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Ljavek's Indigenous Urban Futurities-Making: Some Stories about Learning to Feel a Way

Towards Home in Taiwan's Urban Lands and Waters

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Abstract

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This dissertation centers stories shared with me from Ljavek, a primarily Paiwan Indigenous community located in one of Taiwan's largest cities. Ljavek is an urban Indigenous community that formed nearly seven decades ago, even while they continue to face government pressures to displace and relocate from the central areas of the city. My main research partner was/is Galaygay Balasasu, a key public figure in Ljavek's ongoing political advocacy for their rightful presence in the city. The purpose of this research is to re-assert that urban spaces still hold Indigenous presence, affect, knowledge, and histories, while urban spaces are still lands and waters with their more-than-human and more-than-living agentic capacities. The research inquiries focus on the role of affect in learning to sustain human-place relations, particularly as Indigenous communities sense-making pathways to assert their self-determination within the

colonial structures of urban spaces. I mainly drew on Indigenous Research Methodologies of visiting and conversations (Kovach, 2021; Tuck et al., 2023; Tuck & McKenzie, 2014; Wilson, 2020) to re-center Ljavek's intergenerational and affective learning within urban spaces. The research data is composed of conversation transcripts with several Ljavek community members and their political advocacy partners, as well as field notes and archival documents. The dissertation presents findings in three separate research articles: First, I explain how listening is an embodied revision for qualitative research methodologies to identify and resist colonial norms embedded in academic research, while attending to the Indigenous research partners' relational invitations. The second article theorizes that learning is reflected in the changing composition of the city, from changes in the urban infrastructure, communities who stay or are coerced to leave, to budding more-than-human relations in urban spaces. I propose learning as emerging through the co-constitutive processes of *worlding* and *acclimating* between humans, more-than-humans, lands, and waters. The third article focuses on how Ljavek's affective political sense-making both foregrounds the affective colonial technologies attempting to undermine Indigenous community building in urban spaces and exemplifies Ljavek's continual re-assertions of intergenerational Paiwan self-determination. Through this research, I listen to and re-share Ljavek's invitations for us to re-envision urban human-place relations, and how we may respect Indigenous sovereignties and stewardship within urban spaces.

Keywords: Indigenous self-determination, affect, learning in social movements, relational research methods, Indigenous Peoples in Taiwan

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Kám-siā ták-ke.

Galaygay Balasasau 給原住民族青年讀者的話:

有時間的話, 記得回家、多多回去幫忙。

— Galaygay Balasasau, April 29, 2026

Chapter 1: Research Beginnings

Place-ing Writing: Where am I Writing from?

Dear readers, I write to you from Coast Salish lands and waters, under the close observation and supervision of my cat 阿滿. While I write here, I am also guided by the story of ljavilu, a plant central to Paiwan Indigenous ways of being from across the Pacific Ocean and in Taiwan. Following Meixi's (2019) dissertation introduction on "place-ing" her writing, I place my writing in the hot and humid embrace of 高雄市 Kaohsiung City's summer air, the scent and sounds of salt water lapping periodically against cement piers, the camphor trees whose leaves have a cool fragrance if you rub them apart, and the 白頭翁 light-vented bulbul who call from tree to tree each morning and can be seen in a flash of green and white. I write as a queer, trans, 河洛/Hòh-Ló/Hokkien, and Han scholar who calls Kaohsiung City home, and whose family are settlers in Taiwan even with our colonized experiences. I write as someone who recalls these familiar embodied and place-based literacies to ground this dissertation in an inquiry of the learning that takes place in the transformation of urban lands and waters.

I write to place what is now known as the urban center of Kaohsiung City as lands and waters that have been stewarded by Pingpu/Plains Indigenous Peoples and that Ljavek, a largely Paiwan Indigenous community, calls home. Ljavek formed in Kaohsiung City in the 1950s as Paiwan youth moved from 屏東縣 Pingtung County, reflecting the wave of Indigenous urban migration post-WWII. In recent years, as Kaohsiung City has been transitioning from a heavy industry capital to a high-tech and semiconductor-driven economy, Ljavek's original location has become an economically valuable property, and the government has displaced Ljavek from this original location, although Ljavek community members still stay connected across Kaohsiung City and Taiwan more broadly. Following Bang's (2020) call to the learning sciences, I pick up

the question, “what continuously evolving epistemic, ontological, and axiological multiplicities are we enacting and engaging in the remakings and rescalings of the shifting landwaterscapes of life?” (p. 2). What do the changes in urban landwaterscapes tell us about our epistemic commitments and learning in relation to lands and waters?

This project seeks to understand how Indigenous agency and self-determination are enacted through Indigenous mobilities, community formation, and resistance in urban spaces. This project collaborates with Ljavek in Kaohsiung City, Taiwan. In Ljavek’s situation, residents were able to build a Paiwan community in urban spaces, on lands and waters that they were unfamiliar with, and continue language perpetuation, ceremonies, and the intergenerational teachings of cultural practices. Self-determination, in this case, includes more than self-governance, but agency to make collective decisions (Wildcat, 2001), such as to teach and learn languages and cultural practices intergenerationally, to choose where to live, and to maintain kinship relations, whether it be with human, more-than-human kin, or lands and waters. This dissertation takes seriously how learning is relational and collective (Simpson, 2017), happening in kinship networks that include humans, more-than-humans, lands, and waters all as subjects learning with each other (Bang, 2016).

The overarching question that guides this dissertation is: *As the urban landwaterscapes shift and transform, how do Ljavek, Ljavek’s advocacy partners, the Kaohsiung City government, the human and more-than-human residents of Ljavek, the researcher, and the lands and waters that make up Kaohsiung City learn in relation to each other?* This dissertation follows a three-article structure, and in each subsequent article, I follow this question while inquiring more specifically into how the researcher’s learning guides the methodology, and into the affective dimensions of this collective learning.

借路 Tsioh Lōo: Epistemic Journeys Towards Home

Dear readers, to start, it is only fair that I tell you who I am and how I have come to this work as a person, and not just as a researcher. Wilson (2020) writes that work alongside Indigenous Peoples should be based on relations, and that a research project should be motivated by the intergenerational relations and relational accountabilities that make us who we are. My family is not from Kaohsiung City, but my parents moved to Kaohsiung for their professional careers as a high school teacher and a professor. In many ways, this dissertation represents my inquiries into urban migration, asking what systems push people to move, who can choose to move, who is forced to move, how people resist through movement, and what we learn through moving, focusing particularly on Han settler colonialism in Taiwan.

I began this dissertation some years ago in the COVID-19 lockdown, and the intensified reflexivity that period brought forth. There is something to be said about when the human world goes still, and my body had felt safe and uninterrupted enough to revisit and amend the stories I had been telling myself about my family and myself, just as how the deer came back to wander the Coast Salish lands and waters of my university's campus grounds when it suddenly became empty of humans.

Amongst all the transitions that happened in my memories, perspectives, and self-storying back then, what stood out to me was how little I understood about Taiwan's settler colonialism, Indigenous sovereignties, and the reverberations from Taiwan's martial law period and White Terror, even though they all fundamentally shaped every dimension of my life before I had the words to justify them. All I had was my affect, and the intergenerational histories embedded within it. I believe this speaks to many learnings. First, Han privilege truly makes Han people in Taiwan completely ignorant of racism, racialization, and colonialism (Hirano et al.,

2018; P., 2023), even if our families have experienced colonization. In addition, the 2020 renewed Black Lives Matter uprisings still hold relevant and critical pedagogies for people in different places to inquire about our positions in the racial hierarchies across the world. Although anti-Blackness does appear in different formations across place, and it is important that we do not generalize one context's anti-Blackness to another (Kelley, 2022), an inquiry into how anti-Blackness shows up in Taiwan deepened my understanding of racial capitalism, and particularly how racial capitalism operates in Taiwan to exploit Southeast Asian migrant labor (Lan, 2006).

In that quiet echo chamber of seemingly isolated reflection, I also started affirming my own identities as transgender/transmasculine and 河洛/Hòh-Ló/Hokkien, as only one could when stripped of the pressures to curate a publicly-consumable self. These days, terms like “allyship” and a sense of “shared liberation” can get thrown around without regard to how our relations with ourselves, place, communities, and more-than-humans are transformed by sitting with the ongoing world-making by systemic oppressions, Indigenous self-determination, and intersectional resistances and relation-making. Instead, I think of the affirmation of my trans and 河洛 dimensions of self not as an identification with labels, but a revision towards how I see my relations and relational accountabilities with my communities in Taiwan and the U.S., and the Pacific Ocean that routes my journeys back and forth. Writing from a Nishnaabeg Indigenous feminist perspective, Simpson (2017) writes that relationality is not a romanticized or pure notion, but a practical and action-oriented network of beings in kinetic engagement to make collective livelihoods possible. She also writes from Nishnaabeg creation stories of skyworld and stars to theorize co-resistance as constellations, mobilizing collaborators through their relational connections. In *Constellating Home: Trans and Queer Asian American Rhetorics*, Hsu (2022)

draws from Simpson's theorization of constellation to talk about homing practices, or for queer and trans Asian American and Pacific Islander folx to "locate and create alternate intimacies and belongings in defiance of our structured isolation" (p. 10). Becoming trans and 河洛 has led me towards so many different changes in my life, from speaking with my mother in 河洛/Hokkien (one of the Taiwanese languages) to making friends through the Taiwan Tongzhi Hotline Association¹. In this sense, participating in the world as trans and 河洛 made so many otherwise relational openings became tangible, and I hold immense gratitude to the relationships I have been gifted with along the way.

The dreams for this dissertation grew from this re-learning and re-storying of my relations, and I knew I had to go home to Kaohsiung City, Taiwan, to hone in my inquiry around my relational accountabilities. In the summer of 2023, I decided to take a bike and train ride south from Kaohsiung City, and around the main island of Taiwan counterclockwise. I titled this trip 借路 tsioh lōo, or "to borrow a road." This name was a serendipitous mistake. I had been recalling one of my childhood lullabies, 西北雨 Northwest Rain, and the lyric about fireflies shining a light for a path on a stormy day, or 照路 tsiò lōo, "to illuminate a road," but at a second glance of this song's lyrics, there are pieces here and there that may suggest the native-ization of settlers. My thoughts on the song are not clear yet, but I do feel that 借路 tsioh lōo remains a better title for this trip as I journeyed to learn more about a place that was never mine. On this journey, I visited friends of my Indigenous colleagues, lands and waters with ongoing legal struggles, and Indigenous-owned community libraries. Returning from this trip, I learned about Ljavek, a mainly Paiwan Indigenous community in Kaohsiung City, as I was reading through the news articles from Civilmedia@Taiwan, a nonprofit journalist organization that documents

¹ The Taiwan Tongzhi Hotline Association is the oldest and largest nonprofit organization in Taiwan that supports the needs of LGBTQ+ people and their families in Taiwan, providing services from peer counseling, medical resources, community spaces, and beyond. More can be found on their website (<https://hotline.org.tw/english>).

social movements and protests in Taiwan. As I will share in detail later, through the relationships that I stumbled into along the way, Ljavek became my main research collaborator in this dissertation.

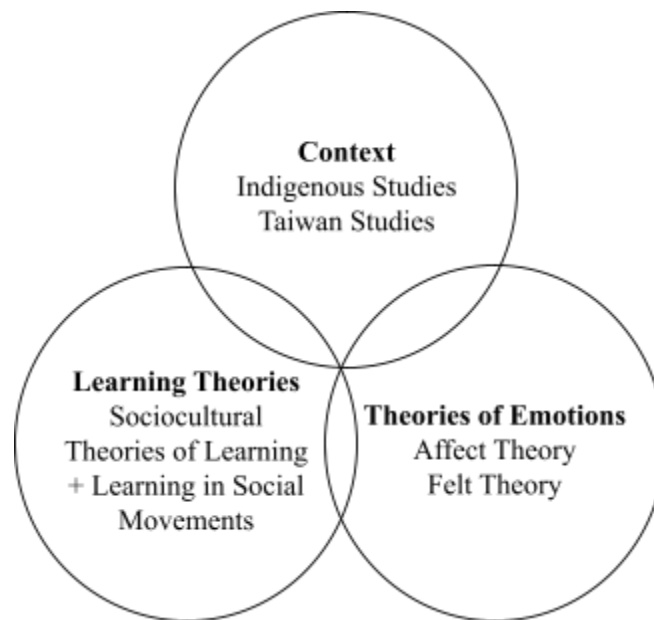
This trip and the friends I made along the way solidified my commitments in research. I write to learn how to call a place home without staking claim, to queer home as a place that is both specific and non-exclusive, and to contextualize the place I call home by re-centering Indigenous presence in urban spaces. I write to ask what we must learn as urban planning assumes that re-invention is liberation and modernity, while perpetuating Indigenous displacement and erasure. I write to re-learn what being from “Taiwan” even means when I begin to detach myself from the illusions of colonial nation-states, learning from Indigenous sovereignties to contribute to ethical human-place relationships even while I live with the embodiment of being Taiwanese as a relational identity unique from being Chinese. I write from all these beginnings to learn from Ljavek about Indigenous migration, self-determination, and kinship-making in urban spaces.

Situating this Dissertation Research

Following the historical construction of educational research as a field with multidisciplinary roots, while this dissertation research is situated within the learning sciences, this research is also informed by theories and literature bodies beyond educational research (see Figure 1.1). To explore the topic of learning in urban lands and waters, I narrow down specifically to focus on the context of Ljavek and their lived experiences and relations in Kaohsiung City, Taiwan. The context and the fields that contribute to articulating this context are therefore based in Indigenous Studies and Taiwan Studies. Within the many forms of learning that take place in Ljavek, I resist dichotomies of in/formal education to re-center how learning

and teaching have always taken place in Indigenous families, communities, and sovereignties, even though settler colonial legacies within educational research may deem otherwise. The learning theories that shape this dissertation are theories that describe sociocultural learning in communities and social movements. Finally, to hone in my inquiry even further, I pay attention to how affect and emotions arise from learning in community and in resistance. I draw from literature in affect theory and felt theory to provide theoretical scaffolding for my dissertation.

Figure 1.1. Situating the Research Contexts and Theories



Key Concepts and Literature

Following the previous representation of how this dissertation is situated (Figure 1.1.), in this section I present several key concepts related to each context or theory.

Context: Lands and Waters, Place, and Indigenous Mobilities

Indigenous communities, theorists, and scholars have long asserted that spatial relations are political and based upon sociocultural epistemologies. Goeman (2015) describes that place is

not to be mistaken with random assemblages of physical structures and objects, but that place must be understood as the grounds for Indigenous memories and meaning-making. Through capitalistic and colonial perspectives of space, lands and waters are collapsed into property, and as objects for discovery, conquest, and void of meaning and agency without human engagement (Bang, et al., 2014). Resisting the normalization of land objectification, Bang et al. (2014) distinguish “land” from “place” by revising Descartes’ well-known statements as “land is, therefore we are” and “I am, therefore place is” (p. 9). Through this revision, this dissertation approaches lands and waters as agentic, historicized, and co-constructed through Indigenous storying and memories.

Indigenous mobilities and urban migrations are related to not only colonial forces but Indigenous agencies. North American Indigenous scholar Leanne Betasamosake Simpson (2017) writes that there can be,

at least four kinds of [Indigenous] mobility: mobility within grounded normativity as an embedded Indigenous practice, mobility as a response to colonialism as resistance, mobility as a deliberate and strategic resurgence, and mobility as direct or indirect forced expulsion, relocation, and displacement and the creation of Indigenous diaspora.

Indigenous movement can be any one of those things or a fluid combination of any or all of those elements. (p. 196-197)

While Simpson writes from a Michi Saagiig Nishnaabeg standpoint, an Indigenous nation on the east coast of North America, her words ring true for many instances of Indigenous mobilities in Taiwan. In Ljavek’s situation, residents were able to build a Paiwan community in urban spaces, on lands and waters that they were not familiar with, exemplifying how Indigenous mobilities

are imbued with agency. The process of living with as much dignity as possible regardless of location is “a flight path out of settler colonialism and into Indigeneity” (Simpson, 2017, p. 197).

Learning Theories: Learning in Social Movements in the Learning Sciences

The learning sciences field generally focuses on theorizing and studying learning processes (e.g., How do people learn? What environments facilitate learning? What should people learn?) (Esmonde & Booker, 2016). Early learning sciences literature emphasized formal learning environments, such as classrooms and lecture halls. However, a growing body of learning in social movements literature posits that learning also occurs in community-engaged social action (Bang & Vossoughi, 2016; Erickson, 2021). Within social movements, individuals undergo emotional, conceptual, practical, kinship, and identity development to identify and counter oppression (Curnow et al., 2019; Jurow & Shea, 2015; Veal, 2020). By broadening our theorizations of learning to include learning in social movements, we may address learning spaces and processes that contribute to decolonization and interrogations of power and privilege.

Turning from conventional and well-bounded learning spaces such as a classroom, literature in learning in social movements emphasizes engagement in real-world tasks rather than simulated tasks, leading to fuzzy space-time boundaries about when/where learning happens (Erickson, 2021). The distribution and divisions of labor across space-time and vertically between different scales make analyzing the “full” social movement at once difficult for the researcher. Here “scaling” doesn't necessarily mean creating something quantitatively “bigger,” but also implies implementing projects in different contexts, scaling across rather than vertically (Jurow & Shea, 2015). Additionally, politicization and learning in social movements is not linear or monolithic, “not merely a process of conceptual development or cognitive change, but a simultaneous process of conceptual, practical, epistemological, and identity development”

(Curnow et al., 2019, p. 716). What happens in social movements has the potential to be transformational in almost every dimension, an exemplification of praxis. Combined, we cannot theorize learning and learning contexts in neat, formulaic conceptions. Diversity in theories and methods is needed to describe and document the expenditure of labor that transforms social practices and societies themselves and makes social movements possible.

Theories of Emotions: “Affect” and the Affective Turn

There have been back-and-forth iterations of how affect theorists think about the intensities named “affect.” As Gregg and Seigworth's (2010) opening to *The Affect Theory Reader* states: “There is no single, generalizable theory of affect . . . there can only ever be infinitely multiple iterations of affect and theories of affect” (p. 3-4). As overwhelming as this may seem, this openness welcomes the heterogeneity of human experiences and stretches our minds to attend to the body with humility.

Earlier on, theorists influenced by Silvan Tomkins believed that affect is innately hard-wired, reactionary, and pre-subjective, and follows Darwin's theories on evolution (Gregg & Seigworth, 2010; Leys, 2011). This theorization has often been critiqued for its genetic and deterministic tendency, which can be reductive, overlooking sociocultural relations as well as the many unpredictable and emancipatory possibilities (Leys, 2011). Not to mention that current scientific methods of approaching affect in neural systems and asserting other positivist claims have been shaky at best (Barrett et al., 2019; Leys, 2011). However, similar ideas still dominate the field of affect (Leys, 2011), while some scholars in the humanities and social sciences turned to linguistic and psychoanalytic means to define and study affect.

The affective turn that followed then seemed like a return of attention to the body. Scholars who had turned to linguistic and psychoanalytic means found themselves in another

“straitjacket” and began to re-attend to the body’s own grammar, one that is rooted in the body’s relation with and becoming in the world, and also how biology is implicated in social performance (Leys, 2011; Palmer, 2020). This theorization is also indebted to feminist theorists who challenged the Cartesian distinction of what is rational and important, asserting that the personal is political (Anderson, 2016). With notable scholars and contributors such as Baruch Spinoza, Gilles Deleuze, Sara Ahmed, and Brian Massumi, affect theory then attends to how intensities “come to compose[] bodies and worlds simultaneously” (Gregg & Seigworth, 2010, p. 6) and “affect [as] persistent proof of a body’s never less than ongoing immersion in and among the world’s obstinacies and rhythms, its refusals as much as its invitations” (Gregg & Seigworth, 2010, p. 1). Affect is not only about the biochemicals firing away in our subconscious awareness but also about how our bodies feel and make others feel, how our bodies experience forces and are pushed/pulled/held along different vectors in the world while placing forces upon other bodies. Also differing from Tomkin’s theorizations, this view of affect expands the affective subject to include more than humans and more than living beings (Gregg & Seigworth, 2010), placing the focus on the intensities and forces between bodies rather than assuming that affect is unique to the internal physiology of human bodies.

Here within the affective turn, “affect,” “emotions,” and “feelings” have different definitions. “Feeling” generally means the sensing of emotions, moods, and atmospheres (Anderson, 2016). Some scholars (e.g., Massumi) draw clear distinctions between affect and emotions, where affect precedes cognitive interpretation and escapes discourse in a pre-linguistic way, and some scholars (e.g., Ahmed) view affect and emotions as inseparable along a continuum of experience and expression (Anderson, 2016; Palmer, 2017). In the former, the body

seems to have a grammar of their² own, while in the latter there is a shared grammar and logic between the body and conscious interpretation (Palmer, 2017; Leys, 2011). But all in all, there is a common categorization of “affect with the impersonal, life and the objective; emotion with the personal, identity and the subjective” (Anderson, 2014, p. 12).

Contrary to these theorists, in this dissertation I approach affect from a perspective that views affect as transpersonal and between subjects. Anderson (2014) is a theorist who uses “affect” and “emotions” interchangeably. This distinction of affect as pre-personal, to Anderson (2014), distracts us from understanding affect as transpersonal, as mediated by encounters between bodies and the geo-historicity of bodies. Instead, he argues that in theory, affect is historical and related to histories of oppression and liberation, while, in practice, affect is virtually inseparable from emotions (Anderson, 2014). Thus, “the task [for us] is to attend to the mediation of what a body can do in specific social-spatial formations” (Anderson, 2014, p. 88) and pay attention to “*affect as bodily capacities emergent from encounters*” (p. 18). This attention to bodies and bodily capacities may clarify how bodies have been racialized, disciplined, and organized, and how bodies may seek liberation through relational practices.

Theories of Emotions: “Felt Knowledge” in Felt Theory

Frequently dismissed by academia, Indigenous community knowledge production emphasizes the relational, the bodily, the subjective, and the collective, which contradicts academia’s pursuit of the bias-free and the objective (Harjo, 2019; Million, 2013). Within felt theory, felt knowledge is a kind of Indigenous community knowledge that centers “the body [as] an archive of experiences where knowledge is also produced and held” (Harjo, 2019, p. 84).

While disregarded by Western academia as polemic, “feminine,” or, worse, not as knowledge at

² I use the pronoun “their” when referring to bodies. This, in my mind, honors the body as more than an object, but a being that I am a part of. I am also inspired by using “their” as a gender-inclusive and gender-expansive terminology that can be both singular and plural.

all (Million, 2013), Indigenous communities have been theorizing felt knowledge for generations as a way to document histories and imagine futurities. Here, I draw from Indigenous scholarship to describe feeling, felt theory, and ways that Indigenous communities have long theorized about affect and the body before affect theory. Million (2013) and Harjo (2019) inform my thoughts here with their respective work on felt theory in relation to the Canadian residential schooling history and Mvskoke futurity.

When Harjo (2019) writes about Mvskoke futurity and Indigenous community knowledge production, knowledge is co-created and lives in the envelopes of *kin-space-time*, which layers onto *space-time* community relationality and kinship. Felt knowledge is thus situated within envelopes of kin-space-time. The body, our feelings, “our lived sensory being-ness” (Million, 2013, p. 30), records and remembers histories as a reservoir of knowledge and skills. We may travel through kin-space-time by remembering being with kin: the laughter in our ears and food reaching our senses (seeing, smelling, and tasting with delight). And these travels between kin-space-time are not just about recalling memories but also inform a sense of responsibility about how to be in this world (Harjo, 2019). Felt knowledge is thus related to the sensory experiences of the body, but more importantly, felt knowledge represents ancestral knowledge, Indigenous ways of living, and guidance for nation-building.

Places are important for felt knowledge, although felt knowledge is not fixed or tied down to one place. Harjo (2019) uses examples of music and dancing in stompgrounds to describe felt knowledge and kin-space-time, how bodies re-create music and dance moves from generations before, and how the stompgrounds themselves are important to facilitate the stompdances and gatherings. Another example is the smell of food. Harjo (2019) mentions a restaurant in Albuquerque that sells breakfast burritos, fried chicken, and smoked meat, which

draws crowds of people. These smells mirror those at the stompgrounds and, while being hundreds of miles away from the stompgrounds, invoke the memories and activities at stompdances. The smells carry with them felt knowledge that, while rooted in place, travels far distances to the bodies who know.

Felt knowledge is not only Indigenous community knowledge but also documentation of colonial violence and trauma. Million (2013) writes about this in relation to Canada's abusive boarding school history and the reconciliation legislation and processes that followed. In many instances, First Nations and Métis women relived and retold their experiences of sexual violence, physical abuse, and colonial genocide. Million (2013) writes: "Our voices rock the boat, and perhaps the world. Our voices are dangerous" (p. 57). The voices, the stories, and the felt are all witnesses of colonization and have been used for demands for reconciliation and accountability. This "data" is not quantitative, and in many ways lives beyond qualitative evidence, pointing to the felt knowledge, the felt experiences, that bear historical weight upon what has been done and what Canada's nation-state must do to make amends and be in relation with First Nations' sovereignty.

Overview & Purpose

This dissertation opens with context scaffolding for Ljavek, before diving into three research articles at the center of this work, and closing with a concluding chapter. The three research papers that make up this dissertation are aligned in their aim to re-center Ljavek's presence in Kaohsiung City's lands and waters, and to extend conversations from the learning sciences to Taiwan, particularly in relation to Indigenous, land-based, and social movements scholarship. The first article details my research methodology in co-designing this dissertation with Ljavek, while the second and third articles represent key findings from this research.

Throughout the three papers, I re-center affect in learning sciences discourse to describe how Indigenous knowledge is inherently felt and embodied, and how this re-centering of affect in learning resists Western, colonial epistemic biases while inviting our field to understand the full dimensions of learning.

For the first article, Ljavek and I propose several methodological contributions by leaning on our bodies' sensories and affect as guidelines for research. This article explores how listening is an important revision to qualitative research methods, through which there is respectful relationship-building with the research partners and honoring of Indigenous self-determination. More specifically, I address tensions within several components of research, including research partner/participant selection, research design and objectives, and how the researcher positions themselves. These methodological shifts contribute to the quality of research data and analysis, and are also politically necessary to respect Indigenous sovereignties, self-determination, and the research partners' decision-making. This work builds on literature around Indigenous refusals, Indigenous Research Methodologies, felt theory, and humanizing educational research methods.

In the second article, I look through "change" as the unit of analysis to explore how changes reflect our affective, axiological, and epistemic orientations towards human-place relations, specifically focusing on changes in urban landwaterscapes, in built environments, in urban migration, and in Ljavek's Paiwan ways of being. Approaching data collection through visiting as an Indigenous feminist research practice (Tuck et al., 2023), I collected data in the form of audio recordings of conversations and their transcripts, field notes, photos and videos of Ljavek's landwaterscapes, and archival documents. These multimodal and longitudinal documentations allowed me to analyze changes to Ljavek's landwaterscapes over the decades, and to surface findings around how the changes in the urban landwaterscapes reflect different

orientations towards human-place relations, whether they are driven by Paiwan ways of being, the agency of lands and waters, capitalism, nation-state interests, and/or global imperialisms.

Finally, in the third article, I zoom in on Ljavek's experiences immediately before and during their legal trial. Building on Vea's (2020) theorization of emotional configurations, I theorize how emotions played a central role while Ljavek learned to advocate for themselves and build a community amidst pressures to break apart. In particular, while government officials incentivized Ljavek community members to move into public housing, they claimed that Ljavek was divided because they were not “團結 tuán jié” or unified enough. Drawing from conversations and interviews with Ljavek and their political advocacy partners, such as the Taiwan Association of Human Rights and Ljavek's lawyer during the legal trial, this article demonstrates how Ljavek's affective sense-making troubled the claim that they were not 團結 tuán jié enough while re-imaging what community unity could look like through Ljavek's already ongoing relations.

