Archive drive of the unprivileged against the privileged: *Ten years* and alternative archive

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Abstract

The post-Umbrella Hong Kong is a site where the unprivileged memories are faced with a systematic eradication against the privileged and dominant memories of mainland China. A strong 'archive drive' exists in the scene which makes the memories of Hong Kong struggle to preserve themselves in defense to their obliteration. For memories to become archived, or an archive, they should go through two consecutive steps. First, they need to acquire a physical space where they can be preserved. Second, they need to be given a law, order, or way of interpretation and enunciation. While the privileged memories unquestioningly undergo the process, those of the unprivileged confront difficulties in both steps. By looking into the post-Umbrella Hong Kong's omnibus film *Ten Years*, this essay will examine the archival struggle of Hong Kong memories where they show emotional anxiety and frustration, but also seek for an alternative way to become an actual archive.

Keywords: archive, archive drive, unprivileged memories, *Ten Years*, Hong Kong

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According to Jacques Derrida (1996) in *Archive Fever*, a drive to preserve things in an archive stems from the very finitude of human memory. "There would indeed be no archive desire without the radical finitude, without the possibility of a forgetfulness" (Derrida, 1996, p. 19). What he calls *conservation drive* or *archive drive* will not exist when there is no destined destruction and death to people's memories. It is, however, Derrida's acute insight that differentiates the archive drive from constructing an archive in practice: the desire to conserve memories does not immediately guarantee its actual existence. By tracing the etymology of the word, he shows that archive comes from the Greek word *arkheion* which refers to "the residence of the superior magistrates, the *archons*, those who commanded" (Derrida, 1996, p. 2). It was in the houses of these authorities, who "[had] the power to interpret the archives" (Derrida, 1996, p. 2), that the official recordings were deposited. Thus, drawing from this origin, Derrida insists that memories should be put through two distinct steps in order for them to become a real archive. First, they need to be placed in a space or a domicile, namely the arkheion, to be preserved physically. Second, they should be given with a law, order, or authority by the archons arranging the way how they should command and be interpreted. It is by this idea of a place, where the memories "[coordinating] a single corpus…in which all the elements articulate the unity of an ideal configuration" (Derrida, 1996, p. 3) are consigned, that Derrida's archive becomes an actual power-laden space of collected documents which speaks in a monolithic way.

The significance of the arkheion and archons in the process, however, is what has deeply connected the archive to the dominant memories. Among many memories which are by nature personal at the beginning and are diverse according to each different individuals, their selection depends on the decisions of the archons, or the archive makers, who have the power and capital to physically construct public sites such as monasteries, libraries, or museums which would store and make available the archives—from simple memoirs to rare books and artifacts—for much longer than the lifetime of a single human being. Michel Foucault's famous concept of archive slightly differs from Derrida's in that he goes beyond the spatial terms that define it. Not limited to libraries or institutions, Foucault (1972) says, "It is *the general system of the formation and transformation of statements*" (p. 130). Nevertheless, archive for both Derrida and Foucault has been regarded as a device/system containing a socio-political power that commands and regulates the memories, statements, and knowledges granting more authority to certain remembrances (mostly those of the powerful, dominant, or majority) above others.

Meanwhile, the major shortcoming of Derridean or Foucauldian archives comes at the same time from this very fact that they focus mainly on the official and privileged memories. While Foucault (1980) suggests the term "*subjugated knowledges*" (p. 81) to draw attention to knowledges (roughly interchangeable with "statements" and "memories") that were either buried under the unitary order or neglected as popular, local, or low-ranked, they do not advance into forming a separate archive of their own. The subjugated do not have enough social, political, economic, or even military power compared to the official archive makers who throughout human history have persisted in building storages of their own memories that have survive the ravages of time. In such a schema, without the equivalent authoritative capacity, it is unlikely for the non-dominant to erect monuments of their own. Thus, unprivileged memories only exist embedded within the unitary order of the official stories, disguised or neglected as popular and local knowledges "far from being a general commonsense" (Foucault, 1980, p. 82).

Yet, this understanding has been changing recently in the so-called digital age. Derrida (1996) in the same book *Archive Fever* tracks not only the origin of the word archive but questions its future within the development of communication and archivization technology. He asks what would have happened in the past when people "instead of writing thousands of letters by hand, had had access to MCI or AT&T telephonic credit cards, portable tape recorders, computers, printers, faxes, televisions, teleconferences, and above all E-mail" (p. 16). Calling this technological change as an "archival earthquake" (p. 16), he suggests that "the technical structure of the *archiving* archive also determines the structure of the *archivable* content" (p. 17). Keeping Derrida's words in mind, the accessibility to new archiving tools (personal printers, recorders, cameras, or computers), less costs in storing them (hard disks, SDD, or cloud storages), and further possibility of private disseminations (representatively through the internet) of our age in the 21st century seem to let us ponder on the possibility of another archive that has been until now overlooked: the archive of the unprivileged.

