990	transcribed
Kevin Luk	Company director	1983	transcribed

Out of the eight interviews, four were transcribed by Mike. Lacking the experience of interview, we had lost tracking of four meeting conversations. Though a concrete analysis of all interviews was not carried out, the variety of people’s background did bring in different voices to contrast students’ assumption of needs and expectations of their generation.

4. Difficulties and solutions

i. Progress and time management

The project was started around second semester break (March 2011) when students were free from their normal study schedule. Our first team meeting was held on March 15, 2011. Then, we had three hardworking months with whole team involved in their assigned roles. The project title was confirmed as “80scene” (Chinese: 80 後 80 先) on April 19, 2011. Shooting was arranged in May, a time when the third semester was started. Video editing was hardly completed because students had to manage heavy assignments and final projects. Meetings resumed in summer 2011. We had missed the proposed deadline as stated in our application. Progress was rather slow since then. We had spent much time on interview than we expected. Though the last interview was done at the end of August, only four transcriptions were worked out in December 2011. The project was idled for the next four months when students were deadily busy with their final year project. After reviewing the progress and manpower of the project, I decided to find a new member to help with coordination, hoping to consolidate all data collection and graphic design more effectively. Alumnus Sandy Tao was invited to join the project in April 2012. Technical structure of the web was reviewed at that time. Web designer Siu Man was able to update some source codes with an additional cost, giving a flexible structure for data update and maintenance. Two more team meetings on web editing and graphic design were arranged during July 2012 but little progress was achieved after a long suspension of the research.

ii. Termination of research

The project was not continued for two reasons; weak team spirit and lack of motivation. Due to everyone's busy schedule, we could hardly have full team of members attending the production meeting every time. It was the major reason that caused the content team and graphic team losing contact and communication. During the long research process, the purpose of the project became vague when members treated it more as an extra duty than an active redefinition of self-identity through their own voices. Team spirit was further lowered when three members who were unable to pass their graduation project. In view of recurrent delays and constant absence of active members, I decided not to continue the project.

We had some brainstorming on the objective of this research on July 31, 2012 before I announced my decision to terminate it. Each member had the opportunity to reflect their self-identity as being "post-80s" and what would they think about themselves after taking out those labels that society gave them. That sharing was more worthy than having a website which could hardly be certain of its finish date. Terminating the project was my intention to let students know no game was never over. I explained to the group about my decision of not having other helping hands. The value of redefining the identity of post-80s would make no sense if the project was going to be done by another team of people.

5. Evaluation & Conclusion

The project ended with an unexpected outcome that those who wanted to stand out from their label were unable to generate their self-affirmation through action. In our final meeting, we brought out a critical point that no student satisfied with the label of “post-80s” but none of them could tell clearly about themselves after dropping this identity. If irresponsibility was an imposed property that students wanted to wash away, their inability to manage responsibility became a paradoxical tool that they used to fight with it. Shifting away from something that students cannot handle becomes a necessary choice to lighten their anxiety with social expectation. We should not simply use the term “lazy” or “lack of a sense of responsibility” to evaluate their performance. The efforts students have made in the early stage of this research must not be denied. We can notice from Isaac’s writing that they have very strong awareness of society, especially the absurdity of our education, something they had gone through so long in life. None of these students intended to drop the project but their motivation might be different from our understanding. It is not surprised that they would not put priority of this project on top of other tasks such as freelance job or entertainment. If paying responsibility is the ability or authority to act or decide on one's own, without supervision, these students were playing their roles from their own point of views. As stated in Isaac’s comments on tutor education, our competitive education system has long been putting young people in a state of anxiety and frustration. Students have been fulfilling the responsibility of a system which looks only at examination result (應試教育) too long that they are rather disillusioned with life and duty. They might understand that taking responsibility is not about following every same step paved by previous generation. Young people would rather look at it with more flexibility and put themselves at ease. Having a clear identity and predictable response to duty is not a matter to young people. These are the expectations which we, our own generation, expect ourselves to do and we project the same to other generations.