These three research articles share the same aim of re-asserting Ljavek's existence in Kaohsiung City. In addition, by working with Ljavek, it became clear that Ljavek's community knowledge and epistemologies provide critical theorizations for the learning sciences, particularly around how we, as a community of humans, lands, waters, and more-than-humans, could move forward and build liberatory futures that re-center Indigenous knowledge.

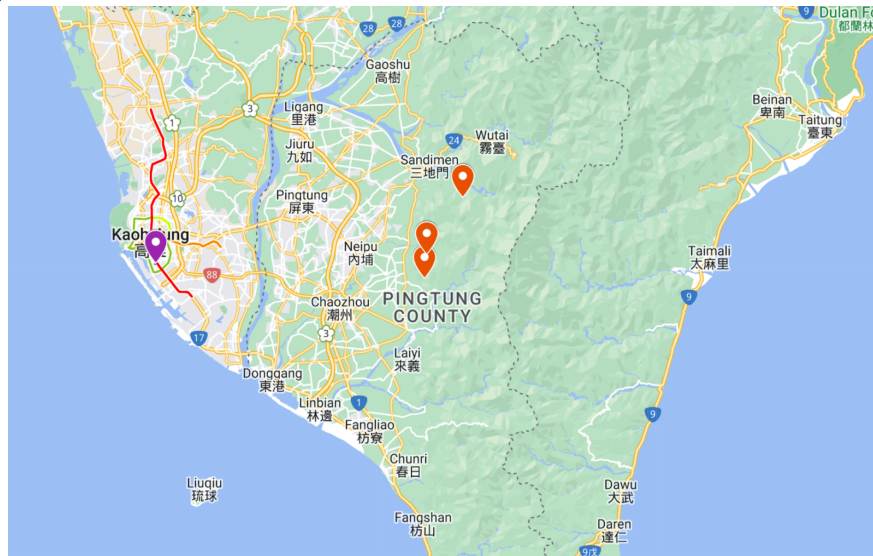
Chapter 2: In Relation with Ljavek

Ljavek in Taiwan's Context

In the 1950s, several Paiwan youths moved from different Paiwan communities, Kaviyangan (佳平部落), Qapedang (武潭部落), and Makazayazaya (瑪家部落), to Kaohsiung City in search of job opportunities (Lin, 2023) (see Figure 2.1). In Kaohsiung City, newly arrived Paiwan youth mainly processed timber that was transported through the canals and Kaohsiung Port or took similarly working-class jobs. Near the canals, they built rows of houses, which then became Ljavek (拉瓦克部落). As a community member shared with me, “Ljavek” can be roughly translated from Paiwan into ocean or a large body of water, which then referred to the canals. Ljavek grew from there as the community invited family members from the *buluo*³ they migrated from, had children, and built local kinship networks. Ljavek once housed around 200 people and welcomed Paiwan and non-Paiwan urban migrants, including Paiwan, Amis/Pangcah, Pinuyumayan Indigenous Peoples, and non-Indigenous Han residents.

³ The Council of Indigenous Peoples (CIP) (n.d.) describes 部落 (buluo) as the foundational unit of Indigenous sovereignties. Legally, 原住民基本法 (Indigenous Basic Law) translates 部落 (buluo) as “tribe”, with the following legal definition: “a group of Indigenous persons who form a community by living together in specific areas of the Indigenous peoples’ regions and following the traditional norms with the approval of the central Indigenous authority” (2018). However, this legal definition refers to several terms with contentious definitions, such as “specific areas of the [I]ndigenous [P]eoples’ regions”, “traditional norms”, and “approval of the central [I]ndigenous authority”, potentially excluding buluo in urban spaces and unrecognized 平埔族 (Pingpu Indigenous Peoples). For this dissertation, I translate 部落 as “buluo” instead of “tribe” and refer mainly to CIP’s description of buluo to honor the ways that Ljavek community members call and understand themselves, even though this translation still upholds English imperialism through the Romanization of Mandarin. I want to also note that buluo is a Mandarin term, and that each Indigenous People describe their sovereignties with their own languages.

Figure 2.1. A Map with Approximate Locations of Ljavek and Where Ljavek Community Members Migrated From



Note. The purple pinpoint represents Ljavek. From north to south, the three red pinpoints represent Makazayazaya, Kaviyangan, and Qapedang respectively. These approximate locations were provided by the Council of Indigenous Peoples (n.d.) and mapped on Google Maps by Yang-Hsun.

Legal issues arose when Kaohsiung City began to implement plans for further urban expansion and economic growth. In 1997, the Kaohsiung City government declared Ljavek an illegal construction, citing that Ljavek community members do not own property rights. Typical of government practices in similar situations (Chao & Lee, 2008), the Kaohsiung City government attempted to relocate Ljavek residents to public housing by offering financial incentives and lower rent prices. Over two decades and multiple relocation offers, some Ljavek community residents moved to public housing while some stayed in Ljavek. While there was consistent pushback against the government's relocation practices, a turning point occurred in 2018 that culminated in a legal trial between several Ljavek members and the Kaohsiung City government.

In 2018, the government demolished several Ljavek houses without consent or prior conversations. Ljavek members who then still resided in Ljavek, and not in public housing, sued

the government. During this trial, Ljavek members collaborated with Indigenous activists and local partners, including the Taiwan Association for Human Rights (TAHR), the Legal Aid Foundation (LAF), and many local university student organizations. In 2023, Ljavek residents won the legal trial by citing the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESC), which are known in Taiwan as 兩公約 (“The Two International Covenants”) and are the only legislation in Taiwan that protect Indigenous residential rights. While Taiwan cannot formally abide by these Covenants without United Nations recognition as a nation-state, these Covenants have been incorporated into Taiwan’s legal system as a legal act, creating an uneven legal terrain for different legal cases.

Today, at nearly 70 years old, Ljavek might be the oldest Indigenous community located in an urban space in Taiwan, but there is little academic scholarship about Ljavek’s experiences. A literature search shows only one article from the TAHR in a human rights journal (see Lin, 2023). In the wake of the trial, Ljavek is recuperating and discussing how they would like to move forward.

Figure 2.2. A Comparison of Ljavek from 1955 (left) and 2023 (right).



Note. Images are screenshots of maps provided by Academia Sinica (n.d.) and the Council of Indigenous Peoples (n.d.).

Ljavek & the Indigenous Peoples in Taiwan

As mentioned beforehand, Ljavek is primarily a Paiwan Indigenous community, which is one of the recognized Indigenous Peoples in Taiwan. The islands that make up what we now know of as Taiwan have always been stewarded by Indigenous Peoples, while surviving the multiple colonial state powers of the Dutch, Spanish, Qing Dynasty, Japan, Chinese Nationalist Party, and the current democratic Taiwan government. Currently, Taiwan recognizes 16 Indigenous Peoples, including the Paiwan Indigenous Peoples. However, there are still many unrecognized Indigenous sovereignties, even though recognition is an insufficient mode of honoring Indigenous political relations with colonial nation-state governments (see Coulthard, 2014; Million, 2013). In particular, many Indigenous Peoples on the west side of Taiwan's main island have not been recognized, including the Pingpu/Plains Indigenous Peoples who stewarded Kaohsiung City. This political situation is in part contributed by the temporal and spatial progression of Taiwan's colonization, in which the west side of Taiwan's main island first encountered colonizers and survived colonial occupation.

Ljavek & Indigenous Urban Migration

Indigenous migration to urban spaces reflects the broader trends that followed WWII, when Taiwan experienced unprecedented economic growth and migration towards newly formed cities. In the 1960s, the government implemented various reform initiatives and laws aimed at achieving self-sufficiency in Taiwan once U.S. aid concluded. These efforts involved industrialization that vied with agricultural sectors for land, thereby shifting Taiwan's primary economic focus from agriculture to manufacturing (Hsu, 2016). Indigenous Peoples, previously

constrained by Qing and Japanese colonial policies⁴ to the eastern and mountainous regions of Taiwan, subsequently migrated to urban areas seeking employment in manufacturing sectors and leaving agricultural jobs, the primary economic activity in the eastern regions (Wu, et al., 2018).

As Simpson wrote (2017), Indigenous mobilities are imbued with Indigenous grounded normativities, Indigenous resistance, and settler colonial forces, and as such the location of the urban buluo and Indigenous communities is determined by a complicated set of historical factors and individual/community decisions. In urban areas, Indigenous Peoples sometimes form collectives near rivers and suburbs as a way to navigate racialization, discrimination, cultural differences, language barriers, economic inequalities, and exorbitant rent prices in the cities (Liu, 2021). These collectives, such as Ljavek, are sometimes referred to by the collectives and popular media as 都市部落 (urban buluo). For example, 建基部落 Jianji Buluo and 阿美家園 Ruifang Amis Homeland are situated near 瑞芳鎮 Ruifang Township coal mining industry. 汐止山光社區 Xizhi Shanguang Community is situated in New Taipei City following waves of migration after the 1960s. Ljavek is situated close to the timber industry, which was supported by Kaohsiung Port. These linkages between Indigenous community formation and industry development exemplify the inseparable ties between Taiwan's urban development and Indigenous labor, which is often erased in urban histories.

Beyond capitalistic and settler colonial pressures, mobilities have always been a part of Paiwan grounded normativity. As a shifting cultivation, hunting, and fishing sovereignty, the Paiwan People frequently migrated in precolonial times to find suitable living conditions and maintain sustainable ecosystems (Tjangkus, 2009). In particular, Paiwan buluo often choose to move to places with streams and rivers (Lenglelgman, personal communication), much like

⁴ This includes 土牛線 (Tu-Niu Ditch) in the Qing Dynasty, which was more rigorously mapped out and enforced from the 1750s, and 隘勇線 (Defense Lines of Frontier Guards) in Japanese colonial era, between 1895 and 1945.

Ljavek's formation. Through the lens of Indigenous grounded normativities and mobilities, accusations that such migrations are illegal serve only to extend colonial (il)logics⁵. These disruptions to precolonial mobilities echo Irene Watson's questions, "'Are we free to roam?' and if so, 'Do I remain the unsettled native, left to unsettle the settled places of empire?'" (Goeman, 2008, p. 25), bringing to the fore tensions between Indigenous sovereignties and the colonial state and problematizing who has the authority to define human relationships with lands and waters.

Ljavek & Urban Settler Colonial Processes

Currently, tensions around urban buluo are often intertwined with 違建 (illegal construction). Typically, the government responds to urban buluo formations by tearing down illegal constructions and offering financial incentives for community members to relocate to social housing (Chao & Lee, 2008). However, these measures often break apart the community. The social housing incentives disregard the interdependence of Indigenous communities and assume that separate individual housing is an appropriate living configuration for urban buluo. Urban buluo communities and partnering advocates have argued that Indigenous self-determination should be respected and that their 適和居住權 (rights to adequate living) are violated in these government strategies. Even though discourses around human rights can flatten Indigenous sovereignties (Liu, 2023), recent debates around 適和居住權 (rights to adequate living) have gained traction through the adoption of several international covenants into Taiwan's legal system, namely the ICCPR and ICESCR, which are known in Taiwan as 兩公約 ("The Two International Covenants"). 兩公約 ("The Two International Covenants") states that Indigenous Peoples' rights to adequate living should be respected regardless of their location.

⁵ Here I refer to Tuck and McKenzie's (2014) writing, which problematizes colonial logics by adding the prefix "(il)logics."

Ljavek in Research Context: Research Partner and Advisor

How did I meet Ljavek?

In 2023, I was deciding on my dissertation research project. Since my previous research projects in graduate school mostly focused on racism in U.S. contexts, I was starting to feel an urge and need to re-center Taiwan in my dissertation. Through *Research is Ceremony* (Wilson, 2020), I started re-thinking the role of inquiry in my life, and how knowledge building should be an intentional practice that accounts for intergenerational responsibilities and relations. This jumpstarted a bike trip around Taiwan, as I visited Indigenous activists and community spaces that my Indigenous relations in Coast Salish lands and waters (Seattle) recommended. Around the same time, I learned about Ljavek through Civilmedia@Taiwan, an independent journalist organization documenting social movements, and became invested in learning more about what was happening in my home, Kaohsiung City.

I soon reached out to the Taiwan Association for Human Rights (TAHR) Kaohsiung Office since they have worked with Ljavek for 7 years, publicizing their situation in the media and connecting them with legal resources and lawyers during their legal trials. I reached out to TAHR first, before reaching out to Ljavek, because I was unsure of Ljavek's capacity to meet and share stories with a researcher, especially given the legacies of colonial violence perpetuated through academic research. Through TAHR, I learned that several Ljavek community members were open to sharing their stories. With TAHR, I met with several community leaders in Ljavek, including the chairman of the "Ljavek Self-Advocacy Group" (拉瓦克部落自救會). I was transparent about my position as a Ph.D. student, and my hope to work on a research project with them. Guided by IRMs' emphasis on consent and refusing research where inappropriate (Tuck & Yang, 2014), I was open to the possibility that a research project would not happen here if

Ljavek rejected it. To my surprise, I was welcomed generously and warmly. As I continued these visits and conversations, Galaygay Balasasau expressed interest in pursuing a dissertation research project together, with the aim of sharing Ljavek's situation and legal struggles to more people. In the following chapter and first research article of this dissertation, I articulate the research co-design methods with Ljavek in more detail. Throughout this dissertation research process, Galaygay became not only my main research partner, but my co-advisor in helping me navigate the appropriate research methods for this work.

Chapter 3 (Article 1): Listening to Ljavek: Heeding Embodied Senses as Method with a Paiwan Indigenous Community in Taiwan

Abstract

“Listening” as a research method is frequently theorized in Indigenous Research Methodologies as well as Indigenous scholarship around learning, epistemologies, and knowledge co-production. “Listening” entails a form of researcher humility in addition to embodying critical awareness towards how research has historically functioned as a colonial tool of harm for many Indigenous sovereignties, perpetuating trauma and deficit-based narratives of Indigenous Peoples. These violent historical interstitial spaces also provide openings towards relational methodologies that address these colonial legacies. Following the affective turn in educational research, I re-articulate how the researcher’s embodied sensories and listening are critical to identifying and resisting colonial norms embedded in research processes, while attending to the Indigenous research partners’ relational invitations. In this article, I draw from “listening” in Indigenous scholarship and share some methodological notes from my research collaboration with Ljavek, a Paiwan Indigenous community in Taiwan. This methods paper represents a portion of a broader, ongoing dissertation research project. I explore how listening surfaced as an important guidance and revision to my qualitative research methods, so that Indigenous sovereignties and self-determination are re-centered in the research design. In other words, I explore how we as researchers need to listen not in quantity, but in political orientation, recognizing the power we hold in reproducing discourse with tangible, political effect. Specifically, I delve into how listening influences several components of the research design. Listening in the research partner selection stage recognizes that we must listen to the community’s refusals in order to collaborate with the specific community members assigned by

the community to take on public-facing storytelling responsibilities. Listening in the data collection stage attunes to Ljavek's unfolding community priorities across time, and how such changes might necessitate shifts in the research methods to align with the changing community priorities. Listening in relation to the researcher recognizes that there are sometimes community invitations for the researcher to reciprocally disclose their own stories. In conversational and storytelling research methodologies, learning surfaces not in the didactic mode of information-sharing, but in a dialogical framework where the subjects all participate in knowledge co-construction. At times, the researcher is also called in to share their own experiences, knowledge, and stories as part of the dialogical process. These methodological contributions reframe the researcher and research methods "in the field" and describe research designs that move us towards the priorities of Indigenous Research Methodologies such as respect, reciprocity, and responsibility.

Introduction

Galaygay Balasasau is a Paiwan Indigenous storyteller, grandmother, and my main collaborator in our research project, and when I began visiting her for our monthly conversations at her home, my hearing senses were shocked by a chorus of dog barking and howling that announced my presence. Galaygay has seven dogs, and every time I visited her, the dogs consistently reminded me that I am a guest and will forever be a guest. At first, my body tensed up each time I had merely arrived at Galaygay's doorstep and her seven dogs started shouting at me from within the house, but eventually, this role as visitor and guest started to feel normal for me.

Within educational research, there has been growing attention towards our bodies' senses and emotions in what is sometimes known as the affective turn (Dernikos et al., 2020). Affect, as Tanana Athabascan and American Indian Studies scholar Dian Million (2013) describes, is "our

lived sensory-beingness” (p. 30). Affect encompasses the discursive expressions of what we feel emotionally and also the body’s sensorial experiences that escape words. As a field, we as educational researchers are only beginning to understand what Indigenous theorists and communities have always known, which is that learning is felt, embodied, and affective (Harjo, 2019; Million, 2008). What we feel is not random, but holds social meaning (Anderson, 2014). How we feel, express our feelings, and how feelings guide our actions are all normed by the sociocultural communities we are a part of (Bonilla-Silva, 2019). How we learn to engage in society and communities of practice involves affect and emotions (Curnow et al., 2019; Vea, 2020). How we interpret sensory information involves routine and repeated sociocultural sense-making and learning (Vossoughi, 2020).

In this article, I propose that my felt sensories and affect guided my researcher learnings, which then informed my research methodologies and perspective on academic knowledge co-production. Specifically, I focus on the methodological implications that grew from my listening senses. As I stepped into Galaygay’s home with each visit, her dogs and their barking cemented the embodied understanding that I am a guest in her home, and they also deepened my understanding of the parallels between my guesthood in Galaygay’s home and my positionality as a Han settler in Taiwan. Drawing from my embodied researcher learnings alongside Galaygay, her family, and her community, Ljavek, in this article, I assemble some methodological notes to re-articulate how our researcher sensories, and more specifically listening, is vital to situate research methodologies in the specific relationships and sociocultural contexts of the communities we work with, and to learn alongside our Indigenous research partners.

“Listening” is frequently theorized in Indigenous Research Methodologies as well as Indigenous scholarship around learning, epistemologies, and knowledge co-production. In line

with oral traditions, listening to stories has been a powerful pedagogical practice for Indigenous sovereignties globally since time immemorial (Archibald, 2008). This practice of learning and sharing knowledge through oral stories has also informed Indigenous Research Methodologies on storytelling and storylistening as a mode of data collection, analysis, and presentation (Kovach, 2021). In *Indigenous Methodologies*, Kovach (2021) writes that “hearing story in Indigenous research is not solely the case of data collection bounded by the sharp confines of an interview session but rather involves an elasticity with space for the affective dimension” (p. 160). Listening denotes a research methodology that is intimately reliant upon the researcher’s hearing senses, relationship with their research partners, and ability to connect what they have heard from their research partners with emotional and political meaning (Harjo, 2019; Wilson, 2020).

There are parallels between Indigenous storylistening and relational research methods within education, particularly when it comes to how listening strengthens our understanding of how to be in good relation. For example, Meixi (2022) and Paris (2011) write that in the context of formal education, the quality of a teacher/researcher’s listening creates openings and/or foreclosures in their relationships with students. Relational and intentional listening demonstrates how much a teacher/researcher cares about their students, respects their epistemic agencies, and understands that students expand the knowledge of educators, researchers, and education systems. Listening thus dismantles dominant beliefs that the teacher or educational researcher holds sole epistemic authority. While not explicitly framed as listening, Marin (2020) proposed ambulatory turns and sequences as method and unit of analysis. She described how noticing the turns in families’ conversations while taking forest walks illuminated human relations with lands, waters, and more-than-humans, especially as people storied the land while moving.

Across this scholarship of Indigenous and educational research methods, listening is known to be not neutral or passive, but instead listening requires that the researcher has a specific political, emotional, moral, and relational commitment, while paying attention to how colonial logics show up in research (Marker, 2018). By describing this research commitment as political in addition to being moral, I re-center Indigenous sovereignties and the realities of Han settler colonialism in Taiwan. “Indigenous peoples preexist nation-states and reject nation-state authority to grant them a right to political self-determination that they have never relinquished” (Million, 2013, p.3). Thus, research that listens to Indigenous Peoples does so to respect the Indigenous political agency to self-determine what is shared, with whom data is shared and stored, and how data is presented. This resists the colonial logics of “hungry listening”, which consumes with the assumption that listening equates to relational reconciliation (Robinson, 2020). In this research, I am informed by Indigenous Research Methodologies and relational research methods within education, and I explore how listening builds on these methods to attend to our bodies’ responses to Indigenous refusals, invitations, and emerging community priorities. I want to note that listening to Galaygay’s stories does not put an end to Taiwan’s ongoing settler colonialism and capitalistic exploitation, but listening does invite new revisions and openings to our research methods. Through my research partnership with Galaygay, I share here a listening and affect-centered mode of research methodology that allows researchers to attune to the knowledge co-production processes taking place in community-based learning environments. Listening as a research method asks that we attend to our relationships with research partners as felt, affective, and embodied practices, requiring researchers to explore how our research partners’ and our own emotions guide methodological revisions to ensure that we honor Indigenous self-determination and political agency.

Research Setting and Partnership with Ljavek

My research orientation follows a growing body of literature in the learning sciences that re-centers the teaching and learning that happens in families, communities, activist spaces, and outside of formal education (Curnow et al., 2019; Jurow & Shea, 2015; Marin, 2020; Veal, 2020). I began practicing listening in my research collaboration with Ljavek, a Paiwan Indigenous community who stewards lands and waters in Takao, or what is now known as Kaohsiung City, Taiwan. Ljavek formed in Kaohsiung City more than seven decades ago, in the 1950s, as Paiwan youth moved into urban centers during Taiwan's rapid urban development post-WWII. For over three generations, Ljavek then invited other Indigenous and Han settler urban migrants into their community, perpetuated Paiwan language and ways of being, sustained relations with the plants and more-than-humans in the city, and co-created a Paiwan community within a Han-dominant urban center. However, as Kaohsiung City became more economically viable, the government began pressuring Ljavek out of the city, separating community members to different public housing locations or incentivizing community members to leave the city entirely. Listening, here, thus takes place when there are continuous changes in Ljavek's sociopolitical context and priorities. When the government illegally demolished several of Ljavek's houses to continue pressuring Ljavek to move out, Ljavek sued the government in a successful legal trial in 2023. As a result, Ljavek has been granted a new plot of land in the city, although currently community members live across Kaohsiung City and various parts of Taiwan while they wait to move into this new location.

A primary part of my research design with Ljavek involved visiting with community members and listening to their stories of Ljavek's history, present situation, and future plans. From September 2024 until September 2025, I lived back home in Taiwan and away from my

university in the U.S. to complete my data collection. Visiting has been described as an Indigenous feminist research practice that allows for deep and humble listening through honoring consent and ensuring that data collection happens in a place of the research partner's choosing, a place where kinship and memory work may take place in an organic and embodied manner (Tuck et al., 2023; Robinson, 2020). Over the year that I was in Taiwan, I visited Galaygay at her home nearly every month, excluding busier times during holidays and new year celebrations. We talked about various topics that emerged from her storytelling of Ljavek. I prepared for these visits by writing down how I was feeling and what I was curious about, but I decided not to prepare interview questions and instead let her storytelling lead our conversations. My methodological approaches were meant to create in-built flexibility for Ljavek's refusals and redirections into inquiries that were meaningful and important to them. The data we co-collected then included audio recordings, transcripts, and field notes that included our embodied interactions.

Most of my visits were with Galaygay, and our research partnership is the foundation for theorizing listening as a research methodology. Beyond co-designing research, Galaygay guided my researcher learning to revise my understanding of relational research methodologies and to incorporate my embodied learning. While I will share more about Galaygay's importance in Ljavek throughout this article, I want to briefly describe her here. If you looked up new articles about Ljavek, Galaygay's face or words would probably show up. She is a grandmother, a storyteller, and a person who feels a deep responsibility for Ljavek. She was a main voice in Ljavek's legal trial, and the last person to move out of Ljavek's original location. My first impression of her was on a hot and sunny day in Ljavek's original location, the summer a year before we decided to pursue this research project together. Even as someone born and raised in

Taiwan, I had completely forgotten about the hungry mosquitos in the summer there. When Galaygay and I met, we chatted very briefly before she stopped, humorously scolded me over wearing shorts, and insisted that I put on some repellent that she had inside her home. We laughed about how I was getting eaten alive, and I quickly recognized how Galaygay cares deeply for people around her, especially younger folks.

In relational research work with Indigenous research partners, it is critical to be upfront about one's positionality and motivations in a research project (Wilson, 2020). I am queer and transgender, and I am also a 河洛人 (“Hòh-Ló-Lâng”) Han scholar who grew up in Kaohsiung City, Taiwan. My family are settlers in Taiwan, even with our colonized experiences. With my experiences growing up as the racial dominant group in Taiwan, I did not understand my racial privileges or understand racial minoritization until I began my higher education in the U.S. As someone who calls Kaohsiung City home and who recognizes the shared liberation between Indigenous, queer, and trans people, I wanted to direct my energy as a researcher into understanding the colonial processes that continue to take place on the lands and waters that we now know as Kaohsiung City. This commitment orients my research listening, specifically as someone familiar with Taiwan's context, while still learning about the colonial and Indigenous presences in my homeplace.

Methodological Notes from Listening to Ljavek

In this section, I share some of my research findings as methodological notes informed by listening to Ljavek. In particular, I re-articulate how the researcher's sensories and attunement to listening are critical to identifying and resisting the colonial norms embedded in research processes and framing. Each of the following subsections goes into how listening reconfigures research in relation to partner/participant selection, research design, and researcher positioning

by responding to Ljavek's refusals, community priorities, and invitations. These notes arose from my own researcher learning while collaborating with Ljavek. These methodological notes speak to how shifting our methods is not only ethically necessary and contributes to the quality of the research data and analysis, but these methodological shifts are also politically necessary to honor Indigenous self-determination and agency.

No, Go Ask Galaygay: Listening to Ljavek's Refusals in Research Participant/Partner Selection

In his notes on humanizing research, Paris (2011) writes that participant selection is a critical yet often oversimplified early stage of research. Typically, "participant selection" places epistemic authority solely on the researcher, implying unilateral power in deciding who gets to speak and who gets to be heard (Paris, 2011). In contrast, relational and humanizing research asks that we listen and follow "invitations" and "mutual selection", times when "participants chose to work *with* me in addition to being chosen *by* me" (Paris, 2011, p. 140). Indigenous Research Methodologies describe this as not only an ethical but legal and political prerogative (Kovach, 2021; Smith, 2021). Noticing and adhering to research "refusals" represents respect towards Indigenous self-determination, especially in deciding the limits of what academia deserves to know (Tuck & Yang, 2014). In this section, I build on these considerations to explore the politics of research partner/participant selection. In each of my visits with Ljavek and their partnering political advocacy organization, Ljavek and their partners were faced with decisions about what to share and not share. Through their decision-making processes, Ljavek community members often refused my invitations to collaborate. Their guidance did not limit this research, but instead fundamentally changed the research partner/participant selection process to ensure that the research data reflects Ljavek's priorities and political self-determination.

Rewinding for a moment, in the early stages of research when I was still scoping out who I would visit with, I wanted to include everyone's voices in this research. Back then, I knew that Ljavek community members lived in Ljavek's original location, in several public housing locations, and in apartments within Kaohsiung City and across Taiwan. I began the data collection process with my existing relations, while I hoped to visit with Ljavek community members from those different locations. But, in the initial visits, I realized that there were continual refusals in participant selection. Refusals do not have to be an explicit "no", but a *redirection* towards more generative and timely knowledge inquiry for the community (Tuck & Yang, 2014). I remember that I asked Ljavek's political advocacy partners who I should speak with. "Ask Galaygay", they said. I asked some of Ljavek's main activist voices about who I should speak with. "Ask Galaygay", they also responded. After meeting with Galaygay a few times, I asked if she had family in the public housing who would like to share their experiences. We met with some of her family there, but at the end of our only visit, when I asked if they would be interested in meeting again, they said no and that I could ask Galaygay for any follow up questions. These repeated *redirections* helped me gradually piece together that there is a cohesive political and epistemic structure informing Ljavek on knowledge transmission to the general public.