This paper will go further than just using the minor memories as "anti-sciences" (Foucault, 1980, p. 83) to expose the ruptures of the dominant archive. In truth, the inescapable forgetfulness applies to all types of human memories regardless of whom it belongs to. The archive drive prevails not only in the memories of the privileged (institution, dominant), but also in the unprivileged (popular, minority). This extension of Derrida's idea that the desire to build an archive exists within all people alludes to the possibility that minor memories, like those of the dominant, have the same urge to construct their own archive. Going beyond Foucault's subjugated

knowledge, which are posited as mere breaks within the unitary order, non-dominant memories that are innate with the archive drive propose a new schema in which we can think of minor alternative archives. But here, the question of *building a real archive* comes as a much more difficult issue for the unprivileged compared to the privileged. While, as Derrida (1996) insists, the "official" memories have been given spaces in the arkheion throughout human history, and has been endowed with the opportunity to "[speak] the law" (p. 2) through the dominant's authority, the unprivileged has for a long time been denied from both the steps as they are minor, local, or bestowed with lesser power. The so-called unprivileged memories innately with the archive drive have always been in a struggle to become archived. Hence, in the recent age where minor memories have glimpsed a new possibility of overcoming such strains, there arises a question of what way can minor memories resolve their archive drive. How can they be preserved physically in an archival space, and how can they then be given ways of interpretation and enunciation?

The independent film *Ten Years* (Au et al., 2015) is a place where such questions can be explored. Released a year after the 2014 Umbrella Movement in Hong Kong, the film is positioned on the significant socio-political ground where the so-called *local consciousness* of Hong Kongers was being challenged by Chinese nationalism. The previous discourses on the post-Umbrella moment mostly circulated around the formation of a new local consciousness and identity. The discussions most of the time emphasized the renewal of a distinct Hong Kongness against the mainland's authoritative measures and nationalism. In Wing-sang Law's (2018) words, "The pursuit of the forgotten history and collective memories" were "the source of political mobilization" (p. 29). Much research have focused on what we might call "an *insurrection of subjugated knowledges*" (Foucault, 1980, p. 81). As such, it will be important to notice the *low murmurs* that "enter massively into the novel or the short story" (De Certeau, 1984, p. 70) in the film *Ten Years*: the low voices of Hong Kong memories (of immigration, economic development, [post-]colonialism, cosmopolitanism etc.) which were, and still are, in danger of fading into oblivion.

This paper will, however, direct our attention to a different goal. It will examine not "what" these Hong Kong memories are, but "how" they resolve their innate archive drive; how they construct an alternative archive to preserve and maintain the unprivileged "what." A strong archive drive exists in the post-2014 scene where unprivileged memories are faced with imminent eradication. In the city where "the government only tells a one-sided, banal story of development" (Law, 2018, p. 29), neglecting and suppressing other popular voices, Hong Kong's local consciousness

or memories lose official spaces for inscription or preservation while they seek substitute ways other than the official archive. The local consciousness, which is based on the idea of Hong Kong as homeland, has been denied of its root as China's integration of the city "has been to retain the place known as Hong Kong, but not necessarily its people" (S. Chan, 2020, p. 177). By looking into the omnibus independent film *Ten Years,* this paper will search for Hong Kong's response in the face of an urgency in the post-Umbrella era and its alternative attempts to archive the unprivileged memories. Not only does the film partake in the feeling of loss of Hong Kongers, it also searches for the non-dominant's ways of archivization through its narratives, from utilizing traditional strategies such as building museums or libraries to recent methods such as constructing digital archives through films or documentaries. The consumption of the film itself in the context of post-2014 Hong Kong also alludes to a new way of archivization in today's digital era. These observations on *Ten Years* will give insight to our understanding of the somewhat neglected concept that is the archive of the unprivileged.