After these repeated redirections, I decided to center the data collection on visits with Galaygay, but I felt strong tensions between my relational accountability and the expectations from academic institutions. I did not pursue further visits other than with Ljavek community members who had graciously invited me to continue our visits, but I felt tensions between this and academic expectations to pursue exhaustive, "accurate" data in partner/participant selection. While in qualitative educational research, there are longstanding traditions that value case studies

and individual stories, there is still pressure to achieve data saturation in qualitative research rigor more broadly.

This idea to pursue everyone's perspectives can hold valid reasons, such as providing a platform for diverse voices across power hierarchies (e.g., gender, queerness, race, class, disability), but it could also reflect a certain colonial need to consume and collect. In writing about "hungry listening", Robinson (2020) articulates how a colonial orientation to listening feels entitled to Indigenous knowledges and stories, feels eager to consume and categorize, and assumes that researchers are somehow readily granted access to any knowledge.

With immense gratitude, I attribute my decision not to visit all Ljavek community members to Indigenous scholars who have described "the need to know as deeply connected with a need to conquer, a need to govern" (Tuck & McKenzie, 2014, p. 147). Beyond an ethical, methodological intervention, listening to Ljavek's refusals redirected the participant selection to respect Ljavek's political self-determination amidst institutional pressures to collect more, and yet more data. There are things that will never be meant for my ears, especially given my positionality as a Han settler, or for academic research.

Months later, towards the end of my data collection, I had coffee with Dr. Danubak Matalaq and Chia-Hung Yang, and our conversation re-affirmed how listening to Ljavek requires political consciousness. Danubak and Chia-Hung are both in the 台灣原住民基層教師協會 ("Association of Taiwan Indigenous Grassroots Teachers"). Danubak is a respected queer Paiwan activist, school counselor, and scholar, and he has been paying attention to Ljavek's advocacy for a long time. As we drank our coffees and milk teas and chatted away into the late evening, Danubak reminded me that Ljavek has been strategic in co-creating a cohesive public narrative. Throughout Ljavek's media appearances, negotiations with elected officials, and interactions

with outsiders, only Galaygay and a few additional Ljavek community members were the public faces of Ljavek. The conversation with Danubak and Chia-Hung reminded me that Ljavek's political sense-making has been ongoing for a while, and their research refusals reflect their public representation politics, or how they organize their relations to self-determine their public narrative. In other words, Ljavek has been intentional about their public political narrative to safeguard family privacies and ensure that their voices are not co-opted, especially since there are colonial agendas that want to normalize Ljavek's displacement. In this sense, research partner/participant selection becomes a critical political strategy for Ljavek to self-determine their public representation.

With these considerations, I knew I had to listen, not in quantity, but in political orientation. Listening with political orientation requires that we, as researchers, recognize the power we hold in reproducing discourse with tangible political effect. From a learning perspective, political ideological development is socioculturally constructed through everyday discourse and practices (Curnow et al., 2019). Ljavek's public narrative exists in the dominant colonial discourse of land as property and deficit-centered views of Indigenous Peoples, and Ljavek does not have the luxury of presenting heterogeneous stories to public media. Instead, by having a "spokesperson", Ljavek ensures that a strong, singular narrative educates the public on who Ljavek is. Ljavek's decision-making exemplifies data sovereignty, or the jurisdictional power to self-determine data collection, storage, and presentation, especially so that the information aligns with the political claims of the Indigenous sovereignty or community (Duarte et al., 2019; Kukutai & Taylor, 2016). By redirecting partner/participant selection, Ljavek intervened on methodologies to ensure that their political narrative was clear and cohesive. Ljavek's intervention also exemplifies public education and counter-storytelling against

dominant narratives (Martinez, 2014), making sure that the public understands Ljavek's perspective and Indigenous presence in urban spaces. Listening as a methodology thus becomes a political orientation to co-select research partners in order for Ljavek's political truths to surface through their self-determination.

By listening to Ljavek, the Indigenous scholars around me, and the emotional tensions I held, I am starting to understand how research partner/participant selection is a longitudinal, ongoing relational process that is politically governed by Indigenous refusals, self-determination, and community priorities. Most of my data collection then focused on Galaygay's stories and her stories of her family, which hold particular legal and political importance in Ljavek's current ongoing negotiations with the government. Her stories are not a partial component of Ljavek's whole, but rather a dimension of Ljavek that Ljavek has decided needs to be centered in the current political climate. Danubak did mention that the political situation does overshadow some of Ljavek's experiences, and he's written about Ljavek's feminist and Paiwan community building processes (Matalaq, 2021), but, as only someone with decades of school and activism experience could understand, he also reminded me that these things take time and not everything needs to take place right now.

Co-creating Space to "Wash Our Eyes": Listening to Ljavek for Revisions in Research Design and Objectives

There are axiological dimensions to community-based research (Bang et al., 2016), asking that we, as researchers, listen and stay responsive to what matters to the community, particularly when what matters changes over time (Gutiérrez et al., 2016; Jurow & Shea, 2015). Changing the research design in relation to emerging community goals is thus necessary, and so is centering listening in our research methods to attune to the unfolding community priorities over time. Indigenous researchers have long argued that research permission and consent are

ongoing processes, and, to honor the relational and politically self-determining nature of Indigenous knowledge, the responsibility of adaptation falls on the researcher, rather than the research partners (McGregor et al., 2018). In this section, I revisit a moment in my collaboration with Ljavek where the research design had to pivot significantly to align with Ljavek's timeline. I recount when, even after co-creating a research proposal that aligned with Ljavek's political goals at a particular moment in time, the research design had to shift after listening to how Ljavek's circumstances, and thereby priorities, changed.

In December 2023, Galaygay, her family, and I had several conversations about what this dissertation project could be. We imagined hosting a community event where everyone in Ljavek, those in public housing, in apartments across Kaohsiung City, and in different cities and counties, would come together again in Ljavek's original location. We would set up informative storyboards, food stands, and stalls to sell Paiwan dishes and crafts, all to remind Kaohsiung City about Ljavek's continuing existence in the city. Co-creating this community event would have aligned with learning sciences' emphasis on participatory design research and co-design methods, co-creating research that was not only contributive to academic knowledge production but also *meaningful and useful* to Ljavek (Bang & Vossoughi, 2016; Gutiérrez & Jurow, 2016). I carried these ideas with me back to my university in the U.S. to propose my dissertation research design and returned to Ljavek a year later to begin data collection. However, an academic year later, in September 2024, I reconnected with Galaygay in Taiwan and realized that what we had co-designed no longer aligned with Ljavek's current sociopolitical context, and therefore we had to make another methodological pivot. In contrast to our visits in the past, this was the first time that I met Galaygay at her new apartment, and not at Ljavek's original location. I remember seeing her and realizing how unkind this move had been to her body. I watched as she leaned her

head heavily back into her sofa and rested there as she told me about her move, the first since she was just a little child. She told me that her kids and grandchildren were so glad she moved into this “modern” apartment, but that she missed the open air and the wind, and that she has felt very physically unwell since the move. When I brought up the community event, I realized she had forgotten it entirely, which was perhaps because Ljavek’s current context had become so different from a year before and a community event was no longer *meaningful or useful* for Ljavek. We chatted about the community event for a few minutes, but it was mostly me reminding her about what we had talked about nearly a year ago. We quickly moved on to the next conversational topic, and she continued to tell me about adjusting to the new homeplace, the new and unfamiliar routes she has to take to pick up her grandchild from school.

While Galaygay did not flat out refuse the community event plan, I find it important to recognize that the idea did not have any emotional salience anymore. Here, emotional salience provided an analytical signal to listen for and respond to, so that the research maintains relevance for the current sociopolitical community priorities. What once felt exciting and generative now felt inconsequential, belonging to a bygone time when Galaygay still resided in Ljavek’s original location, and when bodily capacities, political possibilities, dreams, and desires were aligned in a different direction. Relationally centered research, such as participatory design research (Gutiérrez et al., 2016) and Indigenous Research Methodologies (Kovach, 2021; Wilson, 2020), explain that changes in what matters to the community can surface from not only what is (not) said but what is felt. In our conversation, I heard both verbally and affectively how the move, and perhaps other unspoken events that had happened in between, had fundamentally shifted the temporal trajectories of what is possible in Ljavek and what Ljavek needs. So, instead, I asked Galaygay what else would be meaningful for our time together, or if we should conclude the

project. I felt open to ending this research. I felt that this responsiveness was necessary as a methodological consideration, that forcing a research project would completely contradict the needs of Ljavek.

In response, Galaygay told me that we could focus on her memories growing up and raising her children in Ljavek. She began telling me about her parents' journey moving into Ljavek, her childhood growing up amongst the many families that make up Ljavek, how she met her husband, and her memories of each of her adult sons as toddlers. While colonial technologies continue to rupture Indigenous relations and displace Indigenous communities, Ljavek as a place stays alive in Galaygay's stories. Her stories evoke theories on how knowledge, memories, and affect are intertwined with place, that even when living apart from lands, those very lands are embodied within people (Harjo, 2019). However, a lot of what we talked about naturally included the traumas borne from living as an Indigenous person in an ongoing settler colonial nation-state. As a researcher, I experienced a deep methodological tension of wanting to not recreate deficit-based narratives of Indigenous Peoples (Tuck, 2009), while wanting to listen to Galaygay's directions. As part of the ethical commitments in research with Indigenous communities, researchers need to explain the impact of academic research and their role in shaping public narratives (J. Dennison, personal communication, 2025). I explained to Galaygay that research does not have to be about trauma and could be anything she wanted to talk about, but she instead told me that she needed the space to process her feelings. She redirected our research towards storytelling and narrating memories (Archibald, 2008), and I did my best to listen to her research guidance, even though there were moments when I was unsure about how I would take care of this mostly trauma-based data after our visit. Still sensing my discomfort,

Galaygay intervened and reminded me that it was the research process that mattered more than the *outcome*:

Galaygay:

你不要投入在那個。[溫柔地笑]

揚洵:

不要投入在? 我不會覺得怎麼樣, 只是覺得, 嗯... 那把它講出來對你來講有比較有幫助嗎?

Galaygay:

就是這樣子!有, 還是會停留在這裡 [手放在胸膛右上方, 靠近脖子], 會比較會...

揚洵:

輕一點嗎?

Galaygay:

輕一點, 對。

揚洵:

哦, 好, 我不希望就是讓你講這些東西, 讓你更(難過)——

Galaygay:

沒有不會不會, 反而會輕鬆啊, 因為我已經很久沒有哭了, 要洗一下眼睛。[一起笑出來]

Galaygay:

Don't you dwell in that. [chuckles]

Yang-Hsun:

Dwell in? I don't feel unwell. I just feel, um... Talking it out aloud, does it help?

G:

Exactly! It still stays here [places hand on the top-right part of her chest, close to her neck], but it's...

YH:

Lighter?

G:

Yes, lighter.

YH:

Oh. Ok then. I didn't want talking about these things to make you even more (upset)—

G:

No, not at all. It's relaxing instead. I haven't cried for such a long time, I have to wash my eyes. [laughs together]

The content of what we talked about remains between Galaygay, myself, and the time capsule of that moment as we chatted in her living room, surrounded by homey wood furniture, and the gifts and snacks her family brought her from trips abroad. This refusal to share what we talked about references Indigenous methodologies that staunch pain and damage-centered narratives that flood literature, which often exploit Indigenous trauma without grounding them in ongoing realities of colonialism and systemic oppression (Morrill & Sabzalian, 2023; Tuck &

Yang, 2014). It took Galaygay turning her caring attention towards me, asking me not to dwell in the weight of the past or the uncertainties of future data analysis, for me to realize that what I can offer to another person expands beyond my occupation as a researcher, but as another person who could listen and reciprocate care. She thereby shifted the research design to re-center relational care in our data collection. I realized, to truly be relational in research, the research design is sometimes just about keeping people company, even if the data is never reported. I also became aware that the data collection process was not simply about gathering data, but transforming the researcher and their analysis emotionally. An embodied researcher learning took place so that I could later understand layers of the research data that I was not privy to before Galaygay shared some of her personal stories.

Listening therefore became central to the research design so that our data collection process centered around relational care as well as attunement to what felt emotionally salient for Ljavek. We pivoted our research methods of co-designing a community event to spending time together storytelling and storylistening, since our initial plan was no longer emotionally salient for Ljavek's community priorities. Galaygay centers joy and humor in all that she does and in all the stories she shares, I believe, in part because she recognizes that things have already passed, and they linger but do not cement futures. What is needed in those conversations was to learn to sit with those memories, which is easier in the presence of caring others (Elliott, 2019). Our visits after that then all started with, "How have you been? How are you doing?", and our conversations meandered from there. With each visit, I also noticed how Galaygay looked physically healthier every time as she adjusted to the new homeplace, and as her children and grandchildren wove in and out of her living room frequently. I also felt an embodied sense of researcher learning that accompanied me later when I reviewed our data. While I can never truly

understand how Ljavek feels, I felt a different emotional attunement to Ljavek's stories after listening to Galaygay.

By the way, I am queer and I identify as a tongzhi⁶: Listening as the reciprocal disclosure of the researcher's positionality

As our visits continued, I began to realize that the reciprocal nature of our relational research necessitated that I share more about who I am as a person, beyond the confines of being a researcher. Specifically, I was invited to share more about my queerness in order to show up more authentically in my relationship with Galaygay. Listening to Galaygay's invitations to share more about myself created relational shifts, which scaffolded a turning point and I was no longer a passive observer, but rather a relational partner/participant during our data collection. In qualitative research, the researcher is often thought of as part of the research design, a methodological lens influencing the data's orientation (Bhattacharya, 2017). Going into this project with Ljavek, I knew that my positionality as a queer and trans researcher orients how I think about human relationships and kinships beyond heteronormative standards, and shapes my political views on how systems of oppression are intersectional and interlocking (McWilliams, 2016). I saw my positionality as an inevitable filter for the data, but I did not plan on talking about myself much in my conversations with Galaygay. After all, I knew that I wanted to center her voice in our conversations. In this way, I initially assumed that listening as a methodology involved minimizing myself to ensure that my research partner had more "airtime" in our conversations, but I later realized that listening necessitated reciprocal disclosure from the researcher to build trusting relationships.

⁶ "Tongzhi" (同志) is the current Mandarin umbrella term in Taiwan commonly used to describe someone who identifies as LGBTQIA+, although the term does not always speak to the nuances of Indigenous queerness and gender nonconformity in Taiwan.

In most spaces in Taiwan and the U.S., I am visibly queer and publicly out. I am an assigned-female-at-birth person with short, cropped hair. I speak with a lower voice, and I typically wear hoodies, t-shirts, and shorts in Taiwan. Perhaps observing my appearance, Galaygay began to ask me questions about the LGBTQIA+ community, even though she never directly asked about my gender or sexuality. At first, I was hesitant with these questions, but not because they hinted at my queerness. I am typically open to talking about being queer and have been very explicit about my identity with my students and colleagues. I attribute this to my luck in finding a loving queer and ally support system, and I find it personally important to be public about my queerness where I can. But, as Galaygay shifted the conversation towards queerness and thus closer to me, I began to worry that my identity would take center stage in these visits, which were meant to be about centering her and Ljavek. Indigenous research has long been plagued by legacies of extraction and harm where the researcher centers their own voice above the Indigenous sovereignties and communities (Kovach, 2021; Kukutai & Taylor, 2016), and I saw myself as a researcher and outsider privileged by Ljavek's trust. I wanted to distance any part of myself that might interfere with Galaygay's storytelling.

But this all changed one day when Galaygay started telling me about a family member who I reminded her of. We were sitting in her living room as usual, talking about this and that, when she suddenly told me that she was worried about this young person in her family who she said looks "just like you". Her comment completely caught me off guard. Here I was, worrying to my fraying ends that I would repeat "creepy" colonial research practices (Liboiron, 2021), when I realized that Galaygay sees me as both a researcher and as a young queer person. I realized, as anyone in good relation with another being, she was just curious about my life and how being queer might relate to her family's lives. So, I started answering her questions more

fully and sharing more about my life, like my experiences binding my chest and joining local LGBTQIA+ community events. She asked me about things she had observed in her queer family members, but felt unsure and worried about. Curiously enough, as with many queer experiences in Taiwan (Jhang, 2018), we never spoke directly about my identity and I never felt pressured to come out to her, even though we talked about many parts of my lived experiences that are undeniably queer. I felt that she listened with care and curiosity, interspersing my stories with her questions.

In conversational and storytelling research methodologies, learning surfaces not in the didactic mode of information-sharing, but in a dialogical framework where the subjects all participate in knowledge co-construction. This synergistic methodology involves “a storyteller and a storylistener, and, at times and under the right circumstances, those roles can move back and forth in the generative meaningmaking through story sharing” (Elliott & San Pedro, 2023, p. 25). By being in conversation on queerness, I felt that Galaygay and I were in an iterative process of caring disclosure over our many visits. This meant that I, as a researcher, had to reciprocate our relationship by listening to her requests to learn more about me, and by showing up authentically as a person and not just as a distanced professional. Listening to the invitations for reciprocal and caring disclosures thus became part of our research methodology. Through the lenses of constructivist grounded theories, “data collection and analysis [are seen] as a shared experience between the participants and the researcher” as knowledge is co-constructed in the encounters between the research partners and the researcher (Bhattacharya, 2017, p. 105). However, this did not mean that I took up a position of “educating” Galaygay on queerness or spent our visits focusing on my life. I realized that storysharing asks that we show up

authentically as a contribution to, but not the focal point of, our collective inquiry, which was still about Galaygay and Ljavek.

Eventually, though, I did come out to Galaygay. Near the closing of my one-year data collection journey with Ljavek, Galaygay and I co-presented our work at my fellowship institution, Academia Sinica, the national academy of Taiwan. In this presentation, I planned to talk about my positionality as a Han settler and tongzhi as usual, but this time I felt a cold sweat and clammy palms as we commuted by train to Academia Sinica together. By speaking about my positionality in an academic setting, I would essentially be coming out to Galaygay. While we had talked about parts of my life that indicated queerness, this disclosure was more explicit and part of a longer, ongoing process of iterative trust-building. At some level, I always knew that building a deeper relationship with my research partners meant that I had to be willing to share as much about myself as what they had been sharing with me (Paris, 2011). Even though somewhere within me there was a sense of practiced calm from years of having to navigate homophobic and transphobic environments, I could not help but feel nervous coming out to Galaygay, someone who I had grown close to over these years of conversations and sharing meals. After the presentation and on our train ride home, Galaygay and I chatted as usual, and then I decided to broach the subject. “You know I mentioned that I am a tongzhi, right?” I asked tentatively. “That’s fine! If you have a girlfriend or a boyfriend, it doesn’t matter”, she responded. If I had been younger, I am sure I would have cried right then and there, seated in the High Speed Rail train ride back home to Kaohsiung City. That moment, for me, was a snapshot of the relationship we had been building for a long time.

Here, listening as a methodology speaks to listening to invitations for reciprocal disclosure. Through repeated and ongoing conversations, there was space for Galaygay and I to

get to know each other as people, beyond the binaries of research partner and researcher. She invited me to share more about my life to expand the conceptual fields of our conversations in ways that attended to our relations, as well as her relations with queer kin. I want to note that coming out was not necessary, and that as researchers, we each have our own emotional boundaries for safety, but I raise my queerness to exemplify how responding to disclosure invitations can build trust. Our responsiveness, rather than simply what we respond with, lies at the heart of this matter. I also want to note that in reality, of course, Galaygay and my conversations were a lot more complicated than that. For Indigenous Peoples in Taiwan and Paiwan People in particular, Christianity as a colonial technology exacerbated homophobia and cemented rigid gender binaries (Liang, 2020). In talking with Galaygay and younger members of her family, I recognize that there are differences in what my generation knows and what older generations have been conditioned to know, and the misconceptions that sometimes hinder our trust-building. But, I also want to name how younger generations are changing. In my visits, I often met Galaygay's son, who has always been affirming of my queerness in my visits and, when we talk, I never feel called to explain who I am. This also reflects a broader movement among Indigenous queer and allying youth who have been outspoken about reclaiming Indigenous gender nonconforming identities that have continued since time immemorial (Liang, 2020; Simpson, 2017). Once, Danubak joked about whether Galaygay wonders, "why are so many of the people who care about me such strange people?" ("怎麼關心我的都是這些奇怪的人?"). I believe I almost spluttered my food with how funny this was. Looking back, I think that our shared liberation as queer Indigenous and non-Indigenous folx calls us to this work.

Reflection: Methods that Listen to Our Embodied Commitments

Although, as of writing this, I am based in the U.S. for the writing stage of this research, I have stayed in touch with Galaygay. From her, her family, Danubak, Chia-Hung, and Ljavek's political advocacy partners, I have learned so much about listening as a research methodology. In many ways, as a researcher, I have been taught to listen beyond the words and into the affective worlds in which the words are submersed in. Listening has guided me to understand a bit more about Ljavek's concerns, grievances, and dreams. Listening, for me, is an embodied and iterative research practice that asks researchers to attune to the emotions of our research partners and ourselves as analytical sites for methodological revisions. Listening is political, respecting Indigenous self-determination and recognizing ongoing settler colonial realities. Listening attends to political refusals, so that partner/participant selection and data collection followed Ljavek's redirections and political strategies. Listening positions the researcher so that there are openings for relational restructuring that re-center reciprocity, respect, and responsibility, key terms in Indigenous Research Methodologies (Kovach, 2021; Wilson, 2020).

While sharing listening as a research methodology, I want to bring forth temporality and the importance of listening at this moment in time, during our world's numerous and ongoing crises (e.g., climate crisis, rise of fascism, ongoing colonial occupation). I think back again on Robinson's (2020) *Hungry Listening*, where Robinson describes White and non-Indigenous people crying when listening to Indigenous music, somehow assuming that "friendship" and "reconciliation" is established through listening to Indigenous artists. Listening is not meant to "get over" the negative feelings that are structurally embedded in colonialism. As Galaygay said, those feelings never go away, even if she feels lighter after being listened to. Decolonization does not take place simply through listening, but through land rematriation (Tuck & Yang, 2012).

Perhaps then, I propose here that listening is a temporal strategy, one that we can do in the meantime. As researchers, we can commit to listening affectively and with our full embodied presence even as colonialism continues to operate. The conversations with Galaygay have taught me to listen for the openings to relationship-building within the ongoing structure of colonialism, openings where we can still be there for each other.

Chapter 4 (Article 2): Changing with Urban Landscapes: Learning in Ljavek's Stories of Indigenous Urban Migration to Kaohsiung City, Taiwan

Abstract

This article explores how learning manifests in the changes to urban landscapes, theorizing through shifting urban built environments and ecologies the relational learning between people, more-than-humans, lands, and waters. In this research, I collaborate with Ljavek, a primarily Paiwan Indigenous community that formed in Kaohsiung City, Taiwan. Over the last seven decades, Ljavek learned to perpetuate Paiwan ways of being within the city, while navigating government pressures to relocate. Our research partnership invites attention to how learning is reflected in the changing composition of the city, from changes in the urban infrastructure, communities who stay or are coerced to leave, to budding more-than-human relations in urban spaces. We approach data collection and analysis by drawing on Indigenous Research Methodologies, place-based methods, storytelling and visiting as methods, and we present findings as a story about Ljavek's changing relations with the city while moving. Here, the unit of analysis for learning is the a) physical manifestation of place changes, as well as b) the stories about these changes, c) the accompanying shifts in sociocultural knowledge, affect, relationships, and practices, and d) the agency of lands and water that scaffold these changes. Through this unit of analysis, this research proposes learning as emerging through the co-constitutive processes of *worlding* and *acclimating* between humans, lands, waters, and more-than-humans. Learning thus speaks to the affective, axiological, and epistemological tensions between colonialism, Indigenous self-determination, and the agency of lands and waters.

Introduction: Changing Urban Landscapes

The lands and waters that we now know as Kaohsiung City, Taiwan, one of the largest urban centers on the main island, have been stewarded by Plains/Pingpu Indigenous Peoples since time immemorial. Since the 1950s, Ljavek formed as a primarily Paiwan Indigenous community located at the heart of Kaohsiung City. However, growing up in Kaohsiung City, I was completely unaware of Ljavek's presence. In fact, if you were to pass by Ljavek today, you might be distracted by the deafening six-lane boulevard that stretches alongside Ljavek. You would see, on one side of the boulevard, 君毅正勤國宅 ("Jūn Yì Zhèng Qín public housing"), or several older, twelve-story residential buildings. On the other side of the boulevard, Ljavek appears at this time of writing as a small plot of grass-covered land surrounded by metal chain link fences. The area looks deceptively empty.

Through this research project, I was gifted with the chance to visit with several Ljavek community members and hear stories about Ljavek. Their storying of the land (Goeman, 2015) has taught me to perceive Ljavek with temporal nuance, and to understand how people have been learning to adapt and make changes to the landscapes. I learned that Ljavek means "a large body of water" in Paiwan, and that years ago the boulevard was actually a canal. Back then, the people on both sides of the canal had just moved there and were learning to develop a new relationship with the lands and waters that make up Kaohsiung City. As Taiwan was transitioning between colonial state powers post-WWII, Paiwan Indigenous youth moved to find better job opportunities in the cities, and Chinese Nationalist Party military officials fled a losing civil war in China, both finding their footing on either side of the canal. The new government initiated the construction of public housing for veterans and their families, while across the canal Ljavek had built their own cement and brick houses, forming rows with alleyways, restaurants, and

community spaces. Ljavek also learned to grow edible plants that suited the urban ecosystem, invite other Indigenous and non-Indigenous urban migrants into their community, and take care of local stray dogs as part of their families.

Returning to the present, the public housing across from the boulevard is still there, while Ljavek has been engaging in decades-long negotiations with the government to stay where they have lived for nearly seventy years. In the meantime, the land that Ljavek lived on has now become economically valuable in the heart of Kaohsiung City, and its future plans to become a high-tech hub. This article grew from my initial land acknowledgment to what we now know of Kaohsiung City, Taiwan. As a Han and Taiwanese scholar with settler relations, I cannot fully understand or re-articulate the connections between Ljavek's stories with Paiwan Indigenous knowledge, ways of knowing, and theories. What I offer here are my learnings alongside Ljavek, specifically to re-learn human-place relations and re-envision liberatory futurities for our urban spaces. I am immensely grateful for Ljavek's generosity in sharing their stories with me and teaching me embodied land-based literacies of Kaohsiung City. Only through our conversations have I learned that sprawling on the seemingly empty lot are plants that Ljavek community members grew, still flourishing in the urban soil.

Through this brief historical vignette, I want to invite attention towards how learning is reflected in the changing composition of the city, from the changes in Kaohsiung City's built environment, the communities who stay or who are forced to leave, to the more-than-human relations that grow within urban spaces. These changes to the city's composition explain our human commitments in relation to place, how colonial and capitalistic processes, Indigenous self-determination, and the agency of lands and waters all work in tension and tandem with one another. Following Bang's (2020) call to the learning sciences, I pick up the question, "what

continuously evolving epistemological, ontological, and axiological multiplicities are we enacting and engaging in the remakings and rescalings of the shifting landwaterscapes of life?” (p. 2). What do the changes in urban landwaterscapes tell us about our epistemological commitments and learning in relation to lands and waters? By honing in on the changes in landwaterscapes, I explore dimensions of human learning in relation with place. I extend Indigenous and land-centered inquiries in the learning sciences that attend to how lands and waters are agentic partners in human learning, how humans have always learned in dialogue with place, and how learning human-place relations involves embodiment and affect (Bang et al., 2014; Elliott & Fish, 2024; Marin, 2020). I also build on Indigenous scholarship, which has long theorized how humans are a part of ecosystems, rather than separate from them, and that knowledge is embedded in our relationalities with each other, with place, and with more-than-humans (Harjo, 2019; Vossoughi et al., 2023; Wilson, 2020).