The archive drive of post-umbrella Hong Kong and the film *Ten Years* (2015)

While the term *localism* in Hong Kong recently has come to refer to "groups with a high sense of anti-China sentiment and calling for either curbs on Beijing's intervention or independence for Hong Kong" (Kwong, 2016, p. 66), a more general sense of local consciousness can be traced back to a period of rapid economic and cultural growth in 70s and 80s when the city's identity was distinguished from both Britain and China.[1] Their belongingness to Hong Kong as home had been growing then, but Beijing's continued interference in the city after the 1997 handover to *bring Hong Kong back to China* has rendered a feeling of disappearance among the locals. The state's official direction to integrate Hong Kong as one of China's cities, or even erase Hong Kong's specific histories—such as the demolition of the historical Star Ferry and Queen's Piers in 2006 and 2007—has faced local opposition. Such movements converged in a single moment in 2014 to confront the decision of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress (NPCSC) to pre-screen the candidates for the 2017 Hong Kong Chief Executive election (which was against the many constant demands from the city) (J. Chan, 2014, p. 576).

The Umbrella Movement, named after the crowd's using umbrellas to block the tear gas sprays from the police, was composed of students and citizens occupying the main roads for 79 days (Hui & Lau, 2015, p. 348). The occupation ended without deterring the NPCSC's decision for the 2017 election. The sentiment among the people of Hong Kong was one of

failure; they found out that "the Beijing government was not interested in offering real democracy to Hong Kong people and that its only aim was to control Hong Kong" (Kwong, 2016, p. 65). They also noticed that the distant expiration date of 2047, when Hong Kong would lose its unique status under the "one country, two systems" model, was replaced by a feeling of "the urgency of an imminent future" (Wu, 2020, p. 47). People have witnessed the acceleration of Hong Kong's disappearance and corruption, giving them a dystopian prospect of the obliteration of the city's unique culture and identity—cosmopolitanism, freedom, justice, and law—that comprised their memories as Hong Kongers. Such a sense of disappointment and failure, however, became a "key turning point" where the localist campaigns that previously did not draw much attention from the public became highly popular (Kwong, 2016, p. 65). Stephen Ching-Kiu Chan (2020) insists that since 2014, "the continuous existence of a widespread social movement has helped to build solidarity among Hong Kongers" (p. 171). Being "another 'cultural turn'" (Lee, 2017, p. 66) it signaled a new formation of the Hong Kong identity, the intensified idea of the local as home but one that might soon be lost.[2]

Ten Years, an independent film engaging with this post-2014 sentiment, is significant here. As Bazin (2005) emphasizes in *What is Cinema? Vol. 1*, photographic and filmic images of the modern era have taken over the "mummy complex" of the plastic arts (p. 9). The old desire to preserve death against the inevitability of time by embalming the corporeal body has constantly been one of the founding motivations for humans to make statues and portraits. This desire became ever stronger within the rise of cinema, as films were a new but by far the most accurate way of capturing the real from the flow of time. Although Bazin's idea, that "[t]he objective nature of photography confers on it a quality of credibility absent from all other picture making" (p. 13), is an outdated in that we now understand the subjectiveness of the lens, it still lets us notice the archiving desire within filmic genres—in this case *Ten Years*—and how powerful film is in constructing memories as to seem objective.

Scholars such as Kaes (1990) worries about how historical films, although they are not the real images of what had actually happened but a constant reconstruction and representation, "increasingly [shape] and [legitimize] our perception of the past…[and] the power over what is shared as popular memory has passed into the hands of those who produce these images" (p. 112-13). These hands that fabricate the power-laden images of past memories are cinematic versions of Derrida's archons that select specific memoirs from history, present them in public theaters, and endow them with authority by the power of mass media. While Kaes (1990)

suggests that there are peripheral attempts coming from non-Hollywood producers to "defy the all-encompassing, homogenizing power of mass media and their control over public memory" (p. 124), these are simply understood as margins and never as independent archives. *Ten Years* will be recognized as a marginal cinema from Kaes' point of view as its status as an independent film will prevent it from being widely screened in public movie theaters or attracting a mass audience as major commercial films do. However, the technological developments in recent periods, when it has become possible to make eloquent independent films with lesser budgets, store them in personal devices such as USB flash drives, and distribute them among various people residing in different places through private screenings or online streaming, have greatly altered Kaes' composition which sharply separates the major from the peripheral films. This was exactly what happened in the case of *Ten Years,* as it was frequently screened in private spaces such as universities, or short clips from it were shared between many people around the world online after it was taken down from major theaters.

From the perspective that (1) *Ten Years* as a film was a means of captivating the vanishing minor memories of Hong Kong, and (2) that it did not remain as a peripheral or subversive attempt and instead became a viral phenomenon among people, the post-Umbrella film becomes a place where we can look for the archive of the unprivileged. S. Chan (2017) points out that "[s]hort of articulating 'the local' as a lived, performed and imagined moment in the everyday experience they identify with" (p. 822), Hong Kongers *made do* with the filmic representations to cope with the impact of Hong Kong's disappearance. As one of the films that engage with the post-2014 sentiment, which Vivian P. Y. Lee (2019) defines as "an incipient sense of ennui" (p. 76) resulting from the recognition of the city's deteriorating autonomy, *Ten Years* (Au et al., 2015) features five dystopian scenes of 2025 Hong Kong, where "Hong Kongness" is further being oppressed, censored, and demolished by the Chinese government. From these scenes we can find not only the feeling of loss but also struggles for archivization.

As a filmic genre that copes with the forgetfulness of time and the old desire to preserve, the five narratives within the film *Ten Years* constantly engage with the sense of loss and the question of how unprivileged reminiscences can become archived against obliteration. The basic steps to constructing an actual archive suggested by Derrida are still valid here, but each short in *Ten Years* tries to rearrange that process for the cases of the non-dominant. They show different attempts to work out the two Derridean steps to first find a physically storing space in response to the archive drive and then endow them with a way of interpretation or law. While shorts such as "Extras" and "Dialects" focus on how unprivileged memories are

neglected from official sites, "Season of the End" and "Local Egg" reuse the traditional methods of constructing museums or libraries to preserve the minor memories. It is in the short "Self-Immolator" that we can observe the new digital method of building an alternative archive. Furthermore, going beyond the narratives, the consumption and circulation of *Ten Years* as an independent film in post-Umbrella Hong Kong let us seek the ways by which unprivileged memories can construct their own independent archives that do not rely on official storages such as museums or libraries. Thus, the next part of this paper will concentrate not on subjugated knowledges that constantly interpolate themselves within the dominant history but on a search for a new schema of an alternative archive of the unprivileged that will become in itself a separate history of the non-dominant.

The ungrammatical memories

Ten Years begins with the black and white short film "Extras," which confronts the very first obstacle that unprivileged memories encounter in the process of becoming archived. As examined in the introduction, when constructing an archive the first task is to place the memories in an archival space for physical conservation. Derrida (1996) writes, "There is no archive without a place of consignation, without a technique of repetition, and without a certain exteriority" (p. 11). Privileged memories, which in the case of post-Umbrella Hong Kong are those of mainland China, do not hesitate to situate themselves inside official spaces, whether they be news, official documents, or political discourses. The authoritative status of the national makes it possible for them to become visible and circulate easily among the *archival scenes*. On the contrary, unprivileged memories, which are Hong Kong's, are challenged from the very first step of acquiring a physical presence within the arkheion as the uniqueness of Hong Kong memories do not coincide with the national corpus, as they are "ungrammatical."

The memories of Hairy and Pete, the protagonists of "Extras" (Zune, 2015), thus exist only within their temporal and private conversations. They are respectively the economic and ethnic minority of Hong Kong, Hairy being a poor immigrant from the mainland since 2003 and Pete belonging to an ethnic group of Indian origin. Hong Kong as a "hybrid" space is regarded as having its roots within the immigrant society. However, despite the fact that they are integral inhabitants constituting the memories of immigrant Hong Kong, Hairy and Pete are excluded from the dominant notion of "Chinese," which, in Wu's (2020) words, "can be easily charged with Han Chinese centrism and nationalism" (p. 38). Within a fictional event of an attempted assassination of two politicians at the Labor Day celebration delineated by the first short "Extras," they are given the role by the Triad

to shoot the victims during the event. Before the actual happening of the incident, the camera captures the characters sharing their own reasons for taking up a seemingly suicidal job. It is interesting that they seem to be detached from the graveness of the political scheme they are participating in (which turns out to be a fabricated plot from the pro-Beijing party to pass the National Security Law). Their reasons for taking part in the crime are personal and trivial—mostly economic and ethnic hardships of living in Hong Kong—and does not concern the bigger picture of the plot, but these personal stories of Hairy and Pete that the audience are made to hear are confined only to the private space occupied by the two figures: a small classroom where only the two are waiting for their mission briefing.

This is in contrast to the final scene where news broadcasts describe the happening as a "terrorist incident." After firing their guns, Hairy and Pete are immediately killed by the police, and the short concludes with extracts from the news referencing statements from different sources—the police report, the reaction of the SAR (Special Administrative Region) secretaries, the Central Government, the Liaison Office—that "[condemn] the unlawful actions of the terrorists" (Zune, 2015, 00:21:56) and assert the necessity of the National Security Law. The two figures are defined by these official voices as foreign powers that "have penetrated Hong Kong" (00:22:55). In the midst of these statements articulating the two unprivileged as the threatening "other," Hairy and Pete's personal memories behind the attack are dispersed out of the public view. They are deprived of the possibility to enter official archival spaces as they do not conform to the syntax of national "Chineseness," to borrow Wu's (2020) term, which does not incorporate low-wage workers or ethnic minorities. Their recollections as Hong Kongers are scattered and only present in their brief private chat before committing the crime.