“Human communities across the world are in times of learning and change” (Vossoughi et al., 2023). Whether that change is in the form of the climate crisis, war and geopolitical tensions, exacerbated forced and coerced migration, or resistance to colonialism and oppressive systems, there is an urgent need to examine how we learn to sit with and morph alongside changes in the present time. With a focus on changes in the landwaterscapes as sites of learning, I conceptually frame these changes in terms of worlding (or the endeavors to make physical changes to the environment) and acclimating (or the processes of how people adjust to changes in their surroundings). In other words, I take a closer look at how changes in Kaohsiung City’s landwaterscapes reflect the city residents’, lands’, and waters’ different commitments and decision-making. I also look into how Ljavek has learned to re-make relations with different communities, lands, waters, and more-than-humans. Here, I ask:

- What changes does Ljavek describe in Kaohsiung City's landwaterscapes?
- How do these changes reflect Ljavek's learnings and relationships with more-than-humans, lands, waters, and existing colonial structures?

Problematizing Urban-Indigenous Dichotomies

To theorize Ljavek's learning in urban landwaterscapes, I ground this article in the troubling of urban-Indigenous dichotomies, especially how such dichotomies obscure Indigenous learning, movement, and community-building in urban spaces. The invented divide between urban spaces and those labeled as "nature-based" or thereby "Indigenous" spaces renders the urban as a vacant space without socioecological context, while excluding Indigeneity from a version of modernity and civilization that the urban represents (Bang et al., 2014). Extending *terra nullius*, the term *urbs nullius* stands in for the colonial emptying of urban landwaterscapes, emptying said spaces of Indigenous histories, sovereignties, stewardship, relations, knowledge, and ongoing presence (Coulthard, 2014). Contrary to these views, the lands and waters that we now read as urban still hold their socioecological political orders and Indigenous relations, meaning that there is still Indigenous sense-making, knowledge, as well as ecosystems, and the agencies of lands and waters embedded in urban spaces. In this research, I re-center the urban as lands and waters, and urban migration as simultaneously rooted in Indigenous grounded normativity and colonial coercion. While urban migration is often conceptualized as a modern phenomenon, I build from Simpson's (2017) theorizations of Indigenous mobilities to re-center how Indigenous Peoples have always moved and migrated, so that urban migration is rooted in the simultaneous forces of colonial coercion, Indigenous self-determination, resistance, and decision-making. I do so to resist colonial notions that urban Indigeneity is "less authentic" ("i.e. urban lands are not Indigenous lands, therefore urban Indians are not Indigenous") (Bang et al., 2014, p. 7), and to

re-center human-place relations in urban contexts. These concepts provide revisions to understanding Ljavek not as passive actors in Taiwan's urbanization, but active decision-makers in co-creating Indigenous futurities in urban spaces.

In Taiwan's context, urban spaces are shaped by ongoing settler colonialism after a serial succession of Dutch, Spanish, Japanese, and Chinese Nationalist Party colonial states, as well as the current democratic Han settler colonial government (Shih, 2007). During the early twentieth century, Japanese and the Chinese Nationalist Party's colonial governance drove urban development and architecture towards an image of modernity that extended imperial and colonial projects (Dawley, 2019). Since the 1960s, industrialization and urbanization post-WWII greatly incentivized Indigenous youth to move towards cities to be economically self-sustaining (Hsu, 2012). Within cities, Indigenous Peoples who had rarely interacted with other sovereignties began to form solidarities that informed major Indigenous and land-back movements in Taiwan (Hsu, 2012). Across major cities in Taiwan, Indigenous migrant communities also formed in urban settings, yet settler colonial technologies continue to manifest through gentrification and the surveillance, policing, and displacement of Indigenous migrant communities in cities (Sugimoto, 2019). Currently, contrary to the misconception that urban spaces are void of Indigenous presence, more than half of the Indigenous population in Taiwan continues to reside in urban spaces (Council of Indigenous Peoples, 2026).

Ljavek's Formation in Kaohsiung City, Taiwan

While Ljavek is a primarily Paiwan Indigenous community that formed in Kaohsiung City in the 1950s, the lands and waters of Takao (Kaohsiung City) have always been stewarded by Pingpu/Plains Indigenous Peoples. Post-WWII, several Paiwan youths moved from different Paiwan buluo, Kaviyangan (佳平部落), Qapedang (武潭部落), and Makazayazaya (瑪家部落),

to Kaohsiung City in search of job opportunities (Lin, 2023) (see Figure 2.2). Their story of urban migration is not uncommon. Migration and movement has always been a part of Paiwan grounded normativity (Tjankus/Kuo & Chen, 2015). In addition, after World War II and in the wake of Taiwan's rapid urban expansion, numerous Indigenous youth were incentivized by economic, educational, and healthcare opportunities to move into cities (Wu, et al., 2018). Ljavek's formation is reminiscent of Indigenous mobilities across the world, where migration is not a simple effect of colonialism and capitalism, but also involves Indigenous self-determination, agency, and decision-making on behalf of collective livelihoods (Simpson, 2017). Today, at nearly 70 years old, Ljavek might be the oldest Indigenous community located in an urban space in Taiwan.

In the years following, Ljavek grew as a community while Kaohsiung City's economy took on multiple transformations. Following Paiwan cultural traditions and the locations of available job opportunities, Ljavek formed near the canals of Kaohsiung City. As a Ljavek community member explained to me, "Ljavek" can be roughly translated from Paiwan as a large body of water, which referred to the canals. As a community, Ljavek grew as the community welcomed fellow urban migrants, including Paiwan, Amis/Pangcah, Pinuyumayan/Puyuma Indigenous Peoples, and non-Indigenous Han residents. At one point, Ljavek had rows of houses, and more than 200 residents. Ljavek has also continued to perpetuate Paiwan language, ways of being, and ways of knowing for at least four generations. During this time, Kaohsiung City also morphed from a heavy industrial port city, which was well-known for its serious pollution, to its present image as a metropolitan city with the potential of becoming a high-tech hub. These shifts also impacted the economic value of the lands and waters in which Ljavek resided.

As Ljavek's stewarded lands and waters began to gain economic interest, the Kaohsiung City government pressured Ljavek community members to separate and relocate, which resulted in a successful legal trial where Ljavek sued the city government. Around the 1980s and 1990s, the Kaohsiung City government began to incentivize Ljavek community members to relocate to different public housing locations. These governmental pressures also included policing, surveillance, and threats of housing demolitions, common colonial practices in Taiwan that target Indigenous communities in urban spaces to divide a community (Sugimoto, 2019). A turning point occurred in 2018 that culminated in a legal trial between several Ljavek members and the Kaohsiung City government. In 2018, the government demolished several Ljavek houses without appropriate communication. This prompted Ljavek to sue the government, and during this trial, Ljavek community members collaborated with many local partners, including the Taiwan Association for Human Rights (TAHR), the Legal Aid Foundation (LAF), and many local university student organizations. In 2023, Ljavek residents won the legal trial by citing international covenants on Indigenous residential rights. This was a landmark trial for Indigenous residential rights in urban spaces. In the wake of the trial, Ljavek was granted a plot of land in a separate location in Kaohsiung City, and at the time of writing, Ljavek is currently waiting on this land and discussing how they would like to move forward.

Situating Learning in Place Relations

Over the years, the learning sciences has expanded from cognitive theories of learning to sociocultural theories, suggesting that learning is not simply an internal process but involves social participation and interpretation of social cues. Learning takes place in the shifting participation in social practices and mediation of sociocultural artifacts (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wertsch, 1998). What we learn is not simply strings of facts, but instead knowledge is embedded

in sociocultural norms, historical lineages, and discursive signs, which often include text, visuals, gestures, but can also include architecture and built environments (Engeström & Sannino, 2021; Esmonde, 2016; Nasir et al., 2020). In other words, as a field, we have moved from perceiving learning as individually internal to intersubjective. However, even with this shift to conceptualize learning beyond the individual person and inclusive of our social environments, we still often treat our surroundings as objects mediated in learning, rather than worthy of subjecthood.

Several learning sciences scholars have called for the need to re-center place and ecologies in our theorizations of learning (Marin & Bang, 2018; Philip et al., 2018; Vossoughi et al., 2023). Our view of place is often limited as the background or context of learning, rather than a subject that we learn in relation with. As Bang (2016) articulates, place, more-than-humans, and more-than-living beings are often described in learning as subject-object relations, and not subject-subject relations, omitting an entire realm of learning that takes place when we observe and learn from lands and waters. In the learning sciences, there is thus a need to remember how humans have always learned alongside our place relations.

Indigenous and land-centered researchers have always centered the subjecthood of lands and waters in knowledge and learning, recognizing that lands and waters are agentic, precede human existence, and move at a pace independent from human articulation (Elliott & Fish, 2024; Goeman, 2015; Lees & Bang, 2023; Simpson, 2017; Tuck et al., 2014). This view that lands and waters are integral to our learning and sensemaking can also be found across Indigenous geographies and planning (Harjo, 2019; Smith, 2025; Stevenson, 2019), Indigenous science and environment research (Bang et al., 2014; Barker, 2019; Cajete, 2000; Kawagley, 2006; Kimmerer, 2013), Black geographies and spatial analysis in educational research (Germinaro,

2025; Nickson, 2022; Nxumalo et al., 2021), as well as Interaction Analysis research that accounts for place (Jordan & Henderson, 1995; Marin, 2020; Shapiro et al., 2017; Taylor, 2017).

Through these perspectives, lands and waters can be considered as teachers and interlocutors in our learning, and are thereby foundational to knowledge production. Our learning is situated in not only sociocultural contexts but also in the materiality of place, especially since humans are a part of rather than separate from nature, and our social relations extend beyond other humans and include lands, waters, and more-than-humans (Krishnamoorthy et al., 2021; Odell, 2020; Scott & Mona/Tsai, 2015; Smith, 2025).

In this article, I build on these bodies of work, while extending land-centered research to urban spaces and emphasizing the agencies of urban lands and waters. Here, I also follow Bang et al. (2014) to distinguish “land” from “place”. Bang et al. (2014) revise Descartes’ well-known statements as “land is, therefore we are” and “I think, therefore place is” (p. 9), which Tuck and McKenzie (2014) explain as an ontological reframing of land as prioritizing collective livelihoods, and place as prioritizing human perceptions. I refer to “land” and “place” in the article when I highlight the agency of lands and waters, or the meaning-making between humans and place, respectively. I also follow Bang (2020) and refer to “landwaterscapes” when highlighting the changes that take place in the urban ecological and environmental surroundings.

In learning through place relations, I also want to re-center how our knowledge of place is not detached, but felt, affective, and embodied. Through the affective turn in multiple disciplines (Clough & Halley, 2007; Dernikos et al., 2020), there has been growing attention to how emotions hold social meaning and how learning is not divorced from feeling (Curnow et al., 2021; Doharty, 2020; Vea, 2020). Emotions are meaningful, not irrational or random biochemical reactions. Our affect describes our relation with the world at large, including the historicized

relations between space, colonial and racial structures, and our bodies (Anderson, 2014; Coulthard, 2014; Fanon, 2008; Palmer, 2020).

In this research, I include affective dimensions of human-place relations in my unit of analysis to describe how shifts in human-place relations are propelled by, accompanied by, and prompt emotions. Affect signifies how we desire to change landwaterscapes and dream of otherwise futurities, undergirding epistemological and axiological orientations in human-place relations that are learned and that continue to be re-learned. Here, I build on Indigenous scholarship, which has always described place-based knowledge as intergenerationally embodied, and I draw from theorizations of how what we eat and incorporate into our bodies strengthens human-place relations (Goeman, 2015; Whyte, 2018), and how memories of place and place-based practices provide axiological guidance for Indigenous nation-building and ethical human-place relations (Harjo, 2019). These theoretical foundations ground this research's perspectives of affect as inseparable from human-place relations, and our attempts to learn to co-create ethical relations with urban lands and waters.

Changing Collectively: People and Landwaterscapes Learning with Each Other

All that you touch
You Change.

All that you Change
Changes you.

The only lasting truth
Is Change.

– Octavia Butler, *Parable of the Sower*, 2000

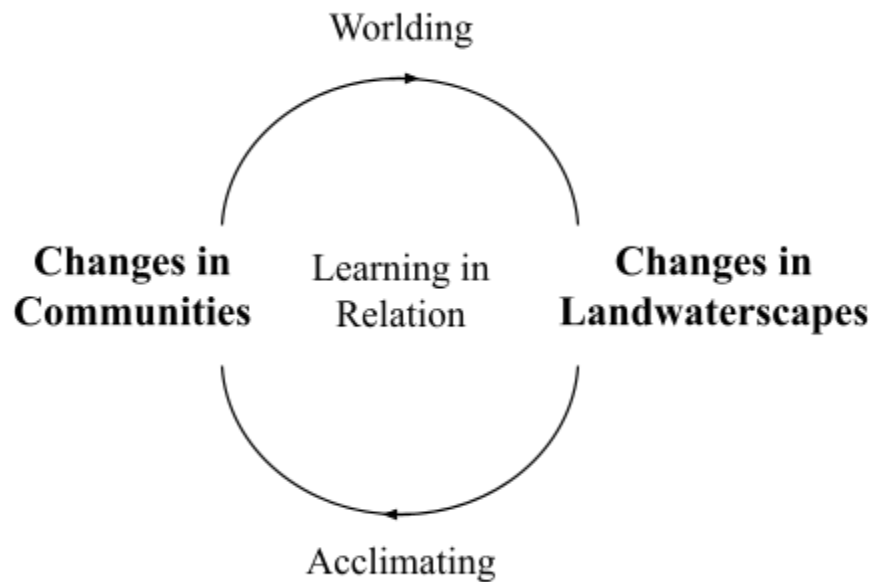
The main purpose of this conceptual framework is to re-center the learning dialogues between people, lands, waters, and more-than humans. Juxtaposing the learning sciences' emphasis on learning as shifts in human ideologies, behaviors, discourse, and identities (Holland, et al., 1998; Lave, 1993) with Indigenous and land-centered literature that prioritizes the agentic nature of lands and waters (Goeman, 2015; Tuck & McKenzie, 2014), I propose a framework that views both the changes in landwaterscapes and communities as sites of learning.

I conceptualize the process of landwaterscapes and people changing alongside each other as two interrelated dynamics: 1) *worlding*, or the endeavors to make physical and tangible changes to the environment, and 2) *acclimating*, or the processes of how people adjust to the changes in their surroundings. This leads to the cyclical model in Figure 4.1, which is a co-constitutive model. The changes in landwaterscapes and communities inform each other, without linear starting or ending points. Changes in communities could prompt changes in landwaterscapes, and vice versa. This model also takes into account the agencies of lands and waters. Lands and waters can inform changes in communities, and also take an active role in the re-shaping of landwaterscapes.

Through this model, an analysis of learning thus requires longitudinal observations of how urban landwaterscapes have changed over time. In these changes, I understand a) learning as changes in human participation and meaning-making, b) learning as shifts in human-place relationships and the undergirding affect, axiological, and epistemological orientations, and c) learning as the material transformation of physical/material landwaterscapes. To put it differently, I ask, how does our reshaping of urban infrastructure and environments reflect changes in our understanding of human-place relations? What kinds of power structures facilitate changes in urban landwaterscapes? How do people learn to adapt to these changes in urban

landwaterscapes? Who has the agency to make changes to landwaterscapes, and who is forced to adapt in certain orientations?

Figure 4.1. Learning in the Cyclical process of Worlding and Acclimating to Changes



Worlding: Learning to Change Landwaterscapes

... human presence makes the presence of matsutake more likely– despite the fact that humans are entirely incapable of cultivating the mushroom. Indeed, one could say that pines, matsutake, and humans all cultivate each other unintentionally. They make each other’s world-making projects possible.

– Anna Tsing, *The Mushroom at the End of the World*, 2015

Urban landwaterscapes are constantly changing, particularly in the contemporary global trend of rapid urban infrastructural development, and these urban worlds we build are significant. Rather than a random assemblage of parts, there is meaning and direction in how we build our cities and urban centers. In this article, I thus theorize that to world is learning to re-make our

relations, and to enact our evolving affective, axiological, and epistemological commitments in human-place relations on the physical spaces around us. By calling attention to “worlding” and “world-making projects”, I invite focus towards the changes of urban landwaterscapes, what such changes tell us about our political orientations in human-place relations, and how we may learn to world-make ethical urban spaces that move us towards good ecological relations.

The term “worlding” holds long traditions in fields such as anthropology, literature, and affect studies, which all, at their broadest level, suggest that restructuring our physical world involves sociocultural and relational meaning-making (Chiu, 2018; Palmer, 2020; Tsing, 2015). Our worlds are composed of more than their material parts, and also of the discursive signs and social artifacts that provide sociocultural context (Palmer, 2020), and thus restructuring architecture, built environments, and landwaterscapes involves sense-making into the ways we intend to rearrange our environments. In addition, “worlding” has also been described as the endeavors of all species to make livable arrangements by changing the environment, which is a relational process that involves the consent of lands and waters (Tsing, 2015). Viewing ecosystems through these lenses of world-making allows us to understand inter-species relations, or how different species have projects that overlap, assist, contradict, or interact with one another. In urban spaces, we can see this in the building of urban infrastructure such as tar roads, canals, highways, and microbial networks in underground waterways, which scaffold the livelihoods of humans and more-than-humans. Worlding is then a learning process through which we sense-make and navigate different possibilities of transforming the world through the re-making of socioecological relations (Vossoughi et al., 2023). Worlding is the learning of what hegemonies are currently present, and what openings exist to potentially move us towards thriving human-place relations. Worlding involves learning to shift these relations, and the

underlying affective, axiological, and epistemological assumptions. In this research, I describe learning as the changes in how different subjects restructure the world, and thereby restructure underlying relations, affect, axiologies, and epistemologies that ground specific world-making projects.

In this research's conceptualization of worlding and learning, I also emphasize that worlding is affective in the sense that emotions accompany the reshaping of landwaterscapes. In affect theory, affect is described as not only the discursive expressions of emotions (e.g., feeling "joyful", "distressed", "enraged"), but also our bodies' capacities and urges to change our environments. Through this perspective, affect can be defined as our bodily capacities to world, or to re-shape, meaning-make, and experience our surroundings (Anderson, 2014; Palmer, 2020). Worlding could reflect what we know to be necessary for human livelihoods, but it may also reflect what is imagined and felt to be necessary, where political orientations scaffold what is felt. Here, I raise a historical example that speaks the politics behind affective desires to world urban landwaterscapes. During the British colonization of Lagos, Nigeria's metropolitan port city, British colonizers dredged and filled swamps for fear of malaria and even death (Adeyemo, 2023). This reshaping of waterways was informed by not only colonial greed to claim land and resources, but the felt assumptions that "civilizing" the landwaterscapes was the only path towards the colonizer's health and bodily integrity (Oluwasegun, 2017). There are affective and sociocultural meaning-making embedded in our endeavors to change landwaterscapes, where affective (e.g., fear, insecurity, frustration) and epistemological (e.g., human dominance over lands and waters) commitments informed the British colonial practices to fill in the swamps with sand, instead of contemplating the possibility to leave Lagos. In this sense, changes in landwaterscapes are always political, especially since these changes hold axiological stances in

how we imagine human livelihoods and how we learn to be in relation with places and more-than-humans to ensure those livelihoods.

Since there are affective, axiological, and epistemological commitments undergirding our endeavors to change landwaterscapes, transforming our worlds requires that we learn to shift our meaning-making and participation in human-place relations. This a political endeavor to world in ways that acknowledge current hegemonies while concurrently continuing to learn alternative world-building projects. In the politics of worlding, I do not mean to “start” new world-building projects through this research, but to recognize ongoing world-building projects in Ljavek and elsewhere that resist colonial worlding. Beyond capitalism and colonialism, landwaterscapes are continuously reshaped by the agencies of humans, more-than-humans, lands, and waters in a “chaotic dance” (Million, 2011, p. 318), and sometimes reshaped even by pure coincidence and happenstance, in which a mushroom finds a nuclear wasteland the perfect place for growth (Tsing, 2015). I call attention to this “chaotic dance”, where numerous world-building projects are underway, and I focus specifically on Indigenous self-determination in re-making urban relations. Urban infrastructure can be understood as “things and also the relation between things” (Larkin, 2013, p. 329), and as such I ask: What kinds of relations are we learning to envision through building urban infrastructure? How do we learn to envision and sustain livelihoods that are collective and respectful of lands and waters through the changes we make to landwaterscapes? These questions guide my analysis and interpretation of Ljavek’s stories, where landwaterscape changes are sites of learning about how to live together in good relation with lands and waters.

Acclimating: Learning to Live Alongside Landwaterscape Changes

In this article, I shorthand the learning processes through which communities re-organize knowledge, practices, relations, and identities to adjust to material and physical changes in landwaterscapes as “acclimating”. While these processes take place in all communities, to build a conceptual framework that aligns with Ljavek’s experiences, this section pays particular attention to Indigenous Studies scholarship and how Indigenous sovereignties have always learned to live alongside the changes in landwaterscapes, including changes in urban landwaterscapes. I conceptualize acclimating as a form of learning, or the learning processes through which communities make decisions and reorganize relations in response to changes in urban landwaterscapes.

Simpson (2017) describes Nishnaabeg knowledge as praxis that emerges from place-based networks of relationships and reciprocity. In her theorizations, Indigenous learning and theorizing are inherently kinetic, in nonstop motion, and involves action, emotions, and thought simultaneously to formulate knowledge in the dynamic relationships with lands, waters, and more-than-humans. Whether there are changes to landwaterscapes or community migration to different places, Indigenous sovereignties and communities have always learned to adapt by prioritizing reciprocity and respect in all relations. In other words, Indigenous ways of being involve learning about the particular “political orders” that are already in motion within the ecosystem (Simpson, 2017). There is not an authentic or historically stationary Indigenous tradition, but rather traditions change over time to stay in good relation with the ever-changing landwaterscapes (Simpson, 2017). Related to world-making projects and affect, the process of restructuring socioecological relations to make livable arrangements renders different subjects as the literal sites of worlding. Acclimating bodies is where world-making projects unfold. To refer

to the aforementioned example of Nigerian swamps under British colonial governance, the worlding and filling in of the swamps directly shifted where mosquitos appeared and disappeared, and where White bodies felt potential to move and stay. Worlding and acclimating are thus intrinsically tied to one another on the basis of affect and bodies; what feels possible to world is actually our human, more-than-human, and place subjecthoods.

Through Indigenous epistemologies, these mutual reshapings are commonplace and, contrary to this example, do not always have to imply power imbalances or unethical relations. In the face of changing landwaterscapes through climate change and colonialism, acclimating also represents the response to changes, and the decision making capacities of the community to enact change that sustains the community and their relations. As Meixi (2022) wrote, “From Indigenous understandings of learning, well-being, and the future, a community’s collective continuance—that is, their self-determining capacities to adapt to change—is directly dependent on the ethical and moral qualities of one’s relations” (p. 443). Through these perspectives, I locate learning in the Indigenous self-determining and decision-making capacities to re-organize practices, relations, and identities to sustain the collective continuance of kinship networks within a place.

In terms of acclimating to urbanization and urban migration, Indigenous learning and ways of knowing continue in urban spaces by relating to these spaces still as lands and waters with their own ecosystems and political orders, and as such urban modernity is not antithetical to Indigeneity (Bang et al., 2014). There is still a need to learn to re-make relations with the human and more-than-human communities in urban centers, and with urban infrastructure. Beyond spatiality itself, learning is also involved in navigating urban migration and the barriers created by colonial restrictions of movement. Human mobilities and movement have always informed

learning, just as mobilities have always been integral to human life (Bang, 2020). Different relations, practices, and traditions necessarily emerge from transitioning knowledge from prior places. However, colonial framing of land as property draws borders in where people are able to move and stay, contradicting Indigenous grounded normativity around moving as a commonplace practice in human life (Coulthard, 2014; Simpson, 2017). These power dynamics implicate learning in acclimating to landwaterscape changes, particularly in the context of increasing capitalistic pressures for Indigenous youth to move into cities.

Methods

Study Context and Methodological Overview

Over a year between 2024 and 2025, I lived in Taiwan and collaborated with several Ljavek community members to co-design this research project. While the official data collection period happened during this time, we had been in contact and had brainstormed this project for two years beforehand. During data collection, Ljavek had already led a successful legal trial against the Kaohsiung City government in 2023, and was waiting for the government to fulfill its legal obligation of allocating a plot of land in the city for Ljavek.

While my main collaborators at Ljavek and I had initially co-designed a Ljavek community event to assert Ljavek's presence in the city following the trial, by the time I had moved to Kaohsiung City to begin data collection everyone was still adjusting to the trial results and recovering from the intensity of the trial itself. A community event was not feasible nor practical for Ljavek at the time, so instead we pivoted to regular visits to document their navigation of the post-trial situation and reflect on Ljavek's journey thus far.

The longitudinal nature of this research collaboration reflects our overarching research methodologies, namely, placed-based and relational research. Informed by Tuck and McKenzie's

(2014) *Place in Research*, we prioritized data collection and analysis that took place in the physical location of Ljavek and Ljavek' community spaces. I focused on collecting and analyzing data with attention towards changes in the landwaterscapes and how such changes inform learning, regarding place as a contributor and collaborator in our research process. In addition, Shawn Wilson's (2020) *Research is Ceremony*, Indigenous Research Methodologies (Harjo, 2019; Kovach, 2021), Participatory Action Research (Lenette, 2022), and participatory design research methodologies (Bang & Vossoughi, 2016; Gutiérrez et al., 2016) guided my commitments towards respect, reciprocity, responsibility, and relationality throughout the research process to co-create a research project that could be useful to Ljavek within and beyond academic purposes. Specifically, the purpose of this research was to re-center place in our theorizations of learning, while highlighting Indigenous knowledge co-production in community and urban settings. I approach the intersection of place and learning by defining my unit of analysis as the incidents of change in landwaterscapes within Ljavek. I analyze these changes as empirical sites of worlding and acclimating, where learning is surfaced through the physical changes to the landwaterscapes and Ljavek's capacities to respond to these changes.

Researcher Positionality

Following Wilson's (2020) call to "use relational accountability as the style of analysis" (p. 119), I describe my positionality to not only detail how my subjectivity is a research lens, but explain how I came to this research and how I believe it aligns with my relational accountability. I grew up in Kaohsiung City, Taiwan, before moving to the U.S. to pursue my bachelor's degree. I identify as a queer and Han person with 河洛人 ("Hòh-Ló-Lâng"/ "Hokkien") and 外省人 ("waishengren") family, which describes me as someone from the dominant racial and settler group in Taiwan, even with our colonized experiences. Indigenous scholars in Taiwan point out

that Han-ness is so normalized that most Han people are unaware of their collective identity and privileges (Leeve, 2023). This resonates with my experiences, and I only began to reflect on my positionality after being racially minoritized in the U.S., inquiring into Han settler colonialism in Taiwan as well as my family's own languages, histories, and identities.

Movement and migration has always been a part of my family's stories, and I began this research project by wondering whether non-Indigenous people could move while building good relations with Indigenous sovereignties, lands, waters, and more-than-humans. Designing this research through relational accountability, it only made sense to locate this work back home in Kaohsiung City. On this epistemic journey, I have deep gratitude for the Indigenous and non-Indigenous scholars, colleagues, and activists I met along the way, particularly Panay Akim⁷, who is a Pangcah archivist in Hualien County, Taiwan. I learned about Ljavek and Ljavek's advocacy partner, 台灣人權基金會 (Taiwan Association of Human Rights, or TAHR) as I began to learn more about ongoing political tensions in Kaohsiung City. TAHR was one of the emerging civil rights organizations established at the end of Taiwan's martial law, and continues to advocate for intersectional human rights. In particular, I thank the TAHR staff members, including Yi-Chia Yu, who connected me with Galaygay Balasasau, my main research partner at Ljavek.