One thing to note is that "Extras" delineates the denial of Hairy and Pete in a rather monotonous way (Zune, 2015). The whole short is filmed in black and white, and the emotions of the two figures are never dramatized. Moreover, although the short is about an assassination attempt, "Extras" incorporates a minimum amount of action. Nevertheless, it is impossible to ignore the anxiety called forth by the urgent sense of destruction that exists beneath the stillness of the scenes. Although bleached out beneath the voices of the news reporters, the uneasiness stemming from the unresolved archive drive of Hairy and Pete is still present. Displaying the two figures, who are evidently extras, as the protagonists of the short, their private and minor voices are concretized despite their trivial and whispering content. Yet, they are never given a chance to be heard publicly. The superficial monotony of "Extras" therefore emphasizes the official archival space's

indifference to the emotional frustration of unprivileged memories. The anxiety of being excluded from the dominant discourse is most of the time invisible in news or police reports.

These unseeable emotions are shown more directly in the third short "Dialect" (Au, 2015). The film features the frustration of a taxi driver in an imagined future Hong Kong where Mandarin, instead of Cantonese, is the official language. In this world, the latter is rapidly losing its material presence in every part of the local. The government has passed a law prohibiting taxi drivers who cannot speak Mandarin from picking up passengers from crucial business sites. Navigations are operated based on the official language, and do not understand the Cantonese pronunciation of the protagonist. Not being able to speak fluent Mandarin, he is constantly "pressure[d] to give up one's native language … [amounting] to an erasure of cultural identity and memory" (Lee, 2019, p. 79). The driver feels the full effect of this eradication when he witnesses his son being more fluent in Mandarin. The young generations are no longer educated in Cantonese. What the taxi driver recognizes is the institutional installation of "Chineseness," and the irresistible reduction of spaces for Cantonese-speaking people who possess memories of the former Hong Kong.

The unprivileged, but still physically preserved

While "Extras" and "Dialect" depict the exclusion of unprivileged memories from approved archival spaces, there is yet a different story. Although the unprivileged face difficulties in obtaining conservative spaces due to their discrete quality, it does not mean that their physical storing is completely impossible. This speculation is crucial here in that it permits us to move beyond the Derridean archive, where the archons collect only those that "articulate the unity of an ideal configuration" but refuse those that "could separate (*secernere*), or partition" (Derrida, 1996, p. 3). Instead, we can dive into the idea of *the unprivileged but still physically preserved,* which allows us to contemplate minor memories that are not embedded within the authorized stories but exist as separate deposits.

Steedman (2007), in her paper "'Something She Called a Fever': Michelet, Derrida, and Dust," proposes an interesting critique on Derrida's archive by pointing out that when we look back to ancient times where Derrida traces the etymology of the word archive, we see that "the archon operated a system of law in a slave society" (p. 12). The archon belonging to Ancient Greece operated their community with a master-slave perspective. Within this social system, slaves (or the unprivileged) were important only as properties of their owners: "The *archons* dealt with slaves…only as aspects of their owners' property and personalities" (Steedman, 2007, p.

12). Their subjective voices, specific memories, or perspectives were thus naturally irrelevant to the archive-building process. They were the invisible ones whose voices were totally useless. Instead, Steedman suggests a similar but different figure of the modern period, the "magistrate," who is "charged with the care and management of the poor and with the mediation of social and class relations" (2007, p. 12). The magistrate, as opposed to the ancient archon, leaves two types of recordings during its service: (1) the official documents (of course), and (2) personal notes, ledgers, and lists of various trivial things written to help him resolve the requests from the non-official or the popular. They all also end up in the archival space. She calls these non-official recordings "stuff" or "dusts," as they were not intended for archiving, but were left unexpectedly.