Data Partnerships and Data Collection

This article and the broader research project would not be possible without Galaygay Balasasau and her family's generosity in sharing their stories with this young, out-of-nowhere researcher. So, to begin describing our data collection methods, I will first introduce Galaygay and our data partnership. After meeting Galaygay through TAHR, we stayed in touch through

⁷ To the younger generations of Pangcah/Amis readers here, Panay shares with you that "Ca'ay katalaw a madangdang i serangawan."

our shared interest in Kaohsiung City's land and residential rights. I would describe Galaygay as the grandmother you can always turn to, but never want her to catch you doing something stupid. She is a warm, kind, and observant person. Like her father before her, she has also been Ljavek's main outward-facing voice throughout Ljavek's legal trial and negotiations with the government.

As mentioned earlier, we had initially planned to co-design a community event for this research project, but circumstances pivoted us towards documenting Galaygay's stories about Ljavek and her family. When we began data collection, the legal trial concluded, and Galaygay had to move from Ljavek's original location to a new apartment, still within Kaohsiung City, to wait for the land Ljavek secured through the trial. This move was arduous and marked a new stage in Ljavek's collective journey, where there was a need for rest and a community event did not align with Ljavek in that moment. With this pivot in research design, the data collection methods in this project mainly consisted of storytelling and multimedia documentation of Ljavek's place to explore the incidents of changes in landwaterscapes and Ljavek's acclimating processes to these changes. While the focus is on Ljavek's original location, I also include additional places where Ljavek community members live, such as the public housing and Galaygay's new apartment, to more fully present who Ljavek is today.

The data collection methods mainly leaned on *Visiting as an Indigenous Feminist Practice* (Tuck et al., 2023), while also drawing from Indigenous Research Methodologies (Harjo, 2019; Kovach, 2021; Wilson, 2020). Visiting allows for the de-centering of humans and re-centering of place, since one can visit a person, more-than-human, or a specific location. Visiting is also an embodied and temporally recursive research method, where you physically experience a place on multiple occasions. Through repeated re-engagements with place and with Galaygay, I witnessed how landwaterscape changes and community adaptations recursively

informed one another. On each successive visit with Galaygay and her family, and while I continued my archival research, I began to grow an embodied literacy of place (Lenters & McDermott, 2019; Tuck et al., 2023) in Ljavek. I began to notice that the vertical concrete structures on the pavement were actually bridge piers of the canal that no longer physically exists. Visiting allowed me to experience the sensoriness of place and relations, and to engage in memory work that connected Ljavek's stories from past, present, to future. My feelings about Ljavek also deepened through the repetition of visits, since felt experiences embody and accumulate meaning through repetition (Gregg & Seigworth, 2010; Tuck et al., 2023). The recursive nature of visiting as a method continually layered an understanding of place so that I had a growing immersive and embodied knowledge of Ljavek. Although during data collection the conceptual framework did not surface yet (Figure 4.1), the repetitive and longitudinal nature of visiting as a method allowed me to observe landwaterscape and community changes as a sustained phenomenon. In this sense, visiting functioned as a methodological enactment of the conceptual framework model itself, as I learned alongside all the changes I witnessed.

I visited Galaygay at her home in Ljavek's original location twice, before I visited Galaygay monthly at her new apartment in Kaohsiung City for a total of 10 visits, which was recorded as 7.5 hours of audio and 10 field notes. In addition, I made one visit to Galaygay's family at the public housing, which was recorded as a field note. Throughout 2023–2025, I also frequently visited Ljavek's original location to take photos and video recordings of how the place was changing, in part through the city's urban planning and development. TAHR also shared their archival documents from Ljavek's legal trial. This accumulated in 70+ photographs, 30 minutes of video footage, and 25+ archival documents on urban planning maps and legal trial records.

In my visits with Galaygay and her family members, the data collection prioritized consent and storytelling principles. As Tuck et al. (2023) write, “visiting is a practice based upon consent, allowing to know and unknow, considering a willingness to receive visits as gifts, and eventually a responsibility to continue the perpetuation of stories facilitated through visiting” (p. 2). Visiting emphasizes relationality and holds the visitor responsible for following the refusals and invitations in the community, instead of forcing the researcher’s agenda. I visited Ljavek with general curiosities rather than a set of interview questions (e.g., What calls Galaygay to her responsibilities in Ljavek? Has that ever changed? How did Galaygay advocate for Ljavek’s rightful presence? What does Galaygay envision for Ljavek’s future?), and with these curiosities in mind, my conversations with Galaygay were directed by her. These conversations usually lasted 2 to 5 hours, depending on how much Galaygay wanted to share that day. Often, Galaygay’s family members were home as well and chimed into the conversation. Galaygay was comfortable with me recording our conversations in audio, and I recorded parts of our conversations, but when family members were present, I turned to field note-taking. In October 2024, I asked Galaygay if her family in public housing would be interested in sharing their perspectives. She asked on my behalf, and her cousin agreed to a visit. During this visit, her cousin preferred not to have an audio recording, and so that conversation was recorded through field notes. Through my switches between audio recordings and field note-taking, I wanted to respect Ljavek’s refusals and self-determination in data collection methods.

Data Analysis and Data Presentation

The data analysis and presentation attends to how knowledge is relational and storied. Following Indigenous modes of qualitative analysis (Kovach, 2021; Wilson, 2020) that also draw from Indigenous storywork (Archibald, 2008), I prioritize how relationships can be built and furthered

through data analysis. I used an inductive approach named in *Research is Ceremony* (Wilson, 2020) which, instead of breaking down dialogues into the smallest possible coding grain sizes, intentionally looks for interconnectedness. I looked for the connections between the stories that Galaygay shared with me in our conversations and the additional pieces of research data. In particular, what connects across all the data, from the conversations to the archival documents and my embodied place visits, is how the material and physical changes in the landwaterscapes are informed by human-place relationships, histories, desires, and sociocultural understandings, and these changes result in tangible consequences for the human and more-than-human residents. With this, I began to create research memos that listed all the landwaterscape changes that were mentioned in the research data, framing landwaterscape changes as the unit of analysis. Here, the unit of analysis is not merely the physical manifestation of place changes, but also a) the stories about these changes, b) the accompanying shifts in sociocultural knowledge, affect, relationships, and practices, and c) the agency of lands and water that scaffold these changes. By selecting this as the unit of analysis and therefore focal point of this inquiry, I aim to re-center Indigenous knowledge and a relational perspective of lands and waters as worthy subjecthoods.

Stories and listening deeply to stories became the main analytical approach to understanding the unit of analysis of landwaterscape changes in all its epistemological, affective, relational, and historical dimensions. In the data analysis, I re-visited the stories that Galaygay and her family had shared in conversation, and the additional data as peripheral support to these stories. Stories have been frequently addressed in educational research as a vital practice to learn about positioning oneself in relation to other beings and places (Meixi et al., 2022; Tzou et al., 2019). In Indigenous research, Million (2011) describes stories as the foundation and literal practice of theorizing, and that listening and interpreting stories also require emotional and

embodied inquiry. These framings guide my analysis to listen to stories while practicing respect, reciprocity, and relationality (Kovach, 2021), and to re-attend to stories that seem to “haunt” me (Yoon & Chen, 2023), which indicate stories that display a kind of affective attraction inviting me to re-visit a story regularly and inquire into the meanings that have yet to surface. While re-visiting the stories, I was guided by my relational accountabilities with Galaygay, to future Ljavek descendants reading this, and to Kaohsiung City lands and waters as my home. Re-attending to Galaygay’s family stories thus orients this analytical approach. I continuously made connections between the different datapoints in my research memos on landwaterscape changes, layering onto Galaygay’s stories with the documentation of landwaterscapes, urban planning maps, and legal documents.

For this article, I eventually chose one particular story and the connected data as the focal point. To present my findings, I chose to re-share a story Galaygay told me, alongside the additional data that connect with this story. My choice was informed by multiple reasons. First, I chose this story as a representation of worlding and acclimating, and how Ljavek learned alongside lands and waters within urban spaces. This story exemplifies Ljavek’s relations with more-than-humans, and this was one of the few stories where Galaygay and her family mentioned plants important to Paiwan ways of being. This story also surfaced from my only visit to Ljavek community members residing in the public housing, and frames Ljavek as an expansive community connected through relationships rather than bounded by geographical borders. The story speaks to Ljavek not as a physical area, but a community that includes the people, more-than humans, lands and waters in public housing, in apartments across Kaohsiung City, and Ljavek’s original location. I also chose this story as an exemplification of joy, especially since I will always remember how excited Galaygay was towards the end of the story,

as she shared photos of the plants she had grown in Ljavek's original location. These reasons brought me back to this story consistently. I also want to note briefly that this story was shared in Mandarin and Paiwan, and I translated the story here.

Findings: Selected Story about Ljavek and Urban Landwaterscape Changes

For over seven decades since Ljavek formed in Kaohsiung City, numerous changes have rumbled across the urban landwaterscapes, as seen in the collapse of buildings, the appearance and disappearance of a canal, and an upshot of skyscrapers across the city skyline. Here, I re-articulate some key changes through a story of Galaygay and my visit to her family, who live in public housing. In the story below, traveling became a major theme to reflect on worlding and acclimating on a longitudinal scale. Within the story, we travel physically to get to the public housing, and also temporally by recalling different nonlinear yet constellated memories. We travel to recall and make sense of what has changed in the urban landwaterscapes and, in particular, the story asks why a certain relation with a plant has changed as Ljavek formed. By presenting this story as the finding, I invite readers to travel together here as well. I situate the story first with my relations with Galaygay and how we traveled to the public housing as an opening for readers to follow along and understand the relational underpinnings of this story. I will first present the story as a whole being, and invite readers' interpretations of worlding and acclimating within the story, before sharing my current story interpretation.

Where will Ljavilu Grow?

Galaygay and I chat happily on our long drive over to 娜麗灣國宅 ("Naluwan Public Housing"). Just a week or two ago I had asked if she thought folks over there would be interested in sharing their perspectives with me, and she told me about her cousin who has become mainly responsible

for advocating for her family member's rights at the public housing. So here we are. We drive gently over to the public housing. I am in my dad's car while Galaygay sits right next to me in the passenger seat.

I feel oddly calm. The night before I kept worrying myself to bits about how I, a Han settler, should show up at this place that is the material manifestation of Han settler colonialism, 福利殖民 (“welfare colonialism”)⁸, and policies meant to keep Indigenous Peoples on the literal geographical margins of the city, while Ljavek's current location has been developed as a memorial park for Formosa Plastics and possibly future semiconductor industries. As silly as it is, I tried thinking of what chef Sohla El-Waylly⁹ did when she was nervous, imagining herself to be someone in a different role. Like, instead of being a brunch competition host on television, imagining herself to just be a culinary judge of the contestants before her, no cameras, no fake smiles, just the root of the task which is to judge food. So, while thinking about what the root of the task before me is, I thought of the last time my mom invited her friends over for lunch and I was the kid but not-quite-kid-anymore peripheral member at a table of aunties. So that's who I am today. Not an interviewer, ethnographer, or researcher, just a kid visiting some aunties, a kid who is curious about what they've been up to and how they're doing.

When we arrive, Cousin is still busy with family matters so the rest of the family usher us into her apartment where we all sit, eat, and chat. I learn that the last time Galaygay visited was when a staff member at the TAHR wanted to interview the Ljavek residents at 娜麓灣國宅 (“Naluwan Public Housing”). “It's just too far away”, Galaygay tells me. She does not get to visit unless someone drives her there. I recalled how, during and before the legal trials, TAHR

⁸ 福利殖民/Welfare colonialism operates through discursive colonial state intentions to provide “care and social benefits” to “marginalized” groups, while undermining Indigenous sovereignties and self-determination in the process (see Silan & Wang, 2025). These practices are particularly prevalent in Taiwan and perpetuates deficit-views of Indigenous Peoples.

⁹ Sohla El-Waylly is a well-known chef for her educational cooking videos on YouTube. She has also been one of the only people to detailedly expose the racist practices by *New York Times Cooking*.

staff members met with Ljavek frequently and tried multiple different strategies to advocate for Ljavek's rightful presence. They had proposed to change Ljavek's land-use designation from city to residential property, but that strategy seemed unfathomable to the city government.

By the time Cousin arrives, people have come and gone, and soon it's mainly just Galaygay and Cousin talking while I am listening. They catch up, switching intermittently between Mandarin and Paiwan, which reminded me of how I speak to my mother nowadays, but for us it's a smattering of Mandarin, English, and Hokkien. There are just some things that cannot be translated, or cannot be shared outside of the present intimate circle.

After some conversations with Galaygay, Cousin eventually turns to me and more formally gives me a go-ahead to ask what I would like to, and I sit up straighter at this invitation. I have come in with no pre-formed questions, so our conversation flows from one particular topic to the next. Cousin and Galaygay both tell me how their 部落 ("buluo") used to live on the plains, but were forced to move up the mountains as Hokkien people occupied larger portions of the plains. There seems to be a story there about how the government had let the Paiwan People choose whether they wanted to live in the plains or up in the mountains, and they chose the mountains because it was more suitable for their crops and aligned with their agricultural expertise.

Figure 4.2. The Plant Known as Ljavilu in Paiwan



Note. This photo was sourced from Aborgpedia (Lin & Editorial Team, n.d.).

At the mention of plants, we start spending a lot of time talking about ljavilu. Galaygay and I laugh about how we can never remember the Mandarin name for ljavilu even though we try to. The Mandarin name includes a complicated chemistry term for the biochemical contents of the plant, and it is difficult for us as non-chemists to memorize. But ljavilu is a plant Galaygay and Cousin will recognize and know anywhere in the world. It is part of the Paiwan staple, usually made into the edible wrappings of cinavu. Cinavu, or rice and meat wrapped in ljavilu leaves, is the same dish you would find at Ljavek's annual ceremonies. Cinavu is the dish Galaygay makes for her kids and grandkids, the one that you would find in the touristy parts of Taiwan where they "showcase Indigenous cultures", the dish that was passed around in Ljavek's ceremonies which also functioned as a means of protest and self-assertion in Kaohsiung City. Cinavu is the dish that Galaygay brought to Academia Sinica to share with everyone there when we co-presented on this research work, the one she gifted a fellow Paiwan scholar who gasped that he had not had a good cinavu for so long, and the one that she generously shoved into my hands many times when I visited, telling me that I am still young and that I need to eat more.

Figure 4.3. Ljavilu Leaves Wrapping the Inside Layers of Cinavu



Note. Ljavilu leaves wrap the inside layers of the cinavu, closest to the fillings, as shown in the opened cinavu on the right. This photo was sourced from AgriHarvest’s online magazine (Dong, 2025).

Cousin and Galaygay trade stories about growing ljavilu in Kaohsiung City. The streets of Ljavek were lined with edible plants that fruited around the year, save for ljavilu. Cousin told me about her many trials and tribulations in growing ljavilu in her backyard at Ljavek and in the dirt near the public housing. She had even brought a ljavilu plant from her 部落 (“buluo”), a full-grown one with the soil around its roots and all, to Ljavek but it still did not survive. There is a kind of funny exasperation to all of this. Technically, ljavilu did grow, but the leaves were so small the cinavu you wrap would not suit a human. Instead, Galaygay grew a flourishing garden of mangos, red quinoa, luffa, pigeon peas, and dragon fruit. Cousin shared that she finally learned that it was not the soil of Kaohsiung City, but that ljavilu needed an environment with mist and fog, water droplets in the air that kept the climate moist. Galaygay interrupted to show me selfies of herself beaming with the red quinoa in bushels behind her dangling from what I can only describe as trees, not small agricultural plants. Cousin told me that she even chatted with

people in the public housing to exchange information about the soil and climate, but things just did not work out.

Discussion: Selected¹⁰ Story Interpretations

Ljavek's Pedagogies through Changing Relations with Ljavilu

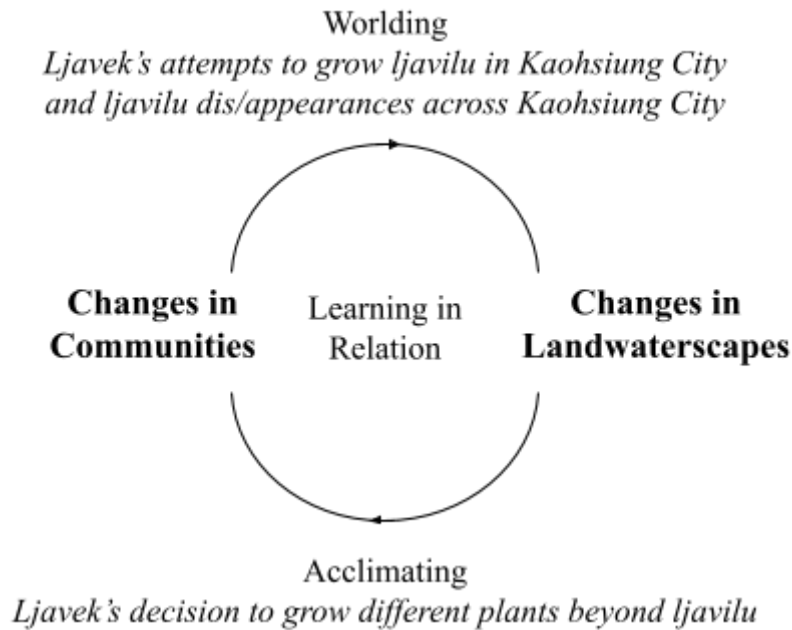
From the story beforehand, I focus on Ljavek's changing relation with ljavilu, and how the agencies of Ljavek and ljavilu informed their relational learning. There are iterative processes of learning in Ljavek-ljavilu relations, in each attempt where ljavilu is planted ("appears") to where ljavilu dies ("disappears"). Through describing ljavilu "dis/appearances" and "planting", I build an analysis that speaks to the dual nature of growth, where the agencies of both Ljavek and ljavilu are required for growth to take place. Ljavilu would not *appear* in a new place without Ljavek's acts to plant ljavilu and ljavilu's consent to grow in the new place. This perspective guides this story interpretation to understand relational learning between the subjecthoods of Ljavek, ljavilu, and the urban lands and waters, and the axiological pedagogies that Ljavek embodies through their changing relations with ljavilu.

I interpret Galaygay and Cousin's attempts to plant ljavilu as a desire to world the surrounding urban landwaterscapes, while their responses to the continual disappearance of ljavilu is a form of acclimation (Figure 4.4). At first, Galaygay and Cousin wanted to plant ljavilu in Kaohsiung City, which I interpret as attempts to world Kaohsiung City's urban landwaterscapes in ways that align with Paiwan relational knowledge. For most if not all Paiwan households, ljavilu is a cornerstone plant for Paiwan cuisine (Galaygay, personal communication, 2025), and so it is no surprise that Galaygay and Cousin deeply desired to grow this plant near

¹⁰ I named this section *selected story interpretations* to name the researcher's interpretation as just one way of understanding this story. Hopefully, the story will bring forth different learnings for the reader.

them, and to co-create a world where they maintain close relations with ljavilu regardless of where they had moved to. To world, Galaygay and Cousin shifted their practices and relations (e.g., talking with new neighbors, trying to plant seeds and then planting fully grown ljavilu), and generated knowledge around the plant and the place (e.g., ljavilu needs a misty environment). However, there were tensions in worlding between Ljavek and ljavilu in Kaohsiung City's urban landwaterscapes. After countless tries to plant ljavilu, Galaygay and Cousin eventually stopped these worlding attempts when they realized that the city's climate was unsuitable for the plant. Ljavilu just would not grow in the urban center. Instead of forcing ljavilu's growth, when ljavilu continued to disappear from Ljavek's different community locations within the city, Galaygay and Cousin learned to acclimate to this new relational reality by growing different edible and agricultural plants, some aligned with past Paiwan traditions and some contributing to new relations between Ljavek and the urban landwaterscapes of Kaohsiung City. This iterative process in Ljavek-ljavilu relations exemplifies tensions between different worlding desires, and how Ljavek respected ljavilu's disappearances by learning to acclimate to the urban landwaterscapes in new ways.

Figure 4.4. Mapping on the Conceptual Model Ljavek's Learning in Relation to Ljavilu



Galaygay and Cousin's respect towards ljavilu's disappearances represents an affective critical pedagogy in respecting and attending to local ecosystems. Aligned with Indigenous learning, theorizing, and knowledge production, Galaygay and Cousin did not attempt to force the landwaterscapes to accept ljavilu once they realized that the relations between ljavilu and the urban lands and waters did not sustain one another. Contrary to a colonial view that commodifies natural resources, Galaygay and Cousin burst into laughter describing their futile attempts to grow ljavilu. There is a humorous exasperation, and perhaps some grief, in our conversations as if to say, "we tried, but what a waste of time when we knew all along that this is just how it is". Returning to Indigenous theory and learning as a dynamic process that attunes to networks of relationships and reciprocity (Simpson, 2017), Galaygay and Cousin understood that ljavilu refused to live in a place that did not meet their needs. Galaygay and Cousin also understood that the landwaterscapes of this particular location has a political order that should be respected. This

perspective is in direct tension with a capitalistic sense of place. Take for example, the following description of water relations:

In an imperial state formation, ... water is treated as a commodifiable resource subjected to regulation, management, and conservation, even while climate and weather are being mutually confused so that illegal extraction and waste disposal are obscured. Water is represented as innately, inevitably available, as if drought can just be waited out until the return of abundant snows and rains. (Barker, 2019, p. 15)

Barker's (2019) critique demonstrates the illogical nature of perceiving lands and waters as commodities, which falsely assumes that natural resources are always readily available when called. In contrast, for Galaygay and Cousin, there is no attempt to mist the air, or to world in a way that forces the environment to bend to their wills. Galaygay and Cousin's felt embodiment, how hard they laughed, directly refutes this idea that lands and waters can be subdued into following a person's will. They found humor in the situation, and moved on to grow other plants that sustained their grandchildren, children, and themselves. In this sense, I interpret Galaygay and Cousin's laughter at the absurdity of forcing *ljavilu* to grow as an affective pedagogy in respecting the agencies of *ljavilu* and the urban lands and waters.

As Galaygay shifted to growing other plants, her decision-making represents learning to acclimate to the new urban landwaterscapes, as well as learning to respond to the colonial structures that pressured *Ljavek*'s urban mobilities. By respecting *ljavilu* and the landwaterscapes, Galaygay shifted her practices and relations to grow other plants in Kaohsiung City, some that are common to historical Paiwan ways of being (e.g., red quinoa, pigeon peas) and some that provide new openings (e.g., mango, luffa, dragon fruit). These relational shifts reflect Galaygay's self-determining and decision-making capacities, which provided openings to

re-build relations on the move and maintain traditions that are alive, dynamic, changing, and in good relation to a new place. I distinctly remember Galaygay showing me photos of the quinoa she grew, abundant and heavy on the trees, while she stood by the quinoa and beamed into the camera. She told me that she did eat the quinoa since they were difficult to process, but maintaining this relation brought her so much joy, exemplifying how Indigenous knowledge and memories are stored in these relations with more-than-humans beyond simple consumption. While Galaygay continued to sustain her family and her relations without ljavilu, the absence of ljavilu still speaks to how some relations are forced to be left behind in colonialism-coerced movement. While Indigenous Peoples have always moved and re-made relations, making relations takes time and generations, which is disregarded at the speed in which people are pressured to move nowadays (Dian Million, personal communication, 2025). Colonialism and rapid urbanization has drastically escalated the speed in which Indigenous Peoples are forced to move, especially towards urban centers. These themes of acclimating and growing different plants speak to the co-existing realities of how Indigenous Peoples have always moved and learned to re-make relations while moving, although ongoing colonialism pressures an unprecedented speed of movement.

Through their changing relations with ljavilu, Galaygay and Cousin lead us in reframing learning in relation to urban ecosystems to prioritize attentiveness, respect, and openness to change, while foregrounding the disruptive nature of colonialism and coerced movement. Galaygay and Cousin paid attention to the ljavilu's patterns of appearances and disappearances, and through these patterns they learned about ljavilu's relational foreclosures in Kaohsiung City. Their humorous remarks at their continuously failed attempts to plant ljavilu speak to a willingness to pivot and re-make different relations with the urban landwaterscapes, and also

speak to how colonialism ruptures Indigenous relations with more-than-humans. Galaygay grew various different plants instead, and her way of re-making relations teaches us about respecting urban lands and waters as agentic and not always aligned with our desires, while also showcasing how Indigenous ways of being have always been changing and growing. Perhaps most importantly, Galaygay and Cousin's acclimating and response to worlding tensions reminds us that there is no such thing as *urbs nullius*, that urban landwaterscapes still hold political orders, refusals, and relational openings that must be respected.

Epistemological Commitments in Kaohsiung City's Urban Landwaterscapes Changes

But there is also the forest's point of view.

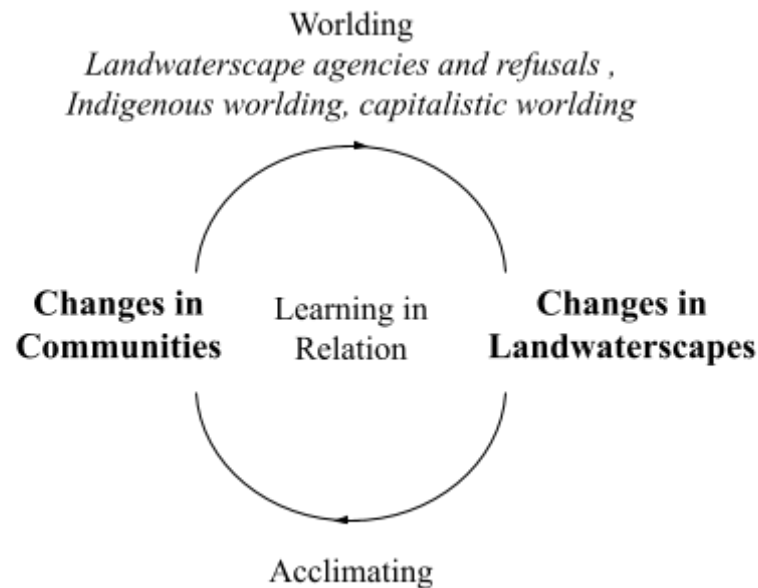
Despite all insults, resurgence has not yet ceased.

— Anna Tsing, *The Mushroom at the End of the World*, 2015

While the last section focuses on Ljavek's learning as pedagogy for respectful human-place relations, in this section I turn to Ljavek's urban landwaterscapes as a central subject in relational learning processes. Following Bang's (2020) call, I move from perceiving place as a backdrop to viewing lands and waters as interlocutors in learning. Specifically, I center on the worlding of Kaohsiung City, providing an analysis of the tensions between the agencies of lands and waters, Indigenous self-determination, and transnational nation-state and capitalistic interests, and I describe how an analysis of these tensions reveal underlying affective, epistemological, and axiological commitments in the development of Kaohsiung City. In other words, I regard the changes in urban landwaterscapes as the material manifestation of human-place relational learning. Theorizing colonialism as a "chaotic dance" between different Indigenous and colonial powers rather than a complete overpowering takeover (Million, 2011), I

explore the epistemological tensions between landwaterscape agencies and refusals, Indigenous worlding, and capitalistic worlding.