Extending the Derridean archive through Steedman's idea leads us to think that there can exist material residues which do not coincide with the official monolithic corpus. It is here where we can imagine the archival spaces where the unprivileged can assert their physical presence. Although Steedman does not engage specifically in cases other than the "unintended recordings," we can think of other various remnants of the non-dominant that were preserved in material form. For instance, a study of Swedish minor immigrant cinemas by Andersson and Sundholm (2019) shows that many minor films produced by immigrants in Sweden, despite the fact that "[they] seem to lack not only the cultural or archival value in general, but… are not in any explicit way Swedish objects" (p. 124), were nevertheless preserved in the National Library. This was due to the Swedish regulation beginning in 1979 to archive all audio-visual materials that were released in the country. There are also other instances, such as when the unprivileged construct their own private space, like a personal museum or library, to collect memories that will not be otherwise recorded in the official.

Returning to *Ten Years*, the second short, "Season of the End," conforms to the latest case. The story follows Wong Ching and Lau Ho Chi who attempt to construct a private museum of the past Hong Kong in their small apartment by collecting the remains from the city's ruined houses and demolished spaces (Wong, 2015). The couple are obsessed with gathering all sorts of objects ranging from broken brick pieces to abandoned everyday materials such as tattered old gloves and broken china that they believe to contain the localness of their memories. The first scene of the short shows us the couple's house where the leftovers of Hong Kong are preserved in glass jars and steel cabinets, neatly categorized and labeled with specific information. They have built a minute museum of what they believe to be the physical memories of Hong Kongers.

But even with their success in constructing an archival space, a pervasive impotence and discontent still looms throughout the short. Despite the hard archival effort of the couple, they seem to feel that their work might turn out to be useless. They have recorded the Hong Kong memories and provided them with a physical space, but why this anxiety?

It is noteworthy that these collected ruins are called "specimens" (Wong, 2015). Wong and Lau collect objects, carefully sort them, put them in glass jars, and seal them with wax to prevent contamination. Their application of a scientific method to building an archival space can be understood by looking at the early enlightenment encyclopedists who sought to understand the world through "possession and control of recorded information" (Schwartz, 2007, p. 76). According to Joan M. Schwartz (2007), like the early understanding of the photograph, which was believed to objectively represent the Nature without the mediation of human subjectivity, the archive based on the modern principle of classification was thought to bear in itself the *truth*. Specimens were "collected, labeled, and classified in the pursuit of historical understanding as much as in the exploration of the natural sciences" (Schwartz, 2007, p. 76). In line with this early concept of the archive, Wong and Lau seem to believe that by turning objects into specimens they can preserve within them the self-evident and self-reliant memories of Hong Kong.

However, as Schwartz (2007) indicates, the more recent theories have shown that "neither archival records nor archival practices are theory-free or value-free" (p. 77). Specimens do not stand alone self-evidently. In archival practices and reinterpretations, there is always the presence of an archivist. This brings us back to Steedman's idea of magistrate. She emphasizes that archival records are "not history but just stuff" (Steedman, 2007, p. 13), and that preserved materials and archival space are not by themselves History. Although the magistrate might leave unofficial recordings that recount the trivial memories, we again need historians who can mediate for those fragments (such as Jules Michelet, whom Steedman suggests in her paper). "Stuff" or "dusts" are significant, but cannot be completed by themselves. We can draw a real example from Andersson and Sundholm's (2019) account. When they were recovering the immigrant cinemas from the film archives, they found out that minor cinemas were physically preserved but altogether forgotten and given no significance, simply existing as meaningless deposits. They claim that the archiving of minor cinemas "should not be limited to collecting and preserving" (Andersson & Sundholm, 2019, p. 121) because if simply stored without further ado, they will lack the socio-political power to repeat and circulate in public scenes.

The same idea can be applied to the private Hong Kong museum in "Season of the End." The sense of impotence permeating the characters comes from the fact that materials themselves do not bear the memories of Hong Kong within themself. Regardless of how hard the couple try to make the specimens, the memories seem to slip from their grasp. Revisiting Derrida, material presence does not resolve the archive drive as it cannot yet be considered as a true archive. It lacks the second step of the process, where the archival space should be given to a way to command, be interpreted, or configured. Wong and Lau's anxiety originates from the fact that without giving the material collection a voice to speak, it will eventually be forgotten (Wong, 2015). Such is the case of Swedish immigrant cinema where the films were neglected and left asleep beneath the piles of numerous other recordings for decades, no different from the pile of dusts.

Archival artists, or the surrogates

Derrida, Steedman, Schwartz, and even Andersson and Sundholm's ideas all point to the fact that physical preservation in archival spaces does not immediately guarantee the conservation of memories. Derrida's (1996) schema, which proposes two consecutive steps, (1) physical preservation, and (2) endowment of the way of interpretation, is a useful tool when investigating the methods of preserving memories, or in other words, the dissolution of the archive drive through the construction of an archive. Privileged memories, such as "Chineseness," undergo this process without additional effort, but in the case of the unprivileged, or "Hong Kongness," they encounter hardships in both the first and the second steps. This means that even though they succeed in acquiring an independent place in an archival space, there is yet another obstacle to overcome: they are faced with the task of giving themselves a way of enunciation. Official memories are given the authority to speak by the archons (in a contemporary sense, the dominant) and by the very spatial power of the arkheion (the institutions). The unprivileged, on the other hand, do not have such support. They need to look for alternative measures.

The last short, "Local Egg," alludes to a possible substitute. It features a scene in a future Hong Kong where the term "local" can no longer be used (Ng, 2015). In stores, eggs cannot be labeled as "local," but instead should be described as "from Hong Kong." Banning the term local, which has deep connotations of distinct Hong Kong memories, is an attempt of the government to erase Hong Kongness. Bookstores are also inspected regularly to find publications with "politically sensitive" contents. Against this strong censorship conducted by the government, the local inhabitants have constructed a hidden library made out of banned books. In an

ordinary-looking house, people have physically stored books that were subject to confiscation. Like the private museum in "Season of the End," the locals have built an alternative archival space to place their unprivileged memories.

However, different from Wong and Lau who are caught up with a great frustration, the local inhabitants see the hidden library as a space of hope. The difference between the two comes from the presence of a boy named Ming. In "Local Egg," the censorship and oppression of Hong Kong memories are performed by none other than local children (Ng, 2015). Young students, who are in their elementary school age, are given activities by their teachers to expose the wrongdoings of their parents. Similar to "Dialect," the young generation's severance from the former local memories indicate the irresistible dying out of Hong Kongness. Yet, Ming is different, because he participates in constructing and expanding the hidden library. Able to know the precise inspection dates, he works as a spy for the local inhabitants. Ming, albeit belonging to the younger generation, is the bearer of the Hong Kong memories of former generations and the hope to connect them to the future.

Foster (2004), in "An Archival Impulse," highlights the role of *archival artists* in excavating forgotten recordings and materials to give them their own narratives and to reinstate them in the form of "archival art" (p. 3). Preserved recordings, which could not have obtained their own voices through the official archives, are given a context and interpretation by these surrogates. Ming in "Local Egg" (Ng, 2015) takes up the same position of the spokesman for the hidden archive. The memories inscribed in the books in the hidden library are not yet obliterated because the older generations of Hong Kong are still alive to give the materialized memories voices and order. But like in "Dialect" or "Season of the End," there is a deep anxiety stemming from the dystopian prospect that these older generations will someday die out ("Dialects") and only the archival space without voices will be left behind ("Season of the End") (Au, 2015; Wong, 2015). However, the last short, with Ming accepting the role as an archival artist for the hidden library, features a possible substitute to the authoritative archons. The child can give the physical archival space its voice in order to preserve the Hong Kong memories as an actual archive. Thus, the Derridean schema has found its somewhat successful rework here. The official archival space is replaced with a private library. The way of interpretation, which for privileged memories was given by the dominant and institutions (we might also use the term apparatus), is given by no other than a child acting as a surrogate figure for Hong Kongness.

The film *Ten Years* and beyond the physical space

The four shorts of *Ten Years* that we have examined strive to understand the way of archiving unprivileged memories, but they still stay within the traditional method. While the unique features of filmic genre, which are explained by Bazin (2005) as carrying the inclination to preserve against time and hold the capacity to objectively re-present the real, allow them to more freely deal with archiving desires, they are still left confined in the old schema of official statements, news, libraries, or museums. Among the four, "Local Egg" finds the most persuasive means to construct an archive of the unprivileged, but it seems yet insufficient as a small library with only a single child as its voice. It still lacks the stability of national libraries or the immense authoritative power that runs beneath them. In this sense, they would not differ much from Kaes' (1990) marginal films that defy the major cinematic images that construct the public memories. In other words, while it may be considered to be an archive in the sense of satisfying the two Derridean steps, it nevertheless shows limits in long-term preservation and distribution/circulation.

The forth short of *Ten Years* suggests a new way beyond the traditional sense of archive. "Self-Immolator" is a mockumentary constructed around a fictional figure who self-immolated in front of the British Consulate-General Hong Kong as an act of protest after the passage of the National Security Law in the 2025 city (Chow, 2015). The camera captures different Hong Kong people speaking their thoughts and stories surrounding the incident. It exhibits interviews conducted with those of diverse social statuses: a university professor, a student, an active writer, and a news commentator. Furthermore, it shows stories of various Hong Kongers, ranging from an ethic minority of Indian descent who is denied her Hong Kong belongings, to an ordinary computer salesman who is visited by government officials simply because the self-immolator had used a gas can that was purchased from his store.