Figure 4.5. Mapping on the Conceptual Model Different Worlding Tensions



While Ljavilu did not grow in Ljavek’s original location, and Ljavek community members now reside in different public housing and apartment locations, what did materialize in Ljavek’s original location was multiple capitalistic projects, revealing how changes in Kaohsiung City’s urban landwaterscapes physically manifests the tensions between different affective, axiological, and epistemological commitments. Currently, Ljavek community members have all moved out of their original location. Near this location, there is now a memorial park for a titular Taiwanese conglomerate, Formosa Plastics Group, and an “empty” land where Kaohsiung City’s mayor made bids for the AI hardware giant, Nvidia Corporation, to establish their overseas headquarters (n.d., “Striving for NVIDIA's Kaohsiung headquarters!”, 2025). Behind both projects, there are clear epistemological orientations that world the urban landwaterscapes of Kaohsiung City into a high-tech hub, instead of a place that centers Indigenous relations with lands and waters. A

visual observation of Ljavek's original location over time reveals these trends, from the rows of housing that Ljavek built and the plants in relation with Ljavek, to the current grassy area with the new memorial park right next to it. The worlding tensions are, at their core, tensions between different meaning-making of human-place relations. In contrast to Indigenous ways of knowing that view place as where cultural practices emerge (Goeman, 2015, p. 73), colonialism collapses lands as property and perpetuates zero point epistemology, or the view founded on varying forms of absence such as Indigenous absence, to "construct meanings of land as vast, uninhabited spaces ripe for discovery" (Bang et al., 2014, p. 5). This epistemological orientation contributes to the "emptying" of Ljavek's original location, and to the bids for capitalist projects in seemingly "empty" nearby plots of land for economic potential. In addition to capitalistic interests, these projects are also scaffolded by nation-state commitments. Currently, Kaohsiung City is re-framing its economy from a heavy industry to a high-tech hub known as the New Bay Area, calling to Silicon Valley's technocapitalistic success. This aspiration allows Taiwan to position itself as contributive to the global technoeconomy, incentivizing U.S. allyship with Taiwan against China's threats of occupation while perpetrating a neoliberal imagination that technocapitalist elites are superior to all other urban identities. Through these capitalistic epistemological stances on land, Ljavek displacement is a rational outcome in the pursuit of nation-state integrity and economic development.

This capitalistic and nation-state meaning-making of land is also codified in the discursive practices surrounding Kaohsiung City's urban development, including the legal regulations of land, urban development blueprints, and government discourse around who are "illegal" inhabitants. To provide another example of how epistemological views circulate in the worlding of Kaohsiung City, in an interview with a TAHR staff member, she shared that

changing the Ljavek's legal land use designation could have provided Ljavek with the legitimacy to remain in their original location. Specifically, changing the land use designation from "governmental" to "residential" property could have made Ljavek's original location legally available for Ljavek residence, whereas the current "government" property designation makes it legally unsuitable for residents. Thus, Ljavek community members were deemed "illegal" residents at the original location. While there is no way of rewinding time and ascertaining if this designation change would have significantly advantaged Ljavek, legal definitions of land used certainly contributed to Ljavek's displacement. These legal definitions betray colonial logics that assume that Indigenous sovereignties completely "relinquished" rights to lands and waters and that the colonial nationalization of territories is permanent. This once again demonstrates how there are firm epistemological commitments that ground the government's perspective of human-place relations, so that otherwise possibilities for Ljavek's future are illegible. The epistemological framework that undergirds il/legal residence renders Indigenous mobilities and stewardship illegitimate from the perspective of the government's human-place relations.

While reflecting on these capitalistic worlding projects, there is still, as always, Indigenous worlding and the agencies of lands and waters continuously reshaping urban landwaterscapes. Returning to the story about ljavilu, instead of asking, "Why couldn't ljavilu grow on Ljavek's urban landwaterscapes?", I want to reframe this question in a way that re-centers the agencies of lands and waters and ask, "Why wouldn't Ljavek's urban landwaterscapes *allow* ljavilu to grow?" At its core, I want to hone the analysis on understanding Ljavek's landwaterscapes' *refusals*, and the reasoning and processes behind this refusal. As epistemic reservoirs, the *refusals* of lands and waters are built upon prior human-place interactions that accumulate and inform the relational openings and foreclosures for further

interactions (Harjo, 2019). In this line of thought, land refusal is not romantic or anthropomorphic, but a response to prior human-place interactions. While I am not an environmental scientist and a scientific inquiry of Ljavek's soil is beyond the scope of this article, there remain meaningful theorizations into the landwaterscapes' *refusals* of ljavilu. Since the 1960s, Kaohsiung City has been a heavy industrial powerhouse for Taiwan's economic and militaristic needs, which furthered chemical and air pollution. It is possible, then, that the landwaterscapes' refusals of ljavilu are based in Kaohsiung City's histories of pollution, the land's unwillingness to continue business as usual. Regardless of the scientific realities for why ljavilu would not grow, what remains significant here is how Ljavek's intentions and desires to world needed to consider the refusals of lands and waters. In other words, it takes more than human desires to shape landwaterscapes, but instead there are ecological agencies and constraints that are constantly present. From the story of ljavilu, I ask, are there ways that we are assuming we can world, when we actually need to adapt and follow the political orders of Kaohsiung City's landwaterscapes?

From a researcher's learning perspective, I take these worlding tensions as a critical call to learn to shift our current human-place relationships. There is a need to re-imagine relations based on subject-subject interactions, rather than mediated through capitalistic and nation-state discourses of land as property. Between these tensions of Indigenous, capitalistic, as well as lands and waters' worlding, I want to again return to the story of ljavilu, and what the lands and waters might be telling us in their refusals. Listening to these refusals provides a more realistic perspective on what we can and cannot change in our surrounding landwaterscapes.

Closing Reflections

As a researcher, Kaohsiung City resident, and witness of this immemorial dance between worlding and acclimating orientations, I know that I have learned things on this research journey that have changed who I am. This dance evidences power dynamics in whose desires and dreams get to manifest, what it would take for us to learn to be in otherwise relations with urban landwaterscapes. I have learned from Ljavek's journey, from moving to Kaohsiung City and re-making relations with the human and more-than-human residents of the city, to shift my relation with urban landwaterscapes from being attached to the built environment to inquiring into the epistemological, affective, and axiological commitments that allow for these structures to exist. I have also begun to understand urban spaces as blips in the broader timeline of Indigenous sovereignties and environments, and to re-understand humans as animals within ecosystems. These days, as I have been learning to forage in urban spaces, I believe the most important embodied learning this has brought is not only the taste and texture of the foods I have foraged, but the boundary-crossing between the pedestrian pavement and the plants. My first attempts felt both terrifying and electrifying, my body viscerally felt the boundary-crossing as dangerous, illegal, and wrong, before I started to grow an embodied literacy of the colonial epistemologies that entrap us from learning place. As a Han settler descendant, I do not feel that it is possible within my lifetime to truly establish an intimate relationship and meaning-making of place, but I have learned from Ljavek and their urban movement that there are possibilities to build meaningful relationships with place through intergenerational effort and learning from Indigenous ways of knowing.

“We need social change making that at its heart asks us to reimagine relationships and constructions of freedom that have depended on domination—of people and of nature.” (Bang,

2016, p. 115). In this article, I have put forth a story from my conversations with Ljavek to re-center lands and waters in our learning theories. In particular, I focus on changes. Changes in a city's built environment, in what gets torn down and built up, in which plants grow and die, in who gets to stay and who is forced out of urban spaces, all signify complicated negotiations and conflicts between humans, place, and more-than-humans. The lands and waters' refusals to allow ljavilu to grow exemplify the agency of lands and waters in deciding what/who gets to live, grow, and die. This holds particular implications for urban planning, disrupting linear presumptions that what gets planned and penned in blueprints will ultimately become what it was intended to. We can see here in Ljavek that while urban development is fueled by capitalistic desires and colonial assertions of land as property, urban development is also not possible without regarding lands and waters as agentic. Therefore, there is a need to learn alongside Indigenous knowledge about ethical place relations while moving.

Chapter 5 (Article 3): What is 團結 Tuán-Jié? Ljavek's Affective Learning towards

Indigenous Community Building in Urban Spaces

Abstract¹¹

Background: The Paiwan Indigenous community Ljavek has been advocating for their rightful presence in Kaohsiung City, Taiwan, while facing governmental pressures to move and break apart. Government officials claimed that Ljavek was divided because they were not 團結 tuán jié, or unified enough. Approaching Ljavek's learning through the literature of learning in social movements and affect in learning, this article demonstrates how Ljavek's affective sense-making troubled this claim.

Methods: This research prioritized Ljavek's consent and refusals by drawing from Indigenous feminist research practices and participatory design research methods. The data was shared by Ljavek community members, in addition to advocacy partners who worked in solidarity with Ljavek, including a lawyer, and nonprofit organization.

Findings: For Ljavek and their political advocacy partners, emotions accompanied their sense-making to identify the specific colonial practices that fueled Ljavek's displacement and division. Ljavek's affective learning also provided guidance to move towards futurities as a flourishing urban Indigenous community.

Contribution: This research connects learning with affect and Indigenous self-determination in urban spaces by demonstrating how re-centering Indigenous affective and embodied knowledge is vital to co-creating liberatory futurities for

¹¹ This manuscript is prepared for the Journal of Learning Sciences, and thus the abstract follows the journal's formatting, which has sections on the research background, methods, findings, and contribution.

collective livelihoods. Affective colonial technologies were identified by Ljavek, as well as strategies to re-imagine urban spaces.

Introduction

Within the learning sciences, emotions are often deferred to the background or as an external factor to learning, rather than integral to sense-making processes (Vea, 2020). Studies often describe learning as cognitive sense-making processes without much engagement with affective dimensions of learning. However, as this research explores political sense-making within an Indigenous community, the research partners strongly suggest that the process of understanding politics is inherently affective and emotional. What is politically in/just is intimately felt. Take for example, the following exchange with one of the main research partners:

揚洵：我想問一下，你之前有跟我講說政府人員有跟你說你們就是不夠團結，你聽了之後你感覺是如何啊？

Galaygay Balasasau: 我感受很氣呀，真的氣到說，你們明知道你們在分化我們，你為什麼還要這樣子做啊？對啊，你不覺得很奇怪嗎？

Yang-Hsun: I would like to ask, as you had mentioned before, the government officials often said you were not tuán jié (unified) enough. How did you feel after hearing this?

Galaygay Balasasau: I felt really mad! So mad. Like you already knew that you are dividing us, why are you still doing this? Exactly, don't you find it strange?

(Conversation transcript, April 11, 2025)

While I prompted Galaygay Balasasau to share her felt experiences in this conversation excerpt, this exchange follows many similar ones over the duration of this research, in which Galaygay was the first to share her rage and anger towards the government officials. These officials accused her community of not being “unified enough”, even as they actively took part in dividing and displacing her community. As Galaygay and I talked about this incident, what is striking, apart

from her explicit naming of feeling “mad”, is Galaygay’s accompanying affective sense-making with the question, “don’t you find it strange?” Through this question, Galaygay’s emotions functioned as an opening for meaning-making, theorizing “not unified enough” as an intentional discursive practice from the government to shift blame and accountability onto her community. Her sense-making of the injustice behind this accusation is viscerally propelled by anger, rage, and disbelief. Through her affect, Galaygay *feels* her way towards identifying political injustices and colonial structures.

This article centers the affective and political sense-making surrounding the contradictions of “unity”, or “團結 tuán jié”, that Galaygay mentioned. To provide more context, Galaygay is part of a community known as Ljavek, which has faced continual government pressures to separate and relocate for over three decades. Ljavek is a primarily Paiwan Indigenous community that formed in one of Taiwan’s largest cities after WWII, and since then Ljavek has perpetuated Paiwan ways of being and stewarded the lands and waters. However, as the city’s economy prospered, the government has incentivized Ljavek community members to move to public housing in the city’s peripheries and even forcibly demolished several Ljavek houses, pressuring the division of Ljavek as a community. These divisional tactics make “團結 tuán jié”, or “unity”, a salient research theme. Across all the research data and conversations with Galaygay, her family, and their political advocacy partners, “團結 tuán jié” was frequently mentioned. Whenever Galaygay and her family shared stories about Ljavek with me, the term “團結 tuán jié” came up, and through this term they described how living together as an Indigenous community in urban spaces is politically fraught, existing in constant tension between the forces of colonial structures, capitalistic interests, as well as Indigenous self-determining capacities and political advocacy strategies. Galaygay and her family also often referred to “團結 tuán jié” to sense-make their

futures as a community, and their past interactions with the government. Through a closer look at “團結 tuán jié”, this article attends to the learning embedded in Indigenous community building in urban spaces to sustain intergenerational relationships and resist colonial structures.

Building on the learning in social movements literature, this article focuses on the social construction of “團結 tuán jié”, exploring Ljavek’s political sense-making towards living together with dignity as an Indigenous and urban community. Within the learning sciences, there has been a growing body of learning in social movements research that studies how learning takes place outside of formal educational spaces, and within the collective praxis of social change-making (Curnow & Jurow, 2021; Erickson, 2021). This research focuses on the learning that takes place within Ljavek’s community as well as in Ljavek’s partnership with political advocacy groups and activists. Conceptualizing politicization as a learning process (Curnow et al., 2019), I provide a perspective of political learning that involves affective dimensions, and addresses the entanglements of power through colonialism and Indigenous self-determination.

I describe Ljavek’s living together as a political endeavor that requires learning to navigate and participate in affective colonial struggles. Galaygay and her family’s political advocacy is not merely composed of thought and action, but learning towards an affective praxis of enacting Indigenous self-determination within a settler colonial structure. Following affect-centered literature in social movements (Goodwin et al., 2001; Gould, 2009), learning in social movements (Curnow et al., 2021; Vea, 2020), and Indigenous Studies scholarship (Coulthard, 2014; Harjo, 2019; Million, 2008), I re-articulate decolonial resistance and Indigenous community-building as an affective effort. There are emotions and learning that surface in the identification of colonial practices, in the resistance to said practices, and in the dreaming of otherwise Indigenous futurities. Indigenous futurities-building is a *felt* collective and intergenerational learning process

(Harjo, 2019). I theorize colonial struggles as an emotional configuration by building on Vea (2020) and describing ongoing Indigenous self-determination and decolonial resistance as a configuration of affective social practices, norms, and discourse. I locate “團結 tuán jié” as a site of colonial struggle that is emotionally configured between Ljavek, their political advocacy partners, and the government.

In this research, I ask the following questions:

- How do Ljavek, their political advocacy partners, and the government participate in discursive practices that construct “團結 tuán jié”? How is affect involved in this meaning-making process?
- For Ljavek and their political advocacy partners, how does affect serve as an opening for learning to re-imagine 團結 tuán jié and resist colonial definitions of 團結 tuán jié?

I draw from Indigenous Research Methodologies (Kovach, 2021; Wilson, 2020) and participatory research methods (Gutiérrez et al., 2016; Lenette, 2022) to hold conversations with Ljavek and their political advocacy partners. Our conversations surfaced several ways learning was unfolding within this context. First, Ljavek’s collective resistance and negotiations with the government was an affective and intergenerational learning process. Second, Galaygay was not only learning to advocate for Ljavek, but also to interpret the government’s perspective and the affective colonial technologies circulating to further Ljavek’s displacement. Third, Ljavek was grappling with the broader political implications for Indigenous communities in urban spaces, and the tensions between Indigenous self-determination and colonial nation-state logics in legal systems, especially when it comes to Indigenous mobilities and movement, and Indigenous stewardship of lands and waters. In this article, I engage with “團結 tuán jié” as an emotional configuration that is co-constructed through a range of ideas, practices, discourses, and affect,

which shapes how Ljavek is perceived and how Ljavek responds to build towards collective livelihoods. I also argue that the discursive practice “not 團結 tuán jié enough” is circulated to isolate Ljavek from public support and deny government accountability from threatening Ljavek’s collective wellbeing. While this research documents Ljavek’s reflexive sense-making of events that have already taken place, this sense-making is still vital in Ljavek’s ongoing legal struggles to re-imagine pathways towards collective futurities.

A Note on 團結 Tuán Jié

Within the research data, including conversations with Ljavek and their political advocacy partners, 團結 tuán jié became a key term that showed up consistently. Broadly speaking, 團結 tuán jié can be translated as “unity”, and in Taiwan’s context, I specifically understand 團結 tuán jié as a sense of togetherness that involves a political orientation. In the present day, the English term “solidarity” is often translated into Mandarin as “團結 tuán jié”, marking a specific political resonance to the term. For me, as someone who grew up in Taiwan and spoke Mandarin as one of my first languages, the term harkens the visual of a rallying cry, of a call to come together as a collective and make a certain political dream a living reality. In this sense, 團結 tuán jié is in no way a legal term or a formally institutionalized concept, but rather one of those descriptors that is difficult to translate between languages. In the research data, the research partners often interchangeably referred to 團結 tuán jié with terms such as 合心力 hé sin li or the power of together-ness. When I approached this study of the term 團結 tuán jié, I also included mentions of unity, cohesiveness, togetherness, and similar mentions of the degree of closeness in community relations. In writing, this article interchanges 團結 tuán jié with similar terms (i.e., unity, cohesiveness, togetherness).

A Brief Introduction to Ljavek

While this article cannot do justice to encapsulating Ljavek's seven-decade history and ongoing presence in Kaohsiung City, nor represent who Ljavek is, I provide some context into Ljavek's ongoing legal struggles, which scaffold this research's exploration of 團結 tuán jié and unity within Indigenous communities in Taiwan's urban centers. The islands that make up what we now know of as Taiwan has experienced multiple, consecutive colonial governance, from the Dutch, Spanish, Qing Empire from what is currently China, Japanese, the Chinese Nationalist Party, and the current Han settler-dominant democratic government (Shih, 2007). Beginning with the Japanese colonial governance, there were extensive colonial measures to force and coerce Indigenous migration towards locations where governance was easier and suited the colonial state's ambitions for Taiwan's agricultural development (Hsu, 2012). Paiwan Indigenous Peoples were targeted in these coerced migrations, especially after the 1950s (Hsu, 2012). However, movement has also always been inherent in Paiwan ways of being and in Paiwan origin stories (Tjankus/Kuo & Chen, 2015). I name these complex dynamics to demonstrate how Indigenous mobilities are never just a colonial product, but also involve Indigenous self-determination, Indigenous grounded normativity, and Indigenous resistance to colonial governance (Simpson, 2017). Indigenous mobilities, such as Ljavek's formation in an urban center, can represent "flights into dignity" to sustain future generations in a rapidly urbanizing world (Simpson, 2017).

Ljavek formed within this historical backdrop as a primarily Paiwan Indigenous community, and they experienced coerced movement while also actively participating in urban migration to provide financially for their families. In the 1950s, many Paiwan youth moved towards cities following the rapid urbanization in Taiwan after WWII, especially since economic opportunities were condensed in urban centers. Several Paiwan youth moved into Kaohsiung City and formed Ljavek, sustaining themselves and their families in the new age of urban development.

Ljavek, at its most crowded era, consisted of rows of houses that the community members built themselves, and included around 40 to 50 households, or more than 200 people (林/Lin, 2023). While Ljavek mostly includes Paiwan Indigenous Peoples, they also welcomed other Indigenous and non-Indigenous urban migrants into their vibrantly heterogeneous community. Since then, Ljavek has continued to perpetuate Paiwan ways of knowing and being, Paiwan language, and Paiwan relations with more-than-humans for more than four generations. Their intergenerational knowledge and teaching also includes strategies to advocate for their rightful presence in Kaohsiung City.

However, since the 1980s, the government has repeatedly pressured Ljavek to move out, or take rent incentives to move into nearby public housing, essentially breaking apart the community. As Kaohsiung City has flourished as a port city with potential as a high-tech hub, the land that Ljavek stewards has become economically viable property in recent years, and Ljavek was often described as “an illegal construction on government property”. The government pressured Ljavek to move out through policing and legal strategies, reflecting broader colonial practices that push out Indigenous urban migrants from major cities in Taiwan (Sugimoto, 2019). At its highest intensity, the government demolished several Ljavek houses without warning. After the demolition took place, Ljavek community members sued the Kaohsiung City government in a successful legal trial in 2023. The trial ensures that Ljavek community members will have a separate plot of land in Kaohsiung City, though not including Ljavek community members living in public housing. However, Ljavek’s legal victory is a landmark in Indigenous urban rights in Taiwan, the first successful legal case of an Indigenous community suing the government with legislation on Indigenous urban residential rights. This article focuses on the time period around the 1980s to present day, during the height of Ljavek’s negotiations and confrontations with the

government. The research emphasizes the teaching and learning practices of Ljavek to advocate for themselves, and how their strategies implicate their present and future directions.

Conceptual Framework: Affective Political Sense-Making

To describe how affect shapes Ljavek's political sense-making, I will first bridge the learning sciences and affect theory (i.e., how people learn through emotions), before building on this connection through Indigenous Studies scholarship on affect, colonialism, and Indigenous self-determination (i.e., how affect informs learning to resist colonialism and re-center Indigenous self-determination). This framework takes seriously affect as integral to learning, especially when learning to contribute to anti-oppression.

While in the learning sciences there has been growing literature around affect, this literature rarely engages with Indigenous ways of knowing and colonialism. In the learning sciences, affect has often been overlooked in studies on learning and knowledge production (Vea, 2020). This reflects a Western, colonial, and patriarchal trend of thought that deems emotions as irrational, while limiting knowledge to what is objective and linear, often thereby excluding queer and feminist knowledge that come from Indigenous, Asian, Black, and Latine/Latinx perspectives (Million, 2013). In contrast, Indigenous scholars, activists, community members, and intellectuals have always understood that knowledge is felt and embodied (Coulthard, 2014; Harjo, 2019; Million, 2008). They refute the colonial urge to decontextualize knowledge, asserting that learning is always situated in the body and in place (Bang, 2020; Marin & Bang, 2018; Simpson, 2014). In this research, I draw from Indigenous scholarship on affect and felt theory to describe how Ljavek embodies intimate and in-depth knowledge of colonial structures, Paiwan ways of being and governance, community building, and their own political self-determination. I re-articulate how emotions are pivotal in not only making sense of ongoing colonial structures, but feeling and

imagining the possible pathways towards Indigenous futurities in spite of these structures. In recent years, while there has been an affective turn in educational research and the social sciences more broadly, we are only beginning to understand that learning is inherently affective and there remains needed discussion on the relation between affect, learning, power, and place (Dernikos et al., 2020). By re-centering affect in learning, I not only follow the call towards understanding learning in all its dimensions, but also resist colonial legacies in academic research by re-centering how Indigenous and feminist knowledge production are inherently affective.

In this section, I propose a perspective on affective learning within colonial struggles. I will first define affect, overview its connections with the learning sciences, and then I propose viewing colonial struggles as an emotional configuration, drawing connections between learning, affect, Indigenous self-determination, and colonialism.

What is affect?

Affect and emotions are not only internal psychological states, but also our urges to engage with the world and those around us. While we may often think about emotions through words that describe our emotional states (e.g., happiness, anger, sadness), emotions also encompass our bodies' orientations in the world. Dian Million (2013), known for her scholarship on Indigenous felt theory, describes affect as "our lived sensory being-ness" (p. 30). In *The Affect Theory Reader*, Gregg and Seigworth (2010) define affect as "intensities" and "forces" that arise from encounters between subjects, "persistent proof of a body's never less than ongoing immersion in and among the world's obstinacies and rhythms, its refusals as much as its invitations" (p. 1). These theorizations of affect draw attention to how our bodies are integral in our sense-making of the world, and how our affect indicates certain valences towards how we want to shape and interact with our surroundings.

While there are scholars who distinguish affect from emotions, naming the former as the ineffable feelings that cannot be captured in signs and discourse while the latter can be described textually (e.g., feeling “sad”, “angry”, and “happy”), I align with scholars who do not distinguish affect from emotions and who do not focus on the divide between discursive or non-discursive feelings for an individual, but instead place emphasis on the transpersonal side of how affect functions between subjects (Anderson, 2014; Palmer, 2020). Through this perspective, affect arises in the encounters *between* subjects rather than *within* a person, and the subject can include humans, more-than-humans, and place. Affect describes how subjects, informed by their histories, create potentials for how they will engage with one another (Anderson, 2014). By positioning this definition of affect in this article, I describe how affective valences are not random, but situated in sociocultural and political context. As such, emotions are situated within sociocultural norms, contexts, and histories, and a research analysis on power and oppression cannot be complete without attention towards affect. Our affect is involved in the reproduction and resistance to hegemonies. This conceptualization of affect as socioculturally situated grounds this framework, and forms the foundation for understanding how affect is implicated in learning through its relation with social practice and political ideologies. In this research, I attend to affect as simultaneously linked to and enriching an analysis of Ljavek’s political struggles.

Key concepts for affect in the learning sciences

While often omitted, the topic of affect is not actually new to the learning sciences. Vygotsky (1987), whose work is foundation to the learning sciences, wrote about the interrelation of affect and thought in learning and developmental stages. There is also growing literature in the learning sciences that recognizes the role of the body in learning, such as affect in relation to teacher education (Dernikos et al., 2020), Indigenous and land-based pedagogies (Bang, 2020; Simpson,

2014), STEM education (Bellocchi et al., 2017; Wickman et al., 2025), arts education (Hickey-Moody, 2013), and learning in social movements (Curnow et al., 2021; Veal, 2020). I build on learning sciences literature that addresses affect in relation to Indigenous and land-based pedagogies, learning in social movements, and political learning. Drawing from this scholarship, in this section, I emphasize several key concepts around affect's role in learning.

First, learning involves our body's sensorial experiences. Our learning is mediated by our bodies as we interpret our surroundings through our senses. Tasks such as learning to use tools or create new designs involve considerable understanding of our own bodies (Vossoughi et al., 2020). Learning can thus be theorized and analyzed by observing the body's growing familiarity with certain physical actions and gestures. The theoretical perspective that learning can be studied through one's physical gestures and engagements is central to interaction analysis (Goodwin, 2000; Taylor, 2017) and studies on human-place relationships (Marin, 2020), where physical actions are said to be built upon prior actions to create new meanings and "distinctive forms of sociality" (Goodwin, 2018, p. 31). There are axiological orientations that undergird these physical actions and represent our relationships with those we interact with. As Vossoughi et al. (2020) articulates, "embodiment" in learning is "the physical, gestural and artifact-mediated dimensions of human learning, as well as the kinds of ethical and pedagogical values expressed through such interactions" (p. 184-185). Embodiment is thus relational as our bodies' sensories guide relationship-building with our environment and those around us.

In addition, emotions can be a *condition* of learning and a *target* of learning (Veal, 2020). Instead of describing learning as the internalization of knowledge, sociocultural learning theories articulate learning in terms of shifts in social practices, or the changes in social participation and one's changing understanding of participation (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Learning is then situated in

sociocultural contexts, and shows up in the transformation of how one re-engages with existing social artifacts, discourse, and tools (Holland, et al., 1998; Wertsch, 1998). In this line of thought, affect accompanies learning when we understand affect as social practices or implicated in social practices. Emotional expressions, or the processes of emoting, are a form of social practice in that they hold and convey sociocultural nuances (DeBellis & Goldin, 2006; Pintrich, 2003). Emotions can also be understood as implicated in social practices since they can “jumpstart” meaning-making, which was described in earlier education research around motivating emotions and learning (Vea, 2020). Building on these connections between affect and social practices, Vea (2020) theorized emotional configurations to describe how affect functions while people learn to make social change:

By emotional configurations I name these situated and reciprocal interrelationships between feeling, conceptual sense-making, and practice (including linguistic practice) that give emotion social meaning in the learning of individuals and collectives. An emotional configuration does not label the supposed interior content or subjective experience of an emotion, but rather names a set of meaningful relationships between emotionality and the ongoing making of social reality in a particular situation. (p. 315)

Emotions can then become a *condition* of learning, providing scaffolding for new meaning-making and social practices. Emotions can also become a *target* of learning when there are desired and guided forms of participation in emotional configurations. In other words, affect and emotions are involved in learning through affective shifts and shifts in affect-implicated social practices. By positioning affective learning in this way, I want to emphasize that affect has a grammar of its own. Affect is never neutral, but instead affective learning involves sociocultural norms and political meaning.

Last but not least, affect plays a pivotal role within learning in social movements. The field of learning in social movements draws attention towards how learning occurs in everyday acts of social change and politicization, which is “a simultaneous process of conceptual, practical, epistemological, and identity development” (Curnow et al., 2019, p. 716). Contrary to Western, colonial dichotomies of in/formal learning that prioritize schooling in formal education spaces as the only place where teaching and learning happens (San Pedro, 2021), the field takes seriously learning in the contexts of community building, mutual aid, protest, student activism, and other spaces of social change-making (Erickson, 2021), shedding light on heterogeneous learning spaces as well as the learning necessary to scaffold political understanding and social change. The shift in *where* we focus our attention as learning scientists also bears importance for resisting colonial definitions of education as a pathway to “civilization” (Patel, 2015). This contributes to re-centering the pedagogies and knowledge that have always existed in Indigenous families, communities, sovereignties, as well as in Indigenous self-determination and resistance movements. Within these spaces of social change, research is starting to recognize that affect is not an irrational element of social movements, but rather a site of rich social meaning-making and political development (Curnow et al., 2019). There is a need to understand emotions sociologically, to understand how emotions are not only internal psychological processes but produced by and contribute to the production of history, culture, and politics (Goodwin et al., 2001). Within the learning sciences, scholars have taken on affect within learning in social movements to describe how emotions serve pedagogical purposes for political meaning-making, identity construction, and social practice development (Curnow et al., 2021). Politicized emotions are pedagogical in that they provide insight into what is and is not just, constructing an embodied understanding of political circumstances and possibilities.

While Ve'a's (2020) work centers an animal rights activism space, I build on emotional configurations and within the context of Ljavek's Indigenous self-determination and colonial struggle. Bang (2020) argues that re-centering affect is needed in educational research, particularly in regards to resisting colonialism and reframing our axiologies towards lands, waters, more-than-humans, human communities, and Indigenous sovereignties. In the following section, I attempt to follow this call and explore how affective learning challenges colonialism.

Colonial struggle as an emotional configuration

For this article, I want to situate emotional configurations in settler colonialism and Indigenous self-determination. More specifically, I theorize colonial struggles as a form of learning in and through emotional configurations. In the following, Smith et al. (2019) provides an explanation of what "struggle" is:

Struggle is simply what life feels like when people are trying to survive in the margins, to seek freedom and better conditions, to seek social justice. Struggle is a tool of both social activism and theory. It has the potential to enable oppressed groups to embrace and mobilize agency and to turn the consciousness of injustice into strategies for change. Struggle can be mobilized as resistance and as transformation. It can provide the means for working things out "on the ground," for identifying and solving problems of practice, for identifying strengths and weaknesses, for refining tactics and uncovering deeper challenges. (p. 153)

In this sense, being in the struggle involves consistent learning to mobilize collective agency in co-creating new strategies, perspectives, and relations to resist colonialism and ensure collective livelihoods. Struggle is collective and not just individual consciousness-raising, requiring collective learning, coordination, movement, and flight into Indigenous futurities (Simpson,

2017). The constant grappling between colonial powers and Indigenous political self-determination is ongoing, particularly since Indigenous sovereignties have never relinquished their political self-determination, even with the later arrival of settler colonial structures (Million, 2013; Wolfe, 2006). I situate this research within this struggle, this dance between powers and jurisdiction.

I understand colonial struggles as emotional configurations since these struggles are inherently affective. From the affective strategies embedded in colonialism to the embodied feelings that accompany Indigenous relationalities, nation-building, and resistance, affect is a dimension to the colonial struggle. Affect, as a social practice and colonial technology, furthers colonialism through normalizing the discrimination and dehumanization of Indigenous Peoples (Million, 2013). By perpetrating a feeling that it is “normal” that Indigenous life is “less-than”, colonialism provides the perfect alibi to justify further land dispossession and ruptures to Indigenous ways of being.

Racialization and colonialism seek to render racial/colonial subjects with limited bodily capacities, “keep[ing] the marginalized trapped within themselves, unable to divert their bodily drives and affects into the realm of the social and thereby become beings who mean” (Palmer, 2020, p. 270). As Bonilla-Silva (2019) writes, racialization marks a group of people as “savage” and “dangerous”, and “its members are feared and seen [as] in need of supervision and civilization” (p. 3). While Bonilla-Silva (2019) makes claims about racism rather than colonialism, in this example, fear is regarded as a necessary strategy to reproduce hierarchies in the name of “civilization”, re-directing the accountability squarely on those “in need of civilization” rather than the oppressive powers. Thus, there are emotional norms that people are continuously socialized into that perpetuate colonialism. In addition, scholars have explored how

certain emotions are circulated to provide tangible and material manifestations of power and privilege. Ahmed (2004) described how within a far-right conservative White collectivity the repeated circulation of affect (i.e., hate) and attaching meaning to that affect (i.e., together we hate) served to maintain material privileges and create surfaces between this collectivity and those they deemed as Others. Colonial struggle, as an emotional configuration, then takes into consideration how the social practices that scaffold colonialism are mediated through emotions.

In the context of colonial affective norms and technologies, I want to raise several perspectives on learning by building on Indigenous scholarship on affect. Emotions can be regarded as an *embodied knowledge, testimony, and record of colonial processes*, especially in the face of nation-state denial and dismissal. The social meaning and sense-making that ground emotions may not be easily legible to formal institutions, yet, and perhaps because of this, they survive beyond formal documentation and can provide guidance for reparation and decolonialization (Million, 2013). The body is an archive, a reservoir of knowledge, stories, and meaning that bears witness to oppression and documents these experiences (Hsu, 2022). Emotions can also be regarded as *an opening to trouble colonial epistemic hegemonies*. Similar and not separate from regarding emotions as a condition for learning, sense-making processes can surface from emotions that directly challenge colonial structures. For example, anger and resentment, or an “unwillingness to forgive” (Coulthard, 2014, p. 126), involves political meaning-making that embodies moral protest. In these situations, this affect dreams of what has been denied and builds a foundation for transforming present conditions. In addition, emotions can be regarded as *pedagogies for nation-building and Indigenous self-determination*. Indigenous ways of knowing are felt and embodied, building on prior memories of kinship and relationality, which can in turn guide one’s meaning-making of Indigenous nationhood and agency (Harjo, 2019).

Methods

For this research design, my priorities was to ensure that Ljavek's voices guided the methodologies, from our partnership and decision to begin a research project together, to the data collection, analysis, and presentation. Too often Indigenous communities and sovereignties have been relegated as dehumanized subjects of inquiry, rather than partners in innovating research methodologies (Smith, 2021). Colonial perspectives of research view Indigenous lived experiences and bodies as objects to categorize and consume without consent (Patel, 2015; Smith, 2021), disregarding data sovereignty, or the political and legal orientation that Indigenous data, regardless of who collected the data, belongs to Indigenous sovereignties and falls under their jurisdiction in terms of how the data should be collected, stored, analyzed, and shared (Kukatai & Taylor, 2016).

To resist these ongoing colonial legacies in research, I lean on Indigenous and relational research methodologies in the learning sciences. These methodologies scaffold flexibility in the research design for Ljavek to make methodological revisions and improvements, so that this research ensures data integrity in its alignment with Ljavek's perspectives and Indigenous ways of knowing. The methods for this research are thus guided by Ljavek's consent and refusals, in addition to Indigenous feminist research practices in educational research (Tuck et al., 2023), co-design and participatory design research methods (Gutiérrez et al., 2016; Lenette, 2022), humanizing research methods (Paris, 2011), Indigenous Research Methodologies (Kovach, 2021; Wilson, 2020), and ethnographic methods (Bhattacharya, 2017). The data primarily consists of audio recordings and transcripts with my conversations with Ljavek and the political advocacy partners who have been working alongside Ljavek.

In particular, when it comes to Indigenous refusals, Tuck and Yang (2014) write that Indigenous refusals are a generative source of knowledge co-production, since

Refusal is not just a “no”, but a redirection to ideas otherwise unacknowledged or unquestioned. Unlike a settler colonial configuration of knowledge that is petulantly exasperated and resentful of limits, a methodology of refusal regards limits on knowledge as productive, as indeed a good thing. (p. 239)

While I discuss this in more detail in a separate article, Ljavek’s refusals fundamentally shaped whether we pursued a research project together, who chose and denied to engage as a research partner in this project, how we conducted data collection, how I showed up in the research as a researcher and a person, and what is and is not shared publicly in the research writing. In a similar vein, co-design and participatory design research methods stipulate that the research rigor must be measured by the research’s “usefulness” and “meaningfulness” for the research partner and community (Bang & Vossoughi, 2016; Gutiérrez & Jurow, 2016). Ultimately, this research inquiry focused on what Ljavek community members found important, and, as the researcher, I was not the authority on how the research processes unfolded. This research was instead a relational process, and the inquiry progressed as I learned more about Ljavek, and the research partners also learned more about myself and my motivations. To put it in a different way, although I came into this research with my own research interests and methodological orientations, Ljavek advised me on the research methods and approaches that we took together.

Data collection and research partners

The data collection process began with Ljavek community members, and as the theme 團結 tuán jié surfaced in the conversation with Ljavek, I began to meet with Ljavek’s political advocacy partners and ask for their perspectives. So the data collection process was ongoing with Ljavek between September 2024 and September 2025, and the latter half of the research process also included staff members at the Taiwan Association of Human Rights (TAHR) and Ljavek’s lawyer

for their legal trial. This iterative data collection process triangulated the theme of 團結 tuán jié from multiple points of view, articulating 團結 tuán jié as an emotional configuration jointly contributed across the community, the community partners, the government, and the legal system.

In 2023, I read about Ljavek's successful legal trial on Civilmedia@Taiwan, a journalist nonprofit organization that focuses on documenting social movements and activism in Taiwan. I also learned that Ljavek had been in a years-long partnership with the Taiwan Association of Human Rights (TAHR) before and throughout their legal trial, and I approached TAHR first before meeting with Ljavek. TAHR is one of the nonprofits that were established at the tail-end of Taiwan's martial law period, and has acted as a critical force in addressing the human rights violations during Taiwan's martial law rule and in fostering change as Taiwan transitions into a democracy from an authoritarian mode of governance. While the term "human rights" might sound uncritical and White-washed in the more racism-conscious spheres in the U.S., TAHR has been pivotal in calling out the intersectional oppressions within authoritarian governance, including queer rights, the rights of Indigenous Peoples in Taiwan, the labor rights of Southeast Asian migrants, and transnational rights (e.g., Tibet and Hong Kong human rights under China's police surveillance). In Ljavek, the TAHR worked in solidarity by connecting Ljavek with legal resources and documenting Ljavek's experiences with the government, which were all important for the legal trial. TAHR also provided information to Ljavek about how they could move forward when the government pressured them to move out, connecting Ljavek with Indigenous urban communities who had similar experiences. In all, TAHR has been crucial to Ljavek's advocacy journey.

I approached TAHR before Ljavek because I wanted to first establish whether Ljavek was open to sharing their stories with a researcher. With ongoing research malpractices in Indigenous

communities (Patel, 2015; Smith, 2021), I was aware that Ljavek might not want to meet with a researcher. I did not presume that I would be able to start a research project with Ljavek, so I first met with the staff members in TAHR who work directly with Ljavek. One of these staff members then became a research partner. Yi-Chia Yu is a Han person, and a long-term political activist and current secretary general for TAHR. Her work is dedicated towards housing and residential rights, and she has worked with numerous communities who experienced displacement. At first glance, Yi-Chia reminds me of my fellow research colleagues, and she comes from a sociology graduate research background. Her glasses always seemed to be level and never askew, and our conversations ranged from Taiwan's social movements to theorizations of historical and political events that structure Taiwan's contemporary political landscape. Through her and TAHR staff members, I learned that several of Ljavek's public figures were very willing to meet with me, and my relations with Ljavek began there through the generosity of Ljavek community members and TAHR's introduction.

I met with several Ljavek community members in 2023, and I eventually focused the data collection with Galaygay, who became the main research partner in this project. Galaygay and her family have been front and center in most of Ljavek's public facing discourse, such as news articles and interviews. As mentioned in the introduction, Galaygay is a Paiwan Indigenous mother, grandmother, and plant expert. In our many conversations, Galaygay strikes me as someone who feels deeply responsible for Ljavek, including the humans and more-than-humans within the community. I distinctly remember in one of our conversations, she shared photos of the plants she grew in Ljavek's original location, which included a photo of her beaming under heavy bushels of red quinoa growing from a tree she planted. She was the last household to move away from Ljavek's original location, and when she did she brought seven stray dogs she had taken care

of in Ljavek with her to the new apartment. She is outspoken and courageous, speaking up for Ljavek in public for at least the last three decades. After TAHR introduced me to Galaygay, we gradually built our relationship and co-created a broader research project that re-centers Ljavek's presence in Kaohsiung City. I approached our research partnership through humanizing research methods to ensure mutual selection, in which the research partner "chose to work with me in addition to being chosen by me" (Paris, 2011, p. 140). The research project came to be because of our shared interests in documenting the power structures in Kaohsiung City.

Aside from Galaygay, her family, and Yi-Chia, I also interviewed Ljavek's lawyer in the legal trial. San-Chia Lin is a well-known lawyer who has dedicated his work mainly to Indigenous and environmental legal issues. He was one of the two lawyers for Ljavek's legal trial and was central to forming Ljavek's legal argument in court. He is also a Han person, and in our interview I learned that his training in the U.S. led him to learning about the intersection of Indigenous and environmental law, which in turn introduced him to Indigenous contexts in Taiwan. When we met, he was generous with his time and his documents about Ljavek during their legal trial, which was helpful for me to gain a legal perspective on Ljavek's advocacy and relation to urban development policies.

For my data collection methods, I used different approaches with Ljavek than with TAHR and the lawyer to ensure that the methods fit with the different sociocultural contexts. In the data collection process with Galaygay and her family, I leaned on visiting as a research method. In *Visiting as an Indigenous feminist practice*, Tuck et al. (2023) describe visitations as an educational research practice that aligns with Indigenous knowledge production. I visited Galaygay at the places of her choosing, which were usually at her home both in Ljavek's original location and at her new apartment. While visiting, I came into our conversations with my own

research curiosities and interests, but I did not create an interview agenda. Instead I followed Galaygay's lead on what was on her mind that day, and what she felt was appropriate to share. Our visits sometimes included eating and additional comments from her family and grandchildren. Since different family members felt differently about having an audio recorder present, I did not always record our conversations, but instead took field notes after our conversations. I made a total of 10 visits with Galaygay and her family, which took place in Galaygay's home, at a cafe, and at one of the public housing. Every time I visited Ljavek, I was invited to meet with them at their homes, and we would sit together while having conversations that lasted hours on end. I did not guide our conversations, nor their length, but I would ask how they were doing recently, and our conversations would flow from there towards numerous stories about Ljavek.

The research data from these visits include 7.5 hours of audio recordings, their transcripts, and 10 field notes. With the TAHR staff member and the lawyer, I approached data collection in a more structured interview format. Yi-Chia and I had a 1 hour interview, and San-Chi and I had a 2.5 hour interview, which I both transcribed for the data analysis. To make sure that I attuned to affect, in my field notes I also included quick sketches of physical gestures that were made, or notable affective themes (e.g., when Galaygay talked about her plants, her face glowed with pride and joy). After each visit and interview, I also made an affective research memo where I documented how I was feeling after each conversation, how I felt in relation to the data that was shared with me. These affective research memos are limited in the sense that they center my affect as a non-Indigenous Han person, but in the analysis they also helped me identify what felt emotionally salient in our conversations.

Analytical approach

Indigenous storytelling is an important perspective on knowledge production that informs how this research approaches learning as an affective and embodied endeavor. Storytelling is not the linear regurgitation of facts and information, but a subjective retelling that involves the storyteller's subjecthood, affect, embodiment, and memories. Within Indigenous storytelling, repetition is a common practice to ensure that the critical parts of the story are emphasized and shared, even though there are nuances in these different retellings (Archibald, 2008). An Indigenous-centered analysis of these stories involves drawing connections between the memories and theorizations, surfacing the relationships in between the data points rather than breaking down the data into its smallest units (Wilson, 2020). In the analysis, I focused on the relations between the stories and conversations my research partners shared with me, to re-articulate the colonial struggles in Ljavek's story while attuning to the affective nature of these narratives.

In nearly every visit with Galaygay and her family, 團結 tuán jié came up in our conversations. In my affective research notes, I also described how the government's comment that Ljavek was not 團結 tuán jié enough held importance for Ljavek, and I often felt that these retellings held great emotional weight and intensity. However, the theoretical pathways and throughlines related to 團結 tuán jié were different with each retelling. Some days, there was more emphasis on the structural reasons that prevented Ljavek from creating a more unified front. On other days, the conversations veered towards the social practices Ljavek took up to ensure their collective livelihoods. Still other days, we talked about broader systems of oppression that Indigenous Peoples face in urban spaces.

I began the research analysis by referring to my research memos and noticing patterns in our conversations that came up repeatedly. As preliminary research themes surfaced, I realized that 團結 tuán jié was the most frequently mentioned topic across all of my visits with Galaygay

and her family members. I then conducted member-checking (Bhattacharya, 2017) with Galaygay and her family members to make sure that this was something they also found salient, and that this was an important inquiry for them. I also started conducting formal interviews with Ljavek's lawyer, San-Chia, and the TAHR staff member, Yi-Chia, to triangulate 團結 tuán jié from different perspectives, particularly with their experiences with Taiwan's legal and governmental frameworks. I was also curious if Ljavek's story reflected broader patterns of community displacement in Taiwan's urban spaces. After all the research partners confirmed that 團結 tuán jié was a salient theme both within Ljavek and in similar cases of urban displacement, I began locating the stories and conversations where 團結 tuán jié was mentioned, or where similar terms were mentioned, such as cohesiveness, unity, and togetherness. I then qualitatively coded these excerpts for possible themes, using inductive qualitative analysis methods to surface codes and themes around the emotional sense-making practices and discourses related to 團結 tuán jié (Bhattacharya, 2017). The themes surfaced through iterative analysis across all of the research partners' data. I also approached qualitative coding analysis through Kovach (2021) Indigenous research methodologies, and her methods to include "coyote codes", which are codes that show up less frequently in the stories. In the analysis, I ensured that Ljavek's stories were re-articulated in their full dimensions by including these coyote codes, as well as the field note descriptions of physical gestures and emotions.

Who am I in this work?

In *Research is Ceremony*, Wilson (2020) writes that research with Indigenous Peoples should be guided by one's familial and personal accountabilities. This principle is what informed me throughout this research, and led me back home to Kaohsiung City. In my introductions to my research partners, I was always explicit about my positionality as a Han person from settler

descent, a researcher at a U.S. university, and a Kaohsiung City resident. I also shared my motivations with each research partner as my way of building trust in our work together. I shared that I wanted to center learning and Indigenous self-determination in Kaohsiung City because of my close ties with the city, and because of my experiences being racially minoritized in the U.S.

I grew up in a military area in Kaohsiung City, the community fenced off by cement walls topped with barbed wires and shards of glass, and the area completely covered by canopies of camphor trees. I name the camphor trees as a relation that accompanied my childhood, their cool fragrance a balm on lonely days as a queer kid biking endlessly under their shade, but I also name the camphor as a metaphor of my ignorance growing up as a child of the dominant racial and settler group in Taiwan. The camphor, I would later learn, is a plant central to many Indigenous Peoples and their ways of being in Taiwan, and was grown to cover up the military area from any possible forms of military surveillance. I grew up in that atmosphere, where nation-state concerns and fears of China's threats were viscerally present, while simultaneously prioritized over Indigenous self-determination and land rematriation. It was not until I began my higher education in the U.S. and experienced racial minoritization did I begin to reflect on my settler privileges in Taiwan. What we now know as Taiwan is composed of multiple islands that have survived at least seven different colonial powers, and while I had always known this from my history textbooks from my public education, it took experiencing racism and racial minoritization to actually embody this understanding in a way to shift my ontological sense of my place in Taiwan's history.

In my conversations with research partners, I was less explicit about my identities as a queer, trans, and 河洛 Hòh-Ló/Hokkien scholar. However, these intersecting identities also form the bedrocks for my purpose in this research work. Working alongside Ljavek has also brought me to learn about the intertwinedness of homophobia and transphobia with colonialism, how my

queer kin could have lived a free and visible life if not for the colonial logics that perpetrate binaries and patriarchy. I also began to ask my family about our language, stories, and culture as 河洛 Hòh-Ló/Hokkien people, the dominant settler group in Taiwan who also experienced colonization by the Japanese and Chinese Nationalist Party. My experiences continue to remind me that researchers are not the epistemic authority, but instead I have learned so much through Ljavek, and the stories that my research partners have shared with me.

During the data collection process, I positioned myself as not only a researcher but also as a young person coming to learn about the world I am inheriting, with its warts and all. At the time of data collection, I volunteered with TAHR's Kaohsiung City office. For Galaygay and her family, I believe that they regarded me as both a researcher and as a young, queer person who is still navigating life. To illustrate this, I want to share a photo that Galaygay took of me. In research, I have been wary of taking photos, especially with the legacies of deficit-centered imagery that researchers have taken without consent and used to harm Indigenous Peoples. With that, I find it salient that the first photo taken in Galaygay's new apartment was actually a photo she took of me (Figure 5.1). The photo was taken on a cold winter day. I was visiting Galaygay with some homemade ginger bread cookies to celebrate the upcoming Christmas. I decided to wear my beanie and when Galaygay saw this she said I looked "very cute", and that she wanted to take a photo of me. For me, this photo means the world. I am forever grateful for the relationship we have built over the course of this research, and I continue to look forward to collaborating with Ljavek in our ongoing research plans.

Figure 5.1. A Photo of the Researcher Taken by Galaygay at Her Home.



Findings: 團結 Tuán Jié as an Emotional Configuration

While Ljavek faced increasing pressures to move out of their original location, from threats to demolish their houses to rent incentives to move into public housing, Ljavek community members expressed their grievances to the government officials handling their case. Ljavek was then met by the retort that they were not 團結 tuán jié enough, and that the breaking apart of Ljavek was their own doing. As mentioned beforehand, this memory was repeatedly recalled in my visits with Galaygay and her family. Here, I describe how each retelling of this memory and reference to 團結 tuán jié serves as insight into how “團結 tuán jié” continues to be co-constructed by the research partners’ and government’s affective sense-making and social practices. There is a certain constructive-ness of the term that takes place iteratively within everyday social life, and demonstrates how the research partners are learning to engage, negotiate, resist, and re-imagine colonial definitions of unity.

Here, I propose how “團結 tuán jié” can be conceptualized as an emotional configuration through understanding the affective norms, social practices, and discourses that scaffold its saliency in Ljavek’s situation. I conceptualize 團結 tuán jié as an emotional configuration because it escapes clear objective, facts-based discourse, and there are accompanying sense-making and

social practices that take on emotional valences, such as anger, regret, resignation, and longing. I pay attention to “affect as bodily capacities emergent from encounters” (Anderson, 2014, p. 18), so that affect is not merely a side effect of thoughts and actions, but instead affect exists in the transpersonal encounters that influence what a body can and cannot do in a given situation, acting on a valence that pushes, pulls, and/or holds bodies still. An exploration of the affective social meaning that accompanies conversations about Ljavek’s unity enriches a theorization of Ljavek’s struggle with colonialism, how Ljavek feels limited by colonial structures while Ljavek also continues to envision an *otherwise* futurity (Tachine & Nicolazzo, 2022). The felt experiences embody critique of the bureaucratic processes Ljavek endured, even if most of these processes are legal and commonplace, while providing guidance for Indigenous self-determination and community building (Harjo, 2019).

In the following, I interweave conversation excerpts with the research partners in my findings. I begin by describing the limitations of the current definition of unity within a colonial and dominant framework, before moving on to describe how Ljavek and their political advocacy partners are re-imagining what being 團結 tuán jié could mean, especially through Indigenous self-determination.

Feeling 團結 tuán jié as a colonial myth of unity

Over time, I began to realize that as much as our conversations were about them teaching me about Ljavek’s history, our conversations also became a space for Galaygay and her family members’ reflection and sense-making of when government officials told them that Ljavek was not 團結 tuán jié enough. As Galaygay and her family recalled this memory, there were different affective registers (e.g., anger, resentment, regret, resignation, longing) and they theorized about the many complicated factors that might have contributed to this 團結 tuán jié comment. As I

listened and asked clarifying questions, I learned alongside Ljavek about the tangled political landscape of urban residential rights, Indigenous self-determination, and nation-state property regulations.

First, 團結 tuán jié showed up as an emotional configuration in the sense that there were affective registers whenever Galaygay and her family remembered the government officials' remarks. In one particular visit, I spoke with Galaygay's cousin, who now lives in one of Kaohsiung City's public housing, and she shared in great detail the government's strategies in coercing Ljavek's internal separation.

Repeatedly, the Cousin told me that they were torn apart by the government, and that she was sad that Ljavek could not stay united. I later learned from her that several government officials had constantly told them, when they complained about how the government handled their situation, that they were not 團結 tuán jié, essentially making it their fault without taking any accountability. ...When recalling what the officials' said, Galaygay and her Cousin both bowed their heads and sighed. They told me that during Ljavek's official relocation efforts, the government employed a lot more temporarily-contracted workers, which they all fired after Ljavek's case concluded. Galaygay and her Cousin seemed to suggest that the government specifically employed this many people to deal with Ljavek. After Ljavek's case, many government officials were promoted.

– Research field note, October 28, 2024

Through this field note, it is evident that these memories were felt and embodied. Galaygay and her cousin both recalled these memories with heaviness, bowing their heads and sighing while recounting their stories. While the government practices that Ljavek experienced may seem commonplace and in accordance with the law, Galaygay and Cousin's affective narrations provide avenues for sense-making that these same practices were unfair and unjust. These procedures *felt* unfair and unjust, upholding colonial state legislations that undermine Indigenous sovereignties.

As Galaygay and Cousin also shared their encounters with government officials, embodied and affective memory served as an important and powerful record of the violent bureaucratic procedures that made 團結 tuán jié nearly impossible. When most of Ljavek's community members had lived in the original location, there were government officials who frequently showed up without preamble and knocked on their doors to talk about relocating Ljavek. They would approach sometimes in the morning, after Ljavek community members had taken night shifts and were resting. There were also sudden government notices that were stuck on their doors telling Ljavek that their houses might soon be torn down. All of these practices may seem legal, but Galaygay and Cousin felt the precarity of their collective livelihoods because of these practices. The constant bombardment from government officials and continuous reminders of their legal precarity made it immensely difficult to feel safe in their own homes. There was understandably an emotional struggle between staying in Ljavek's original location and risking the loss of their houses. I also want to note that the government official who said Ljavek is not 團結 tuán jié is an Indigenous person working at the Council of Indigenous Peoples¹². Galaygay often shared that she felt torn working with the officials who seemed to recognize Indigenous ways of being in Ljavek, yet were limited by their government position to perpetrate colonial practices.

¹² The Council of Indigenous Peoples (CIP) is meant to function as an autonomous government entity on par with the Taiwanese government. However, since most of CIP's funding comes from the Taiwanese government, the CIP's capacity to enact Indigenous self-determination is seriously limited.

Galaygay and Cousin's affect became a record, documentation and reservoir of knowledge about how the government's practices reproduced colonialism. Her emotions portrayed an embodied knowing that regardless of how legitimate these procedures are for the government, they carried out harm and completely dismissed Ljavek's collective wellbeing. Through these stories, Ljavek expressed how the government's conceptualization of 團結 tuán jié was an emotional configuration that felt precarious, urgent, and necessary yet difficult to achieve.

Second, 團結 tuán jié can be understood as an emotional configuration as Galaygay and her family began to sense-make the underlying affective colonial technologies that scaffold this idea of cohesion. Beyond simply naming their affect during the government's displacement and relocation of Ljavek, Galaygay and Cousin were sense-making their felt experiences as the direct result of the government's active strategies to make them feel vulnerable, overwhelmed, and paralyzed. The following conversation with Galaygay speaks to the naming of colonial affective technologies:

揚洵: 我想問一下, 你之前有跟我講說他們[政府人員]有跟你說你們就是不夠團結, 你聽了之後你感覺是如何啊?