Choosing the mockumentary form, this short alludes to another possibility of constructing an alternative archive. The "Self-Immolator" acts as an abode for the unprivileged memories. The thoughts, stories, and memories of ordinary Hong Kong people will hardly be preserved in official archival spaces in that they are too "local," trivial, or unnecessary, but it is by the very structure of the mockumentary that the minor memories are collected, juxtaposed, and constructed as a bigger body of what we might call the Hong Kongness of the future. Rather than constructing physical spaces like museums or libraries, the short suggests how actual voices in their live forms can be recorded and conserved in the digital era. The unprivileged acquire their place in the media where they are no longer confined to the

spatial limitation of the physical archive, but can be preserved in two ways: the mockumentary itself becomes the archival space for the unprivileged, but at the same time, as digitized media its fluidity allows it to repeat and circulate among physical cinemas (major or private) and online, whether in its entirety or as short clips extracted from the original. Landsberg (2003) emphasizes that "commodification, which is at the heart of mass cultural representations, is precisely what makes images and narratives widely available, available to people who live in different places, come from different backgrounds, from different races and from different classes" (p. 149). In recent times when even the independent mocumentary dealing with minor memories can be considered as a commodity in the form of digital media that can be consumed by various audiences online or through private sharing, the consumers of the mockumentary can themselves become the mediator that gives voice, both within the local and across the global. Their voluntary participation will distribute, echo, and recreate the memories that are preserved in the media.

It is interesting how the way in which *Ten Years* was received by the Hong Kong and world audience resembles the archival attempt delineated within the film. Called the "*Ten Years* phenomenon" by Lee (2019), the film is regarded as a "recent case of bottom-up resistance against official censorship and systemic marginalization" (p. 76). As the film was dealing with politically sensitive issues, it was taken down from major movie theaters despite its huge popularity among the locals. However, when the official space was taken away, Hong Kongers sought for alternatives such as private screenings at universities, or social media where short clips from the film were posted for global circulation. Not only did these reactions place the film in substitute spaces, but they also engendered active engagements to give specific contexts and voices to the memories of Hong Kong in the face of destruction. Among these events is the film's winning the Best Film of 35th Hong Kong Film Awards in 2016. This shows how non-official or non-physical spaces can act as a significant substitute for archival places. The gaining of popular attention and circulation for independent minor film-archives is also possible even within the 21st century Hong Kong film industry where major film productions show a significant "switch from Cantonese to Mandarin…coproduction, mainland investment and self-censorship" (Rehling, 2015, p. 543)—namely the "China Factor."

By looking at and around *Ten Years*, we can see that Hong Kongers in the post-Umbrella era are striving to cope with their archive drive by seeking non-official measures to conserve their memories. Produced in the post-Umbrella Hong Kong scene, in which the local memories are in a crisis of disappearance, *Ten Years* is filled with an archive drive, where the

memories of Hong Kong attempt to construct their own archive in the face of the dystopian prospect of their eradication. According to Derrida (1996), memories should go through two distinct steps to build an archive. They need physical storing, and then they need to provide themselves with a way of interpretation. But being the unprivileged memories, Hong Kongness struggles from the beginning. The anxious and frustrated emotions coming from the recognition that their memories are deprived of physical presence in official spaces are featured in "Extras" and "Dialect." "Season of the End" tries to find an alternative space by creating a private museum, but because it lacks the second step, where it should be given the voice of interpretation, the archive drive remains unresolved. "Local Egg" proposes a hopeful alternative by constructing a hidden library where a child, who can give voice to the place, resides. "Self-Immolator" further expands this idea of the archive to the digital space where physical restraints can be overcome and acquire its archival surrogates. Thus, exploring *Ten Years* through the question of archive drive of non-privileged memories leads to significant insight into ways of how such memories can construct their own archive against the destructive dominant in the recent period of the digital.

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Notes

[1] The factors that brought about the construction of 'local consciousness' itself are very complex. For instance, we can also look back to the mid-19th century British Occupation of Hong Kong where the 'native gentlemen' under the British regime formulated the idea of neither British nor Chinese. See Law (2017).

[2] The paper concentrates on the imminent aftermath of the Umbrella Movement in 2014 as it is a concern of the film *Ten Years,* released in 2015. An analysis of a more recent development of the socio-political struggle in Hong Kong can be found in S. Chan (2020).

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