Galaygay: 我感受很氣呀, 真的氣到說, 你們明知道你們在分化我們, 你為什麼還要這樣子做啊? 對啊, 你不覺得很奇怪嗎?

揚洵: 我覺得的確很奇怪, 對啊。

Galaygay: 他們就在分化, 我們才[被分散]啊。其實我們好像傻子欸, 有一點怕沒有地方去。

Yang-Hsun: I would like to ask, before you had mentioned that they [government officials] often said you were not tuán jié enough. How did you feel after hearing this?

Gaylaygay: I felt really mad! So mad. Like you already knew that you are dividing us, why are you still doing this? Exactly, don't you find it strange?

YH: Yeah, I would indeed find it strange.

G: They were dividing us, that's why we [split up]. To be honest, we were like fools, afraid of having nowhere to go.

揚洵: 為什麼說你們有點像傻子?

YH: Why do you say that you were like fools?

Galaygay: 因為他們是要拆[房子], 真的公文來了耶。對公文來了, 他說什麼時候要拆, 對啊, 大家會不會怕? 當然會怕啊, 每天都睡不著覺呢。

G: Because they were really coming to tear down [our houses]. The notices really came. The notices came and they said when they would tear down the houses. Wouldn't everyone be afraid? Of course you would. It was hard to fall asleep everyday.

In her descriptions of these experiences, Galaygay was not only voicing the tangible practices that furthered Ljavek's division, reminiscent of colonial strategies to divide and conquer, but also Galaygay articulated the affective colonial technologies that contributed to Ljavek's division. The government officials' visits, the notices, and the comments that Ljavek was "not 團結 tuán jié enough" all served to instill fear and a sense of precarity that made everyone in Ljavek fretful at all times. In other words, "not 團結 tuán jié enough" functioned as a guided emotional participation. The government wanted Ljavek to *feel* as if they were responsible for their division and also *feel* that staying in Ljavek's original location was a risky decision. When Galaygay asked, "don't you find it strange?", she directly named this contradiction, redirected responsibility back to the government, and invited my shared recognition in the sense-making that this guided emotional participation is unreasonable and furthers colonial state land claims. Whether intentional or not, the government's guided emotional configuration acted as colonial affective technologies that pressured Ljavek to learn to feel ashamed of their own community and responsible for their displacement. By describing themselves as "fools" in that moment, Galaygay named how these affective colonial strategies made it difficult for Ljavek to think as a collectivity in that time, and how the purpose of these strategies was to then foster an easier pathway to breaking apart Ljavek. In many ways, the affective colonial strategies functioned as a guided participation in an emotional configuration meant to override Ljavek's own clarity in political

self-determination and agency. Galaygay's emotional reality speaks to how settler colonial structures reorganize relational structures, while later attributing the reorganization to some presumed internal deficit of Indigenous communities. In other words, embedded within colonialism is an intentional force that breaks apart Indigenous communities, while invisibilizing colonial strategies as if they were never there. However, the Galaygay's felt memories bring back to the forefront these colonial strategies and how they always existed. Emotions, here, acted as an opening to understand what was wrong and unjust, a condition for sense-making around the ethics of the government's practices.

Finally, the emotional configuration of 團結 tuán jié as living in Ljavek's original location as a community was structurally set up to feel unobtainable. Not only were there affective strategies to overwhelm and paralyze Ljavek, this conceptualization of 團結 tuán jié was in of itself impossible and unnecessary when it comes to governmental decision-making. When asking the TAHR staff member, Yi-Chia, whether Ljavek was 團結 tuán jié enough, her response was that :

宜家：我覺得他們沒有特別不團結，老實說，因為就是我帶過其他漢人的社群，就差不多，...，但是就是知道團結非常困難，可是他們也沒有特別不團結，因為他們就先根本沒有住在一起，他們被分裂到三個地方，到底是要怎麼[團結]？

Yi-Chia: I don't feel like they were particularly not tuán jié, to be honest. Because I've worked with other Han communities before, and it feels pretty much the same, ... But I know that being tuán jié is very difficult, but they aren't particularly not tuán jié, because they weren't even living together to begin with. They were split into three locations. How are they supposed to [be tuán jié]?

From Yi-Chia's embodied participation in many housing rights protests and political resistances, she was able to provide a felt sense for how 團結 tuán jié Ljavek is, in comparison to the other communities she had worked with. From her embodied expertise, she felt that Ljavek was no less 團結 tuán jié than other communities she had worked with, including non-Indigenous and Han

communities. From Yi-Chia's perspective, the question simply was not about whether Ljavek is 團結 tuán jié enough, but instead that 團結 tuán jié in and of itself is a difficult and even unreasonable expectation. Yi-Chia's perspective highlights the heterogeneity inherent in any community, let alone a community like Ljavek that experienced constant colonial pressures to displace and separate. In addition, at the beginning of the legal trial Ljavek had already been living in three different locations. In this sense, 團結 tuán jié appears to be foreclosed by the structural beginnings in Ljavek. Yi-Chia's comments are also a reminder that it takes a lot of additional labor within one's daily life to get a community to work together for a collective political call, atop of one's family and professional responsibilities. Through Yi-Chia's response, I also that she approached the sense-making of 團結 tuán jié from an embodied and affective perspective, feeling Ljavek's situation in comparison to other communities, and naming that Ljavek's cohesiveness was not the actual issue.

Desiring togetherness through Paiwan intergenerational governance

While colonial forces continue to threaten Ljavek's cohesion, Galaygay and her family continue to establish intergenerational unity through Paiwan governance, sense-making these intergenerational pathways amidst urban migration and ongoing colonialism. Following a lineage of at least three generations, today Galaygay and her son continue to advocate for Ljavek's rightful presence. Their decision to take on the responsibility as the main public advocates of Ljavek speaks to the enactment of Paiwan governance known as *temaveak*, in which familial responsibilities are passed on to the eldest child, regardless of gender, from generation to generation (Tjankus, 2009). I argue that this enactment of intergenerational Paiwan governance structures is in of itself an exemplification of 團結 tuán jié, one that is still entangled with colonial structures yet also directly refutes the government's sense-making of 團結 tuán jié as an

unobtainable goal for Ljavek. Even though Ljavek community members currently do not live in the same geographical location, their affective sense-making of 團結 tuán jié through Paiwan ways of knowing exemplifies how their community cohesion still operates relationally across spatial boundaries. 團結 Tuán jié, or a sense of togetherness, is thus learned, interrupted and shaped by colonial control, but still reconstituted across generations through Paiwan governance and intergenerational relations. In this section, I share three different conversations with Galaygay and her son to describe their emotional configuration of 團結 tuán jié from Paiwan perspectives, and the challenges of enacting such a view of 團結 tuán jié.

In one conversation, Galaygay lamented that 團結 tuán jié was difficult intergenerationally, particularly since most Ljavek youth grew up in Han-dominant urban spaces, but later she also began to sense-make how colonial control is continually defied by Ljavek's intergenerational relations and self-determination.

Galaygay: 最後孩子是認同的。可是認同的那個階段，大家紛紛都是已經走了，那...

楊洵: 那就很困難了。

Galaygay: 欸就是很困難啊。我的小孩那時候我們最前面那個20年，他們是沒有在參與，因為他們都在讀書。

楊洵: 他們也應該要先把他們的書擺在優先吧。

Galaygay: 對對對，他們都是在讀書啊，所以說有年輕人出來嗎？好像幾乎都沒有。

楊洵: 是怎麼讓他們從讀書這期間，然後轉到看把這個東西看成很重

Galaygay: In the end the children did identify [with Ljavek's cause], but at the stage when they identified with the cause, everyone had already left. Then...

Yang-Hsun: Then it's way more difficult.

G: Yes, it was more difficult. In the first 20 years, my children did not participate because they were all in school then.

YH: They should prioritize their studies then.

G: Yes exactly, they were all studying. So were there young people who participated? There didn't seem to be any.

YH: How did you let them move from the stage of school to understanding the importance of this?

要這樣子？

Galaygay: 我相信他們因為慢慢去接觸，因為他們平常就不會聽我們在說我們傳統的事情，他們知道可是沒有認真地去。因為他們到外面...

楊洵：都是漢人啊。

Galaygay: 都是漢人，對對對這個文化是有差異，可是我們堅持了那麼久，小孩子就認同了。就慢慢、慢慢的願意。

G: I believe because they gradually approached this, since they don't usually listen to us talking about traditional things. They understand but they don't take it as seriously because once they are outside...

YH: It's all Han people.

G: It's all Han people, exactly, and so there are cultural differences. But since we persevered for this long, our children will identify with us, slowly and step-by-step.

Within this conversation, Galaygay shifts from a feeling of regret to feeling the possibilities of intergenerational connections in Ljavek, which demonstrate her affective sense-making around how Ljavek youth have returned to carry Ljavek's legacies. At first, Galaygay wondered if Ljavek was more 團結 tuán jié, then perhaps their legal case could have been even more successful. She attributed part of Ljavek's lack of 團結 tuán jié to the Han-dominant colonial structures around Ljavek youth, and how this made intergenerational cohesion immensely difficult. I perceived her initial regret as meaningful, representing the desire to draw closer intergenerational relationships within Ljavek, as well as the resentment towards colonial structures that denied her dreams of Ljavek's collective futurities. As our conversation continued, Galaygay then also described how Ljavek youth are identifying with the community and their shared causes. She speaks to embodying "perseverance" and the younger generation witnessing her perseverance. I theorize this as an emotional configuration of 團結 tuán jié through Galaygay's own embodiment. By embodying pride and strength in her relation to Ljavek as a cohesive Paiwan Indigenous and urban community, she resists deficit-narratives of Indigenous Peoples and teaches younger generations about what it means to be 團結 tuán jié from a Paiwan perspective. Through her

emotional configuration of 團結 tuán jié, she invites younger generations to re-assert Paiwan governance structures with her.

In my conversation with Galaygay's son, he reflected on his decision to participate in Ljavek's collective advocacy, exemplifying how intergenerational 團結 tuán jié is a difficult and emergent learning process that is often shaped by felt crossroads in life. Galaygay's son shared that, growing up, he did not want to participate in Ljavek's advocacy. However, while he completed the mandatory military training in Taiwan as a young man, he began to re-think his priorities in life, which led him to taking on familial responsibilities. He is the eldest child of his mother and in Paiwan governance the eldest child, regardless of gender, takes on the main responsibility of the family, which may include stewarding the lands and waters. Galaygay's son is carrying on Galaygay's role, while Galaygay carries her elder sister's and father's roles before her. When Galaygay's son decided to return to his familial responsibilities, he described that:

For him, the learning process of activism and advocacy felt like a crash course. It was difficult and at times he felt powerless, but he had to learn while figuring out each upcoming crisis. ... He said that sometimes he felt like he ... didn't have the right to be agentic, but was forced to resist. We talked about how no one really wants to be part of a resistance movement, but it's the only option when there is no other choice.

– Research field note, May 21, 2025

While Galaygay's son expressed that he was ready to stand up for Ljavek, his feelings express that this is a laborious process which did not have to exist if the government respected Ljavek's

self-determination and stewardship of urban lands and waters. He felt that Ljavek's advocacy was an intense "crash course" and without external support he felt "powerless". His affective sense-making describes 團結 tuán jié as specifically challenging for Indigenous youth, as a learning journey fraught with colonial pressures. He also articulated a realistic view of learning in social movements, particularly that Ljavek's advocacy and resistance were founded out of necessity, not out of a random want to "cause trouble". To be clear, Ljavek's resistance has never taken on a physically violent orientation, but instead most of Ljavek's resistance strategies include remaining physically in Ljavek's original location, reaching out to journalists and TAHR, arranging meetings with government officials and congressional representatives, and pursuing a legal trial. These all speak to the extensive labor and an accumulation of (legal) knowledge required to advocate for Ljavek's 團結 tuán jié.

In another conversation, Galaygay and I talked about her plans for the land Ljavek negotiated through their successful legal trial, and Galaygay's affective sense-making for 團結 tuán jié sets up a blueprint for Ljavek's collective futurities beyond co-residing in the same physical location. Specifically, Galaygay said she imagines the new place would "有大家" or "have everyone". She meant that this place would welcome all Ljavek community members, from those who were incentivized to move out to public housing, to those whose houses were demolished and were forced to relocate, and to those who stayed in Ljavek's original location until the legal trial ended. I recognize that, for me, there is a "flipped" description in how she speaks to human-place relations. Instead of saying "everyone will have this place", she described this futurity as "the place will have everyone". I interpret this as contrasting with the colonial view of land ownership, and instead as an open invitation for frequent visits from Ljavek community members at their new place. Galaygay's desires function to sense-make Ljavek's futurities,

building a vision for 團結 tuán jié that does not hinge on all Ljavek community members living on the exact same land, but instead a futurity where there are strong relations between all Ljavek community members and the lands they steward together. In this sense, Galaygay's emotional configuration of 團結 tuán jié exceeds present colonial conditions and maps out a pathway towards Ljavek's self-determination.

Discussion: Affective Politics of 團結 Tuán Jié and Learning to Live Together

In this article, I re-articulated how Ljavek's affective political sense-making around “團結 tuán jié” a) foregrounds the affective colonial technologies attempting to undermine Indigenous community building in urban spaces, and b) exemplifies Ljavek's continual re-assertions of intergenerational Paiwan self-determination. I theorized this as an *emotional configuration of colonial struggle*, where the co-construction of “團結 tuán jié” becomes a contested site for the sense-making of ongoing colonial practices and Indigenous urban futurities-building. Ljavek identified the measurement of being “團結 tuán jié” enough as an affective colonial strategy aimed to overwhelm, speak over, and effectively erase Ljavek's voice. Ljavek and their political advocacy partners recorded and understood these affective colonial strategies through the body, providing critical testimony for further political action. In other words, Ljavek will not forget about these colonial strategies because it is physically impossible to do so. In spite of these affective colonial terrains, Ljavek community members learned to self-advocate, build powerful coalitions and partnerships, and establish intergenerational advocacy lineages, subverting “團結 tuán jié” through Paiwan governance. Ljavek's political advocacy journey speaks to how Indigenous affect and felt knowledge provides openings for Indigenous resurgent futurities.

Alongside these findings, I share my research sense-making on how Ljavek re-defines “團結 tuán jié”. I raise several examples of how Ljavek is learning to sustain their relations amidst

colonial conditions. First, speaking to strong more-than-human relations, there are stray dogs that Galaygay has been taking care of since they lived in Ljavek's original location. Galaygay has 7 dogs, and she would share stories with me about how they moved together from Ljavek's original location to their apartment. Galaygay's insistence asserts that more-than-human relations are still vital for a community, and that she would always find a place for them to live together. Second, Ljavek is a connected community across geographical and physical boundaries. Galaygay's family sustains strong relations with family living in public housing, who have also expressed the desire and plans to live together. For Ljavek, a community exceeds a neatly bounded geographical area, and is founded on the relational structures that sustain a community across various geographical locations and generations. Finally, Ljavek and their successful legal trial has become pedagogical for surrounding Indigenous communities. In 2024, a neighboring Indigenous community visited Ljavek to learn more about their experiences dealing with displacement and relocation in urban contexts. This builds on Ljavek's prior experiences in 2012, when Ljavek visited two urban Indigenous communities in Taipei City to learn from their experiences and strategies. Through these learning lineages, Ljavek has been part of a larger collective advocating against colonial structures in urban spaces and re-defining what urban Indigenous life could be. From a researcher's perspective, these examples emphasize how Ljavek enacts “團結 tuán jié” through their own ways of being.

This research suggests several implications for the learning sciences and for a broader audience seeking to be in good relation with Indigenous Peoples. For the learning sciences, this research calls for the re-centering of affect, place, and Indigenous ways of knowing in our theorizations of learning. We must understand that desire is wise (Tuck, 2010). A closer exploration of affect provides generative openings to understanding how people learn to recognize

colonial structures, and how Indigenous sovereignties have always approached self-determination through affective sense-making. For a broader audience, we must understand that it is violent to require the performance of an oppressed community cohesion before taking a community's voices and desires seriously. The ask for Ljavek to portray “團結 tuán jié” is reminiscent of the desire to construct a pure, innocent, and perfect victim to warrant political action and repair. However, there is no such thing as a perfect victim, and the construction of innocence is highly subjective, racialized, gendered, and socially constructed (Burke & Brown, 2022; Morton, 2021). Moreover, the existence of injustice does not require a certain (moral) characteristic of those who experience oppression. This phenomenon is frequently observed in social movements in Taiwan, especially across ongoing Indigenous legal struggles related to migration and displacement, and also in transgender activism in Taiwan. To be very clear, I do not fault individual government workers, but the systemic call for a “unified” political community, which misplaces blame on oppressed communities. What Ljavek suggests is that we need to learn to re-define what it means to co-create political advocacy with our communities.

In Parting, Take Care

To be truly transparent with you, reader, I am not great at writing endings to things. In part, I suspect that there is an aspiration that you will take with you what you need by reading the main text, without my fumbling guidance that X, Y, and Z are the “actual” important takeaways. But also, this work is still ongoing. I am reminded of Tsing’s (2015) anti-ending to *Mushroom at the End of the World*, where she nearly lists an entire constellation of ongoing and upcoming related projects, instead of neatly closing the book with a chapter of conclusions. While not similar in scale, Galaygay’s family and I currently plan to continue collaborating on this research project. There are still many open endings to their stories. We have talked about co-writing more public-facing work together, something that documents family stories for Ljavek themselves and future generations. We have also started thinking about what may be needed if the legal trial is re-opened, especially since Ljavek is still waiting for the plot of land assigned to them following their successful legal trial. This wait has dragged on for more than three years now, and there legally needs to be a response from the government soon. In my many visits, I also had lovely chance meetings with Galaygay’s grandchildren, who often listened in to our conversations, sprawling on couches and playing video games while I know their ears are as intent as ever. I wonder who they will grow up to become? How will they continue to carry on Ljavek’s stories, not by doing anything in particular, but just by being themselves and sustaining their relations? Even in the closing of this dissertation, there continue to be many openings into Ljavek’s futurities in Takao, or Kaohsiung City, and beyond.

In this chapter, then, I offer the relations I observed between the three articles while writing them, and share some of my thoughts on my relations with the fields I am in dialogue with (i.e., the learning sciences, Taiwan Studies). Instead of simply summarizing “key points” from

each of the research articles, I want to part with the relations I observed across the articles, and my ongoing thinking-feeling while sitting with these surfaced relations, while living at the intersection of the multiple disciplines that strengthen the learning sciences and educational research more broadly.

“Revisions” in Indigenous Research Partnerships: Relating Themes Across the Three Papers

In writing and reflecting on this writing, I realize that “revisions” have become a core tenet that surfaced across the three papers. Across the three papers, Galaygay, her family, and I are in some way or another arguing for a revision to familiar research methodologies, biases, and traditions.

In the methods paper in Chapter 3, I wrote about revising my perspectives on qualitative research methodologies to re-center the inherently political nature of research and attune to Indigenous self-determination while working with Ljavek as a research partner. Ljavek provided methodological guidance as I was working with them. “Listening” became a central methodological re-orientation to listen for Ljavek’s invitations and revisions to the original research methodologies, so that the emerging research design did not contradict with Ljavek’s ongoing political decisions around how they wanted to share and present their stories. Whether it was telling me to collaborate with Galaygay on this research project, to change my research design to align with unfolding community priorities, or to share my own stories while being in conversation with Galaygay—these are all methodological guidelines that are steeped in political self-determination and that revised my research design. Chapter 3 calls for a revision to how we do research, and to prioritize Indigenous research partners’ decision-making capacities over familiar research methodologies.

In the paper in Chapter 4 about the changes in urban landwaterscapes, I wrote about the need to revise our perspectives on learning and place. I proposed a way of viewing learning through witnessing the changing epistemologies, axiologies, and affect embedded in the changes in landwaterscapes. Following land-based, literary, and anthropological traditions in literature, I described changes in landwaterscapes through “worlding” (i.e., attempts and desires to re-shape physical landwaterscapes) and “acclimating” (i.e., human communities adjusting to changes in landwaterscapes). Through this revised perspective, learning takes place in the physical changes of our surrounding urban socioecological systems, moving beyond human-centric views and re-centering place in our theorizations of learning. In addition, by taking on this perspective, we must revise how we understand urban planning and similar projects of changing the world. There needs to be an awareness of the agencies and consent of lands and waters, and how they contribute to the formation of worlds so that human desires do not always linearly manifest. Chapter 4 thus calls for revisions in how we understand the integral role of place in learning, and how we recognize the role of lands and waters in the re-shaping of our cities and urban spaces.

In the third and final paper in Chapter 5, I ask that we revise the emphasis on collective cohesiveness as a prerequisite for taking a collective’s concerns seriously. In Ljavek’s recent experiences, they were blamed for their displacement and relocation because they were supposedly “not tuanjie enough”, or not cohesive or unified enough. However, in this chapter, I stress how Ljavek is perpetuating Paiwan intergenerational governance and extending their own sociocultural views on being a cohesive sovereignty, which provides revisions to how “tuanjie” or “cohesion” is defined. Through an affective lens, I also theorized how the discourse of being “not tuanjie enough” is an affective colonial technology, solidifying colonial structures through emotional strategies to shame, overwhelm, and paralyze. Ljavek’s troubling of these “not tuanjie

enough” claims are also affective, drawing from affective and embodied knowledge to refute these claims and expose the underlying colonial scripts. Through Ljavek’s affective sensemaking, Chapter 5 revises definitions of *tuanjie* or collective cohesion, theorizes how such descriptions are affective, sociocultural, and political, and critically invites us to understand the colonial structures that impede Ljavek’s sovereignty and collective relations.

Through these three papers, I am continuously reminded that research, instead of providing something purely novel and new, is a repetitive process of revisions. In all the papers, the revisions are broadly about honoring lands, waters, and Ljavek’s Paiwan self-determination from the different perspectives of researcher, research institute, city government, and nation-state. More concretely, these revisions hold tangible implications for how I engage with and understand my relations with different academic fields.

Transnational Indigenous Densities: Implications for the Learning Sciences, Taiwan Studies, and Beyond

Across different disciplines, I hope that this work brings forth nuanced conversations around learning and Indigenous self-determination in Taiwan. With Galaygay and her family, I have described in this dissertation how learning is political, land-based, and affective, and how surfacing these research findings requires respectful collaboration with community research partners. In this section, I will expand on how these learning dimensions provide further implications for the learning sciences and Taiwan Studies. To begin with, I first ground this dissertation’s research implications in a call for honoring Indigenous self-determination situated in specific transnational contexts.

Mainly, research implications from this dissertation ask that we honor “transnational Indigenous densities”. Here, I draw from Moreton-Robinson’s (2015) theorization of “densities”,

or the need for academic discourse to move away from colonizer-Indigenous comparisons and towards the nuanced similarities, differences, and relations between Indigenous sovereignties. A thorough engagement with Indigenous densities asks that we recognize Indigeneities not as a monolith, but that Indigenous sovereignties and epistemologies are heterogeneous. I also invite considerations of “transnational” Indigenous densities, or how Indigenous densities globally hold nuances that are often sidelined in English-dominant discourses. While there have been significant pushes towards global Indigenous conversations, there remain discursive gaps between Indigenous sovereignties in relation to European settler colonialism and Indigenous sovereignties elsewhere. With these gaps, it can be difficult to theorize points of solidarity between Indigenous sovereignties globally, but also to contextualize Indigenous self-determination strategies emerge differently from place to place. This dissertation collaboration shows how Han settler colonialism in Taiwan functions in very similar ways to European settler colonialism, while there still are contextual differences. From this work, I hope that Galaygay, her family, and I explained how/why Ljavek’s self-determination strategies are specific to Taiwan’s colonial context and Paiwan ways of being. Of course, any mistakes and lack of clarity in this writing are solely my responsibility. With attention to transnational Indigenous densities, there are several implications for different disciplines.

For the learning sciences, this research re-emphasizes the need to re-center place, affect, and Indigenous sovereignties in our discussions of learning. As our field begins to recognize how learning is socioculturally situated, an organic next step is to explore how learning is situated within “socioecologies” (Vossoughi et al., 2023), breaking the nature-culture dichotomy to re-center how place has always been a part of our social relations. Following my earlier description of transnational Indigenous densities, this awareness of learning as situated in

socioecologies necessitates geopolitical nuance to the place we are in relation with. There is also a need to attend to how learning is affective and felt, to theorize learning as intimately mediated by our emotions and bodies. These calls align with growing critical, Indigenous, and feminist scholarship that recognizes knowledge building as nonlinear, relational, and land-based. As we begin to pay attention to place and affect, it is also necessary for our field to recognize that Indigenous sovereignties, communities, scholars, and experts have always understood the relations between epistemologies, lands, waters, and the body. Academic “turns” such as the affective turn are incomplete without recognizing the wealth of epistemologies that precede and parallel the discipline’s growth.

For Taiwan Studies, I hold deep gratitude for how this field has opened up a space for critical thought around Taiwan’s global positioning, especially as an international scholar pursuing this degree outside of Taiwan. Through recent annual meetings at the North American Taiwan Studies Association, I am excited to see more scholarship addressing settler colonialism, Indigenous self-determination, and broader anti-oppression activism within Taiwan (e.g., queer movements, disability justice). Alongside these emerging critical scholarships in Taiwan Studies, this research suggests that while competing U.S.-China imperialisms continue to be an existential and physical threat to Taiwan’s sovereignty, there needs to be nuanced discussions about how U.S. and Chinese imperialisms transpire into exacerbated colonial conditions for Indigenous Peoples in Taiwan and for Taiwan’s socioecologies. While current conversations understandably speak to the tensions between nation-states (i.e., U.S., China, and Taiwan), there is a need to platform Indigenous sovereignties, lands, and waters in the same footing, and to revise preconceived notions of Indigenous sovereignties as “domestic” to colonial nation-states. Indigenous sovereignties in Taiwan have always been engaged in global politics with other Indigenous and

non-Indigenous sovereignties. This revision is necessary if we, as people living and connected with the islands that we now know as Taiwan, are to strategize our own liberatory futurities for coexistence and flourishing between peoples, more-than-humans, lands and waters.

To readers more broadly, I write to you with several brief, in-process reflections on human-place relations. With a perspective of lands and waters as agentic, I have begun to reframe the concept of “unsustainability” as violations of socioecological consent. Unsustainable structures break down differently from a machine collapsing in linear and predictable processes, but unsustainability comes from lands and waters’ refusals to continue partaking in certain violent projects. I have also started interacting differently with the urban spaces I live in, recognizing that there are socioecological political orders and relations present, rather than being a decontextualized modern space. Lastly, as an international scholar, I have become more critical of migration and the speed at which our current job landscapes, wars, and geopolitical tensions encourage us to move. As V. Jo Hsu (2022) writes about our people, Han people, “My bloodlines have moved too far too quickly for me to tell you where I am ‘really from’” (p. 163). I feel, at the closing of this writing, a deep need to return home to Taiwan, slow down my intergenerational pace of movement, and reacquaint myself with home.

As this dissertation closes out for now, I sign off as I usually do in my emails, and what my family usually tells each other when we say, “see you”. We say, “take care”. Thank you, readers, for reading this. Whether you have jumped between sections that caught your attention, or read certain sections in full, thank you for thinking-feeling alongside me. Take care.

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Appendix A: Ah-Buán's Dissertation Edits

Below, you will find a curated sample of edits from Ah-Buán, my orange and white cat. These edits were unfortunately beyond the scope of this dissertation, but I include them here to show my appreciation of their hard work, typically while pawing at my laptop and trying to sit closer to (or on) the heated areas of my keyboard. Ah-Buán had been diligent at their editorial work with me for many late nights, and this dissertation would not be possible without them.

Edit 1:

1...../

Edit 2:

In learning through place relations, I also want to

[illegible][illegible]

about place is not detached, but felt, affective and embodied. (April 24, 2026)

Edit 3:

Conbgvvvvvvvgfv (May 31, 2026)